

## ***MOZART'S DRAMATURGY AND FORM\****

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We started the analysis of Mozart's instrumental dramaturgy from a global perception of the phenomenon, which can be summed up in the following three ideas:

1. The existence of multiple connections between theatrical dramaturgy and Mozart's instrumental genres is deeply rooted in the conscience of exegetes, performers and cultivated music lovers. The idea is generally accepted, but the compositional techniques involved are too little known.
2. Another phenomenon, still under-researched, yet assumed by analysts, is the necessity to relate Mozart's sonorous style to the discourse techniques, to the norms of musical rhetoric as they were theorized by Johann Mattheson less than two decades before Mozart's birth.
3. An analysis of the form shows that the reality of Mozart's architectonic structure offers frequent atypical situations, exceptions, or breaches of the norm that can hardly be explained only by principles of form and are usually brushed off with syntagms like *the mystery of creation, the composer's whims, Mozart's inexhaustible fantasy*.

We therefore started from the intuition that Mozart's instrumental compositional style can only be analyzed in terms of the following three essential phenomena: dramaturgy, discourse and form. In other words, the coherence and proportionality, the degree of

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eloquence and the figures of speech preferred, the individualization of ideas and the parameters for the configuration of the dramaturgical suggestion.

As a mere stage in a longer research process, this paper intends to draw attention to a few aspects of instrumental theatricality, reflecting the following ideas, in succession: the main theme or character, the episodic themes or characters, the abandonment of theatricality or the single theme, the metamorphosis of the idea or the hidden facet of the character, the inner drama or the monothematic development. More precisely, by approaching this issue from a musical analysis perspective, we will attempt a dramaturgical or discursive-rhetorical interpretation of the atypical formal elements – discovered in piano sonatas, quartets and trios composed by Mozart beginning in 1785.

### **The main theme or character**

Quite often, the Mozartian theme does not appear like an impeccably articulated idea, but rather like a vivid and powerful character, with a particular imperfect and contradictory structure.

The hero's inner dynamism is most frequently suggested by means of morphological asymmetry. Having discursive motivations – the opening of parentheses that require new actions of confirmation, culmination and resolution, with a harmonic-functional structural basis – the association of unequal segments creates relief and draws attention.

We will first refer to the main theme of the sonata *Allegro* in the first movement of the *String Quartet K.V. 465 (Dissonance)*, a double period (8+14bars). **(Ex.1)** The amplification of the consequent incision results from the deviation of the harmonic trajectory, first toward the subdominant, requesting an emphasis – thus is created the internal extension bar – and then, following a cadence on the 4th degree – an external extension, reinforced by a cadential complement. The process of motif evolution emphasizes these deviation moments. Initially having a firm and interrogative contour and an individualized rhythmic construction, the motif enters into a process of dissolution through the addition of figures of equal value with rotating repetitions ( $\alpha_1$ ,  $\alpha_2$ ), to be replaced toward the end of the theme with episodic formulas fulfilling a culminative or conclusive function. So far, nothing new. In the final part, however, the motif is presented, surprisingly, under a new form, with a descending line, as a primary answer to the previous interrogations. Its occurrence after the perfect cadence on the tonic and the melodic finale on the third of the chord changes, in fact, even the meaning of the end – that of a primary answer and of a provisional finale..

Ex. 1: String Quartet K.V. 46, Part I, Allegro

Allegro. a

Do I

α

α'

α1

α2

V

Do I

Fa V I V I largire interioara

Detailed description: This system contains three systems of musical notation. The first system has a treble clef staff with notes and rests, and a bass clef staff with rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *p* and *α*. The second system continues the notation with dynamics *α1* and *α2*. The third system features more complex rhythmic patterns with dynamics *p* and *sf*. At the bottom, there are chordal indications: Do I, Fa V, I, V, I, and the instruction 'largire interioara'.

largire exterioroara

complement cadential

*cresc.*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*p*

Sol V I II V I<sub>6</sub> II V

Do V (VI)

Punte

*f*

*sf*

*p*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

Detailed description: This system contains three systems of musical notation. The first system has a treble clef staff with notes and rests, and a bass clef staff with rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *p* and *cresc.*. The second system continues the notation with dynamics *p* and *cresc.*. The third system features more complex rhythmic patterns with dynamics *p* and *cresc.*. At the bottom, there are chordal indications: Sol V, I, II, V, I<sub>6</sub>, II, V, Do V, (VI), and Punte. There are also instructions for 'largire exterioroara' and 'complement cadential'.

A similar case occurs in the structure of the main idea, in the first movement of the *Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello in E Major, KV 542 (Ex. 2)*.

This time, the melody has a continuous aspect, with the slight rhythmic differentiation requiring a fine texture of motivic cells which go almost unnoticed when first presented. Their reinforcement by varied repetition within the space of certain internal extension segments, in the second period, occurs as a requisite of eloquence and of dramaturgic conspicuousness. New expressive nuances will thus emerge: a decorative character derived from the ornamental variation of the *z* cell in the first extension segment, or a dramatic note brought by the chromatic modulations and the deviation of the harmonic trajectory toward the relative minor – in the second internal extension. The culminative conclusion in the external extension thus becomes a requisite of discursive logic. Let us not forget the enrichment through timbres, registers and dynamