MOZART and the VIOLIN

Many people do not even know that you play the violin, since you have been known from childhood as a clavier player.

Leopold Mozart to Wolfgang Mozart, Oct. 18, 1777

It would be difficult to find a musical figure who has been the subject of more literature, both fact and fiction, than Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Almost from the day of his death, Mozart's life has been told and retold, his work catalogued and analyzed. He has become a legend, surpassed only by chronicles of celebrated heroes or martyred saints. To his contemporaries, Mozart was both a performer and a composer. For posterity, his genius as a composer overshadowed his image as a performer, just as his fame as a pianist caused everyone to forget that he once played the violin. In fact, he played the violin regularly from the age of six. Although it always took second place to the clavier, still the violin remained an important part of his life until the age of twenty-four, when he stopped playing it altogether.

Given the wealth of literature about Mozart, the amount of writing about his playing the violin is very limited.[1] Scattered among the documents of his life, however, there is ample evidence that Mozart was also a violinist. The family correspondence shows that during his early years he practiced the violin regularly. It is significant, for example, that when he set off for his first tour without his father, Leopold wrote to him wistfully, "I feel a bit melancholy whenever I go home, for as I approach the house, I always imagine that I shall hear your violin going."[2] A few days later Leopold wrote again concerned about Wolfgang's practicing.[3] Mozart's first official employment as *Konzertmeister* at the Archbishop's court in Salzburg was playing the violin. The five violin concertos he wrote in 1775 are living testimony to his close relationship with the violin as a solo instrument.

History has a way with facts. Assisted by the passage of time and human hindsight, it creates its own perspective, part truth and part illusion. History had its way with Mozart's image

1. In the 1300-page biography by Otto Jahn, published in 1856, only two pages are devoted to Mozart the violinist.
2. Leopold to Wolfgang Mozart, Oct. 6, 1777, in E. Anderson, *Letters of Mozart and His Family*, London, Macmillan, 1938.
3. Leopold to Wolfgang Mozart, Oct. 9, 1777, op. cit.

too, leaving us with two sharply contrasting impressions of his person. On the side of illusion, we have Mozart the child, favorite of the gods, blessed with "miraculous" abilities, pampered by the crowned heads of Europe and their courtiers. Goethe distinctly remembered "the little fellow . . . with his powdered wig and sword."[4] Later, in sharp contrast, we see him as a prematurely old young man, a martyr of the arts and victim of an indifferent society. Mozart dies destitute, perhaps poisoned, surrounded by his grieving friends, conducting his Requiem.

The more objective view of him still shows this sharp contrast between Wolfgang, the child prodigy, roaming Europe with his family, collecting gold sovereigns and snuffboxes; and Mozart, the mature composer in Vienna, desperately writing piano concertos to eke out a living. Whichever view we take, the romantic or the objective, we find the split image that biographers have had to contend with for two centuries. A clue to help solve this puzzle might be found in Mozart's violinist father, Leopold, who held center stage, practically through most of his son's life.

The violin played an important role in the relationship of father and son. In every way, but particularly as a violinist, Wolfgang's persona was closely tied to the figure of his father, Leopold Mozart, whose generation belonged to a social order that was about to end. A typical example of a composer in that system was Franz Josef Haydn, who was a "servant" (though a highly respected and cherished one) of the Esterházy family. That old order was soon to be supplanted by one that supported independent artists, such as Beethoven, whose works were commissioned by wealthy patrons, noble or bourgeois.

Mozart's life was split drastically by this great change in the social position of the artist. His adolescence was spent seeking employment as a servant of princes. This was the ideal held up to him by his father, one which Haydn, who Mozart called "Papa," found comfortable. The violin was an essential tool on the road to security and fame in that old social system. When circumstances and Mozart's natural inclination to rebellion forced him into conflict with the prevailing order, he made a complete break with his employer, the Archbishop of Salzburg, and with courtly servitude as a way of life.

This act signaled Mozart's somewhat belated emergence from adolescence into manhood. At the same time, he broke away from the strong influence of his father, and, perhaps as a symbolic act emphasizing his independence from both his father and the system they had served, Mozart *stopped playing the violin.*

The first word of Mozart playing the violin is in a touching letter by a family friend, Salzburg court trumpeter Andreas Schachtner, to Maria Anna, Mozart's sister, after his death.

> . . . in the days after your return from Vienna [1762], a very good violinist, the late Herr Wenzl,[5] came to us. He was a beginner in composition and brought six trios with him, which he had written while your father was away, and asked your father for an opinion on them. We played the trios, Papa played the bass with his viola, Wenzl the first violin, and I was to play the second violin. Wolfgang had asked to be allowed to play the second violin, but Papa refused him this foolish request, because he had not yet had the least instruction in the violin, and Papa thought that he could not possibly play anything. Wolfgang said: You don't need to have studied in order to play second violin, and when Papa insisted that he should go away and not bother us any more, Wolfgang began to weep bitterly and stamped off with his little violin. I asked them to let him play with me. Papa eventually said: Play with Herr Schachtner, but so softly that we can't hear you, or you will have to go; and so it was. Wolfgang played with me; I soon noticed with astonishment that I was quite superfluous. I quietly put my violin down and looked at your Papa; tears of wonder and comfort ran down his cheeks at this scene, and so he played

4. O. Jahn, *Life of Mozart*, Leipzig, 1856, P. Townsend, trans., New York, Cooper Square Press, 1979, Vol. 1, p. 33.

5. His full name was Wenzel Hebelt.

> all six trios. When we had finished, Wolfgang was so encouraged by our applause that he insisted he could play the first violin too. For a joke, we made the experiment, and we almost died for laughter when he played this too, though with nothing but strange and incorrect fingerings, in such a way that he never actually broke down.[6]

Schachtner's letter establishes that Wolfgang was given his first violin at age six. Although he obviously had been experimenting on his own, up to the time of Schachtner's visit he had no formal instruction. Since he made his debut as a violinist less than three months later playing a concerto, his progress was astonishing indeed. This public debut took place on February 28, 1763 (by that time he was seven) at a concert celebrating the birthday of Archbishop Sigismund of Salzburg. Wolfgang's father was named *Vice-Kapellmeister* by his benevolent employer on that same occasion. What concerto the boy played that day is not known, a frustrating circumstance we shall have to accept in all but a few similar instances.

Leopold must have been a superb teacher. He was the author of a famous violin method, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule*, and if we consider one of his later students, Heinrich Marchand, whom Leopold taught violin, piano, composition, and languages, we have an idea of the source of the Mozart children's knowledge. For his daughter Maria Anna, affectionately known as Nannerl, Leopold assembled a book of clavier pieces. This book was later used for the younger sibling, Wolfgang, as evidenced by notes in Leopold's handwriting, such as: "This piece was learned by Wolfgangerl on 24 January 1761, three days before his fifth birthday between 9 and 9:30 in the evening. . . ."[7] As we have no such first hand information about the boy's violin instruction, we can only assume that Leopold's own "Violinschule" was used for his first formal lessons. In any event, it must have been used for a very short time, given the boy's lightning progress.

In June of 1763, the Mozart family set off on their "Grand Tour" of Europe, which lasted three and a half years. The "attractions" included Nannerl and Wolfgang performing singly and together on the harpsichord, Wolfgang sometimes playing with the keyboard covered by a cloth. He also improvised on themes given to him by the audience, played the organ where one was available, and performed on his violin. Whether one regards the tour as exploiting the children or as a father's aggressive bid to ensure upward mobility for his offspring in a rigid society, playing the violin was very much a part of Wolfgang's "act," judging by the advance publicity Leopold sent out. The *Augsburgischer Intelligenz-Zettel* of May 19, 1763 contains a notice typical in this regard. The anonymous correspondent, after listing the children's almost unimaginable achievements, writes: "and he [Mozart] takes part in everything on a small *violino piccolo*[8] made especially for him, having already appeared with a solo and concerto at the Court of Salzburg. Has he then learned this since the New Year?"[9] On June 13 at Nymphenburg Palace, Mozart played the violin and displayed his other instrumental and vocal skills. Mention was made of the fact that Wolfgang "played a violin concerto for the Elector and in addition improvised cadenzas out of his own head."[10] The advertisement for the last of four concerts in Frankfurt read: ". . . the boy will also play a concerto on the violin. . . . Admission, a small thaler per person. Tickets to be had at the Golden Lion."[11] This concert was the source of Goethe's previously quoted remembrance of the boy Mozart.

In Paris the children were pampered by everyone, including the Queen, Maria Leczińska. Here Wolfgang Mozart wrote two

6. O. E. Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1965, p. 453. Maria Anna had requested information on her brother for a projected biography.
7. The piece was a *Scherzo* by Wagenseil.
8. A small violin was all that was meant by *violino piccolo*, not one tuned two octaves higher than a normal violin like the octavino used by Vivaldi and Bach.
9. Deutsch, loc. cit., p. 21.
10. Niemetschek, *Lebensbeschreibung*, p. 15.
11. Deutsch, loc. cit., p. 25.

sonatas (K. 6 and K. 7) for harpsichord with violin accompaniment, which Leopold, whose hopes were being fulfilled beyond all expectation, published at his own expense. Dedicated to "Mme Victoire[12] of France by J. G.[13] Wolfgang Mozart of Salzburg Aged Seven Years" (he was actually eight), this was Mozart's first published work. The family's grand concert on April 9 included the violinist Pierre Gaviniés, who donated his services, playing a concerto by Felice Giardini.

In London he had his seemingly preordained rendezvous with J. C. ("the London") Bach. The violinist-composer who contributed his services in their concerts there was François Barthelémon. Among others, Barthelémon and the gallant black violinist-composer Chevalier de St. Georges (Joseph de Boulogne) had left enough of an impression to have some influence on Mozart's first two violin concertos.[14] An even stronger influence on the boy was Giuseppe Manzuoli, the male soprano, who became a lifelong friend of the family. Mozart took voice lessons from the famous singer, who frequently sat quietly by while the boy was at work. "To sing like Manzuoli" became a family byword. Manzuoli's influence on Mozart was noticed by Baron Grimm,[15] who wrote that the boy sang "with more expression" after having worked with Manzuoli.

While homeward bound, Mozart had his first taste of conducting in Amsterdam (January 29, 1766). Whether he led from the violin or the harpsichord is not known. After this, conducting became another one of the "set pieces" in the Mozart family's concerts. In The Hague, Mozart wrote the six clavier-violin sonatas of Opus 4 (K. 26–31), dedicating them to Princess Caroline. They were immediately published by Hummel. Thus, of the few works published during his lifetime, the very first two were for violin and harpsichord.

12. Second daughter of Louis XV.
13. G. for Gottlieb, German form of Amadeus.
14. According to Hans Engel, *Stiftung Mozarteum*, in O. Schneider and A. Algatsy, *Mozart Handbuch*, Vienna, 1962 p. 186.
15. Baron Melchior Grimm, a significant figure in Mozart lore.

This journey, and others to Vienna, Italy, and Paris in pursuit of fame, money, and improved position, had another aim intended by Leopold: to expose Wolfgang to the influences of a musical world outside Salzburg. Indeed, Wolfgang's receptiveness to the varied musical styles they encountered had consequences beyond Leopold's expectations. Many years later, Leopold revealed the extent of his ambition for his son in a letter to Wolfgang, then twenty-two and on his way to Paris: "It depends solely on your good sense and your way of life whether you die an ordinary musician utterly forgotten by the world or live a famous *Kapellmeister* whom posterity will read about. . . ."[16] However, Mozart was able to assimilate everything that had to do with music with such ease that he astonished his father again and again. On these journeys he absorbed everything that he found valuable in European music and made it his own. The final result far surpassed Leopold's ideal of a "famous *Kapellmeister*." In the end, Mozart's genius needed more space than even his ambitious father could wish for him. Ironically, it was this grand tour that set the stage for Wolfgang's tragic conflict with the society of his time.[17]

By the time he returned to Salzburg (1767), Wolfgang had matured into a recognized composer whose age had no bearing on the competence of his work. Now, at age eleven, as one of the three principal Salzburg composers, he shared in writing an oratorio, *On the Duty of the First Commandment*, with Michael Haydn and Anton Aldgasser. The following year, Mozart "sang, played the violin and the clavier to everyone's astonishment"[18] after the performance of his *Mass* (K. 66) for the investiture of Father Dominicus, son of the Mozart family's landlord. The first three of his Church Sonatas (K. 67–69) for two violins, organ, and continuo were also written at this time, for use in the Salzburg cathedral.

16. Leopold to Wolfgang Mozart, Feb. 11–12, 1778, in Anderson, loc. cit.
17. E. Schenk, *Mozart and His Times*, New York, Knopf, 1959.
18. Deutsch, loc. cit., p 94: Hagenauer MS calendar Oct. 16, 1769 (in Latin).

A trip through Bavaria, Hungary, and Austria brought Leopold his first major setback in his labors on behalf of his son. In Vienna, court and operatic intrigue prevented Wolfgang's first opera, *La Finta Semplice*, from being performed. The father's vehement protest probably cost him the Dowager Empress Maria Theresia's good will, causing a coolness toward Wolfgang at the Hapsburg court that, even with Joseph II's later support, he was never able to overcome completely.[19]

In December of 1769, father and son left for Italy. This tour was an unqualified success. Wolfgang composed throughout their travels with unbelievable speed. He also continued to perform as a violinist. In Bologna he met the great contrapuntist Padre Martini, who wrote as a recommendation on October 12, 1770:

> I, the undersigned, attest that having seen some musical compositions in various styles, and having several times heard [him play] the harpsichord, the violin and sing; Sig. cav. Giov. Amadeo Wolfgango Mozart . . . aged 14 years, to my particular admiration was found by me most highly versed . . .[20]

In Florence the Mozarts met again with Pietro Nardini. They had first met the famous violinist in Augsburg, when Leopold recorded his impressions of Nardini's playing: ". . . it would be impossible to hear a finer player for beauty, purity, evenness of tone and singing quality. But he plays rather lightly."[21] This time Nardini played some variations for clavier and violin with Wolfgang. It was also in Florence that Leopold and Wolfgang were reunited with their old London friend, the castrato Giovanni Manzuoli. This time Wolfgang studied Manzuoli's vocal style even more closely, for it was possible that Manzuoli would take a part in the opera Mozart was to write for Milano. Another famous castrato the Mozarts met in Florence was Venanzio Rauzzini, who was also an outstanding sonata composer. This singer, for whom Mozart wrote *Exultate Jubilate*, helped to bring other musicians, such as the composers Carlo Campioni and Giuseppe Lampugnani into the Mozart camp when controversy raged over "il ragazzo tedesco."[22] Alfred Einstein writes that the composers who influenced Mozart's *concertante* violin style in Italy were Pugnani, Ferrari, Boccherini, and Borghi.[23] While Mozart's affinity for Boccherini's style is unmistakable, there are no authenticated concertos of Pugnani available for us to make that comparison possible. However, Luigi Borghi, who studied with Pugnani at about the time Mozart took lessons from Padre Martini, produced violin concertos two years before Mozart that are strikingly similar to Mozart's style. (Ironically, although Boccherini was a distinct influence, a D Major Concerto attributed to him, and which Alfred Einstein considered to have been a model for Mozart's concerto in the same key, K. 218,[24] has turned out to be a modern forgery.)

Perhaps Mozart's only boyhood friendship with someone his own age was formed in Florence with a young Englishman, Thomas Linlay, who was a violinist protégé of Nardini's, and a talented composer. Linlay's portrait by Gainsborough shows him as an exceedingly appealing young man. The two boys played the violin for each other at their hotel and also performed together in public.[25]

The Mozarts' return to Salzburg in December 1771 coincided with the death of their employer, Archbishop Sigismund. In March, a new Prince-Archbishop was elected, Hieronymus,

19. Thanks to Leopold's petition complaining about the intrigues against his son, a list of Wolfgang's first fifty compositions has survived, including many works that have been lost, among them a cello sonata.
20. Deutsch, loc. cit., p. 127.
21. Leopold Mozart to Lorenz Hagenauer, July 11, 1763, in Anderson, loc.cit.
22. Many Italian musicians doubted any German's ability to write Italian opera, not to mention a mere boy's.
23. A. Einstein, *Mozart: His Character, His Work*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 279.
24. Einstein, loc. cit., p. 280.
25. Mozart was saddened by "Tomassino's" death by drowning in 1788, at age twenty-two. Much later, in Vienna, he spoke of him at length to Michael Kelly, the tenor from Dublin who was the first Basilio in *Figaro*.

Count of Colloredo. On August 21, 1772, their new master awarded Wolfgang, who until then had served without pay, the sum of 150 florins per annum, his first salary as *Konzertmeister*. Franz Josef's brother, Michael Haydn, also held the title and drew the salary of *Konzertmeister* at Salzburg, but his title was honorary; he served as court composer and played the viola in the orchestra.

Members of the eighteenth century nobility cultivated the violin as a means of participating in the musical life of the court. Perhaps this instrument seemed easier for an amateur to learn than the keyboard, which demanded a knowledge of the figured bass, and shortcomings in performances on the violin could be covered by the professional "help" playing along. Archbishop Colloredo was an amateur violinist himself, though according to Leopold, Colloredo counted on Brunetti (later *Konzertmeister* in Salzburg) to cover for him in difficult passages.[26] The new Archbishop was especially unsympathetic toward the two Mozarts' need to travel. However, Colloredo did like the violin no matter how poorly he played, and it was only natural that the Mozarts should seek the way to his unyielding heart through something he would understand, music for his own instrument. That Colloredo's understanding of musical matters could be a problem is illustrated by his alleged comment to Wolfgang: "He [Fischer] sang too low for a bass," to which Wolfgang Mozart answered, "He would sing higher next time, Your Eminence."[27]

Archbishop Colloredo had been in office for a little over a year when, in May of 1773, Wolfgang wrote a work for two solo violins and orchestra, later entitled *Concertone* (K. 190). It is probable that *Vice-Kapellmeister* Leopold and *Konzertmeister* Wolfgang performed the work for the first time. The solo writing in this work is relatively simple; there are no difficult or especially inventive passages. In this respect, according to Otto Jahn, technical difficulty in Mozart's violin parts kept pace with his own progress as a violinist, and this became more evident after 1773. It is also possible that the *Concertone* had been kept comparatively simple for the sake of Colloredo, should he have cared to play it. In any case, Mozart's skill as a violinist reached its peak within the next two years.

In 1775, Mozart wrote the five violin concertos in rapid sequence.[28] Since he wrote them at home, there was no family correspondence about their first performance. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, we can assume that Wolfgang wrote them for himself to perform at the Salzburg court. The family letters and other sources attest that Mozart did perform them elsewhere.

Some biographers have suggested that Mozart wrote the concertos for Brunetti,[29] but Antonio Brunetti, "a thoroughly ill-bred fellow,"[30] was not particularly liked by the Mozarts and, furthermore, was not appointed *Konzertmeister* in Salzburg until after 1775.[31] It was not until the next year, 1776, that Mozart wrote substitute movements for two of his concertos at Brunetti's request. Would Brunetti have asked for a new slow movement to the A Major Concerto (K. 219) or a new last movement for the First Concerto in B-flat (K. 207) if he had already learned and performed them with the original movements the previous year? Writing these five concertos within such a concentrated period of time is "proof that Mozart was applying himself energetically to

26. Jahn, loc. cit., Vol. 1, p. 288.
27. Ibid.

28. A phrase, "The concerto you wrote for Kolb [a Salzburg amateur]," in a letter from Leopold to Wolfgang Aug. 3, 1778, gave rise to several theories: that it was a "lost" work, perhaps the origin of the spurious Concerto K. 271a in D that appeared for the first time in the 1905 edition of Breitkopf and Härtel without any justification of its authenticity; or that it was the Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Leopold was referring to. Wolfgang Plath, the Mozart handwriting-chronology expert, has suggested that the first concerto was written earlier, perhaps in 1773, and that the last digit of its date could have been altered from a 3 to a 5. If the B-flat Concerto was written earlier than the others, this would reinforce the latter possibility. One other "early Mozart" concerto, the so-called Adelaide Concerto, has been unmasked as a modern forgery by the French violinist Henri Casadesus.
29. Friedrich Blume in *The Mozart Companion*, edited by H. C. Robbins Landon and Donald Mitchell, p. 215.
30. Wolfgang to Leopold Mozart, July 3, 1778, *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, W. A. Bauer, O. E. Deutsch and J. H. Eibl (Kassel, 1962–1975).
31. Brunetti's name does not appear on the list of members of the Salzburg Court Orchestra for 1775.

the violin, possibly because it would be easier to find a good situation if he were an accomplished violin player."[32]

Archbishop Colloredo had no patience with lengthy masses and he liked his concerts short as well. Long concerts, very long by our standards, were fashionable at that time: the musicales of an earlier Archbishop, Count Firmian, could last from 5 to 11. In his autobiography, Dittersdorf claims to have performed twelve violin concertos by Benda in one evening. Colloredo's concerts, however, lasted a little over an hour and included only four pieces: "A symphony, a song, another symphony or a concerto, another song, and then *addio.*"[33] It is unlikely, therefore, that Mozart would have played more than one of his concertos during any one of these musical evenings. Perhaps in an effort to attract his employer's attention and gain his respect, the works became progressively more demanding.

These concertos demonstrate, however, an even more significant development than the rapid evolution of Mozart's violin technique. A great leap in musical stature appears between the second and the third of the five concertos. This development is all the more obvious because it occurs so suddenly within a single medium, the violin concerto. It is such a significant change in the level of Mozart's musical development that it must be considered an important breakthrough. This is not to say that the first two concertos, the ones in B-flat and D Major (K. 207 and K. 211) are inferior or mediocre works. They are admirable pieces that outshine any 18th century violin concerto since those of Johann Sebastian Bach, including the works of such preclassic or gallant composers as Tartini, Nardini, the Stamitzes, the Chevalier de St. Georges, Michael Haydn, Dittersdorf or Borghi and they are certainly equal if not superior to Franz Josef Haydn's three authenticated works in this idiom.

The three later concertos of the authentic set of five are of another level entirely. Beginning with the Concerto in G, K. 216, they are infused with the spirit and lyric style of the opera, Mozart's passion from an early age. The opening theme of this concerto was borrowed almost literally from Aminta's aria *"Aer tranquillo"* from *Il Re Pastore*, which Mozart wrote for Archduke Maximilian's visit to Salzburg in April of that year. As if inspired by the use of this theme from his own opera, from that time on Mozart's work is suffused with the spirit of *opera buffa*, its quick expressive shifts of attitudes, and its gestures of almost visual dramatic effect. The *bravura aria* style of the opening of the G Major Concerto is only the first example of this new trend. Consider for example the "rustic wedding" character of the *Strassburger* dance tune in the third movement, or the G minor *Andante* section, so evocative of the mood of the nocturnal serenade "Im Mohrenlande . . ." from *Abduction*. The expressive yearning of the *Andante Cantabile* in the Concerto No. 4 (K. 218) foreshadows Cherubino's *"Voi che sapete"* from *Figaro*, and the *Andante* in the finale is evocative in rhythm and tempo of *"Là ci darem la mano"* from *Don Giovanni*.

Mozart reached further back than *Il Re Pastore* for the "Turkish"[34] dance tune of the Fifth Concerto in A Major (K. 219). He took it from the ballet music *Le Gelosie del Seraglio* (K. 135a) he had written at age sixteen for his opera *Lucio Silla*, there in A major, here in A minor. The Serenade, Aria, and Duet from *Abduction*, *Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni*, were still in Mozart's future, but it was evident that these three concertos were something new and until that time unheard of for the violin. It was in these last three violin concertos that Mozart first developed a fortunate cross-fertilization between his instrumental and vocal

32. Jahn, loc. cit., Vol. 2, p. 152.
33. Leopold to Wolfgang Mozart, Sept. 17, 1778, in *Briefe*, loc. cit.
34. Professor Dénes Bartha, an authority on folk materials of pre-1820 Hungary, maintains that much of the exotic "Turkish" material used by Mozart and other Viennese masters was really Hungarian. According to Bartha, some of these were well known in Vienna after 1760, having been brought back from Transylvania and Hungary by composers such as Dittersdorf and the two Haydns. These exotic tunes are of the Hungarian *verbunkos* type. They originated with Hungarian musicians employed by Imperial recruiting officers to help ensnare young Hungarian peasants into signing up for the Austrian army. The confusion of the Viennese was understandable since not long before, these areas had been under Ottoman rule.

styles. From that time on, he sang with this voice, "the voice of Manzuoli," in everything he wrote.

Concertos Faciles, easy concertos, was the title Johann André used on the title page of his first edition of the concertos, perhaps to make them seem more accessible to the dilettante clientele. To be sure, that title is somewhat misleading. True, there are few demands of spectacular virtuosity of the kind that concertos by Locatelli, St. Georges, or Lolli made on the soloist. Bariolage and other bowing effects keep a low profile. There are some difficult passages for the left hand, but none of the scurrying all over the fingerboard that remained the trademark of the "virtuoso" violin concerto, from well before Mozart almost to our day. Still, the demands Mozart makes on expressive forces, calling on the instrumentalist to perform in this new, vocal style, coupled with an increasingly violinistic flair, place them in a class of difficulty all their own. They pose a different challenge for the violinist, even today, when technical prowess is taken for granted. When Alfred Einstein said of the concertos, "they must have made Paganini smile,"[35] he was missing the point. Perhaps it is necessary to play these works to appreciate the special demands they require of the performer.

To the violinist, these concertos reveal a hand thoroughly at ease with the instrument. Indeed, this was a time when Mozart could perform on the violin at a moment's notice. In August of 1773, at a church service and banquet of Theatin monks, when the organ was unavailable for the program as planned, Wolfgang took the violin from concertmaster Teyler's hand and proceeded to play a concerto without any preparation, astonishing even his father.[36]

Some Mozart scholars suggested that violin playing was tiresome to Mozart and that he only practiced out of a sense of duty and obedience to his father. It is certainly possible that Mozart's daily practicing on the violin was due more to a certain amount of nagging by his father and the demands of a *Konzertmeister*'s position than a real love for the instrument. However, there is no evidence that Mozart had an aversion to the violin. While he did express a dislike for other instruments, such as the flute and the trumpet, on the contrary, the violin often seems to have served Mozart as an expression of his most exuberant self. He wrote to his father, "I played as if I were the first violinist in Europe. . . . They all stared."[37] (The piece was Mozart's *Divertimento* in B-flat, K. 287.) He again wrote to his father later that month, "I played Vanhal's violin concerto in B-flat, to general *applauso* [sic]. . . . In the evening after supper I played my Strassburg concerto. It went like oil. Everyone praised the beautiful pure tone."[38] Sometimes, when the violin served as an outlet for his exuberance, it caused Mozart to overstep conventional bounds of decorum. Leopold wrote: "You took up a violin and danced about and played so that people (Janitsch and Reicha) described you . . . as a merry, high-spirited and brainless fellow. . . ."[39]

Mozart's specific mention of the Vanhal concerto is a fortunate exception; most of the works by other composers that he played on the violin may never be identified. There is an interesting case of mistaken identification connected with one of his own concertos, which he nicknamed the "Strassburger." Expert opinion as to which of his five concertos he referred to by that nickname has varied from that of Otto Jahn (who hesitated between No. 5 in A and No. 3 in G) to that of Saint-Foix, Abert, Blume, and Alfred Einstein, all of whom opted for the No. 4 in D. That it did find its true identity at last is attributable to a combination of luck and some expert musicological sleuthing by Professor Dénes Bartha, who identified it in 1956 beyond any

35. Einstein, loc. cit., p. 279.
36. Leopold Mozart to his wife, Aug. 12, 1773, in Briefe, loc. cit.
37. Wolfgang to Leopold Mozart, Oct. 6, 1777, op. cit.
38. Wolfgang to Leopold Mozart, Oct. 24, 1777, op. cit.
39. Leopold to Wolfgang Mozart, Feb. 11–12, 1778, op. cit.

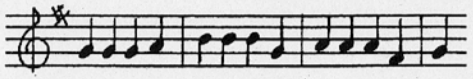
doubt as the Concerto No. 3 in G Major (K. 216).[40] Another misunderstanding concerns Viotti's Violin Concerto No. 16 in E Minor which Mozart conducted in Vienna. Mozart wrote a new *Andante* for this concerto and added two trumpets and tympany to its original orchestration. The existence of these parts in Mozart's handwriting confused scholars who then searched in vain for a "missing" Mozart concerto.

If in fact Mozart's motivation for writing the violin concertos was spawned by the need to impress Archbishop Colloredo, in reality that task was hopeless from the start. The differences in *Weltanschauung* between Colloredo and the Mozarts were too great for any accommodation. The Mozarts' next request in August of 1777 to go on tour was answered by the Archbishop by threatening to dismiss them both from his service. But Salzburg was becoming too small for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, even without the unsympathetic attitude of his employer. While Leopold, with difficulty, managed to hold on to his job, the only security the family had, Wolfgang resigned as *Konzertmeister* so that he could once again seek recognition abroad. It was the first time he was to travel without his father. While Leopold stayed behind with his daughter Nannerl, his wife was to travel with Wolfgang as Leopold's replacement. For her it was to be a fatal journey.

West of the Rhine, in Paris and London, there were musicians who were independent of servitude to any court. In Paris, two orchestras, the *Concerts Spirituels* and the *Concerts des Amateurs*, were operating under royal charter, but with public support. There, musicians such as Corrette, Gossec, Grétry, and St. Georges lived and worked free of the demands and humiliations of courtly service. London was perhaps even more attractive for musicians than Paris. Contrary to Austria, Germany, and Italy, there G. F. Handel, J. C. Bach, and later Franz Josef Haydn had brilliant careers with public concerts as their sole support.[41] "Off with you to Paris! . . . From Paris the name and fame of a man of great talent resounds throughout the world. . . ."[42] wrote Leopold to his son, who was tarrying in Mannheim long after it became apparent that there would be no position offered to him at the musically excellent court of Leopold, the Elector of Bavaria. Leopold Mozart's frustration at not being in immediate charge of Wolfgang's career on this journey affords a rare insight into this famous father-and-son relationship. Their correspondence is especially revealing when Leopold writes ". . . so you have not been practicing the violin at all while you stayed in Munich? . . . I would be very sorry if that were so . . . "[43] and a month later, "Your violin hangs on its nail, of that I am pretty sure."[44] Once again, Leopold was showing his acute sensitivity not only as a father but also as the fine teacher that he was. (NB. Mozart was 22 at the time.)

Paris was not as hospitable as Mozart remembered it from his days as a child wonder. Baron von Grimm, who had been their friend and mentor when the Mozart family was welcome even at the royal dining table in Versailles, was now a busy connoisseur, deeply embroiled in the fashionable "hot war" of Italian versus French opera. In Paris, the freelance composer's lot was

40. Professor Dénes Bartha read a paper to the *Colloques Internationales du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* in Paris as his contribution to the 200th anniversary year of Mozart's birth. Unconvinced by the arbitrary designation by his fellow musicologists of the Concerto No. 4 in D (K. 218) as the "Strassburger" concerto, Bartha had given up the search for proof for or against this allegation. Then, in the 1950's, the Hungarian government charged Bartha with the task of cataloguing a vast collection of Hungarian tunes assembled by one Ádám Horváth between 1780 and 1810. One of these songs, No. 27, attracted Bartha's attention. It was sent by Horváth to a fellow collector with a letter dated May 13, 1789. It contained the following sentence: "I am sending you my poem set to the tune of the 'Strassburger.'" It went:



The search was over. Subsequently Bartha found similar tunes in other Hungarian collections, bearing the name "Strassburger."

41. Any royal appointments they held were comparable to our government grants and afforded considerable freedom.
42. Leopold to Wolfgang Mozart, Feb. 11–12, 1778.
43. Leopold to Wolfgang Mozart, Oct. 19, 1777, op. cit.
44. Leopold to Wolfgang Mozart, Nov. 27, 1777, op. cit.

an undignified, tiresome search for pupils between sparse commissions. The one bright event was the success of the symphony Mozart wrote for the *Concerts Spirituels* (D Major "Paris," K. 297). Having been exposed to the excellent discipline of the Mannheim orchestra, Mozart found the French unjustifiably pompous about their famous *premier coup d'archet*. After the first rehearsal, he was desperate enough about the sloppy playing to write his father: "At last I made up my mind to go [to the concert] determined that if my symphony went as badly as it did at the rehearsal, I would certainly make my way into the orchestra, snatch the fiddle out of the hands of Lahoussaye, the first violin, and conduct it myself."[45] In spite of Leopold's fears, in Paris Mozart was still in fine form as a violinist.

The success of his symphony (Wolfgang happily writes of applause, not only between movements, but also at salient points during the actual playing) was not enough to relieve Mozart's unhappiness in Paris. He wrote to his father, "My life here . . . is totally opposed to my spirit, inclination, knowledge, and sympathies,"[46] and to Fridolin Weber, father of his future wife, Mozart complained, "You have no idea what a dreadful time I am having here."[47]

The only prospect Mozart had, the tentative offer of a position as court organist at Versailles for 83 *louis d'or*, less than his former salary in Salzburg, was too meager for an expensive capital like Paris. Besides, according to Wolfgang, "whoever enters the King's service is forgotten in Paris."[48] However, that meager offer proved to be useful to Leopold. He used it to impress the Salzburgers and move them to offer Wolfgang an acceptable position at home. Guilt and remorse about the death of his mother, hardly mitigated by his father's references to her "sacrifice," gave Wolfgang little choice but to accept the offer from Salzburg. There was, however, a condition to his return to Salzburg Mozart wanted to bring to his father's attention: "There is one thing more I must settle about Salzburg, and that is that I shall not be kept to the violin as I used to be. I will no longer be a fiddler. I want to conduct from the clavier and accompany arias."[49] Leopold, anxious for Wolfgang to accept, reassured him: "Now you are *Konzertmeister* and Court Organist, and your main duty will be to accompany at the clavier." But later Leopold returned to this obviously sensitive subject:

> As connoisseur you will not consider it beneath you to play the violin in the first symphony any more than does the Archbishop himself and also the courtiers who play with us. You would surely not deny Michael Haydn his achievements in music? Is he, a *Konzertmeister*, considered a court violist because he plays the viola in the chamber music concerts? . . . and I wager, that rather than let your own compositions be bungled, you will take part in the performance. It does not follow, however, that you will be regarded as a mere fiddler.[50]

Back in Salzburg, servitude must have seemed even more burdensome to Mozart after his stay in Paris, a city on the verge of a great social upheaval. The anomaly of his social position in Austria was added to the memory of his defeat in Paris. Whether he consented to play the violin in the first symphony alongside the Archbishop and his courtiers is not known, but he did produce one of his masterpieces, the *Sinfonia Concertante* in E-flat Major (K. 364) during this period. This double concerto for violin and viola is a work that ranks with Mozart's greatest compositions, especially in the touchingly personal slow movement. The written-out cadenzas are unique in his writing for strings. It was probably Mozart and his father, who played the work for the first time, and the idea of heightening the edge of the viola

45. Wolfgang to Leopold Mozart, July 13, 1778, op. cit.
46. Wolfgang to Leopold Mozart, July 18, 1778, op. cit.
47. Wolfgang to Fridolin Weber, July 29, 1778, op. cit.
48. Wolfgang to Leopold Mozart, July 3, 1778, op. cit.
48. Wolfgang to Leopold Mozart, July 3, 1778, op. cit.
49. Wolfgang to Leopold Mozart, Sept. 11, 1778, op. cit.
50. Leopold to Wolfgang Mozart, Sept. 24, 1778, op. cit.

sound by tuning the instrument up one-half step in pitch (the viola part is written in D) is a device pointing to Wolfgang as the violist.

Before the Paris trip, probably in 1776 or 1777, Mozart had written two concerto movements for Brunetti, his successor as court *Konzertmeister*. Brunetti asked for Mozart to replace the last movement of the first concerto and the slow movement of the fifth, (K. 219), which Brunetti considered "too studied."[51] In the spring of 1781 in Vienna with the Archbishop and his court, Mozart wrote his father:

> Today, for I am writing at 11 o'clock at night, we had a concert where three of my pieces were played, new ones of course, a rondo for Brunetti [and] a sonata with violin accompaniment for myself, which I composed last night between 11 and 12 (but in order to be able to finish it I only wrote out the accompaniment for Brunetti but I retained my own part in my head). . . [52]

The piece was the Rondo in C (K. 373), and the occasion was Colloredo's father's birthday that was celebrated just before Mozart brought about his jarring dismissal from Colloredo's service.

Mozart's separation from the Archbishop's court and all that it stood for became an irretrievable fact on May 9, 1781. Never again would Mozart have to be a "court fiddler." In fact from this point on, there are no more documented references to his playing the violin. Here in Vienna he felt he could at last obtain the freedom and independence he failed to achieve in Paris. He was in demand as a pianist. He organized subscription concerts,the *Mehlgrube* concert series which was clearly modeled on the *Concerts des Amateurs* in Paris. And he was writing operas. When he played chamber music, he would play the viola. We know of one occasion at least when Mozart performed on the viola in public. In a letter to his wife Constanze, he mentions playing his *Divertimento* (string trio, K. 563) in Dresden with cellist Kraft and violinist Teyber "quite decently."[53] His father Leopold wrote in January 1785, ". . . last Saturday he [Wolfgang] performed six quartets for his dear friend Haydn,"[54] and in April of 1786 during Leopold's visit with his son and daughter-in-law in Vienna, the Mozarts played at Baron Wetzlar's house.[55] (Did Wolfgang take up the violin then, if only to please his father?) The same year, 1786, Michael Kelly, the *buffo* from Ireland, wrote in his *Reminiscences:*

> Storace gave a quartet party to his friends. The players were tolerable; not one of them excelled on the instrument he played, but there was a little science among them which I dare say will be acknowledged when I name them:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | The First Violin | Haydn |
> | The Second Violin | Baron Dittersdorf |
> | The Violoncello | Vanhal |
> | The Tenor [viola] | Mozart |
>
> . . . I was there, and a greater treat, or a more remarkable one, cannot be imagined.[56]

Mozart's first published works were clavier sonatas with violin, among the first of their species in German speaking countries, and his last serious compositions for the violin were three great violin and piano sonatas. (A fourth, the very last of his violin works, a sonata *"für Anfänger*, for beginners, is a self-deprecating spoof of his own style.) It was Mozart who gave this combination its final stature. The Sonata in B-flat (K. 454) was written for the violinist Regina Strinasacchi. Mozart played the unwritten piano part from memory, as he had done before with the G Major Sonata for Brunetti. In the third, the Sonata in A

51. Letters, etc., Oct. 9, 1777.
52. Wolfgang to Leopold Mozart, April 8, 1781, op. cit.
53. Wolfgang Mozart to his wife, Apr. 16, 1789, op. cit.
54. Leopold Mozart to his daughter, Jan. 22, 1785, op. cit.
55. Schenk, loc. cit., p. 357.
56. Deutsch, loc. cit., p. 532.

Major (K. 526), written just before *Don Giovanni*, Mozart reached back to the contrapuntal style of the Baroque. This grand gesture was one result of his involvement with Baron von Swieten's concert series, which renewed Mozart's interest in the Baroque during this last period of his life.

From his first published works to compositions of the last period of his life, Mozart was closely involved with the violin. With the exception of the Rondo in B-flat (K. 269), the Adagio in E (K. 261) and the Rondo in C (K. 373), his five violin concertos stand as Mozart's only surviving authentic works for the solo violin.[57]

The fact that as a performer, Mozart suddenly turned his back on the instrument his father considered so important for him is best demonstrated by the official inventory of Mozart's effects at the time of his death. This document,[58] listing every possession in the apartment of the deceased including three spoons, his linen and of course Mozart's library of music as well as his instruments, mentions:

1 forte piano with pedal	80 fl.
1 viola in case	4 fl.

but no violin. That indeed had been "hung on its nail" some time ago.

Gabriel Banat
Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1986

57. From the *Andante* in A (K. 470) only an incipit of four measures in Mozart's thematic catalog survives. It was written in 1785 as a replacement for a movement in Viotti's Sixteenth Concerto. Some sketches of a Concerto in E-flat, started and abandoned, were casually tossed by Mozart to the Munich violinist Johann Friedrich Eck, who then manufactured a concerto (K. 268) that was widely accepted as an original until recently. See Walter Lebermann, Mozart-Eck-André Report on the E-flat Concerto, in *Musikforschung*, 31 (1978). A concerto in D major known as the "Adelaide" and another, K. 271a, also in D major, are not by Mozart.

58. Deutsch loc. cit., p. 586.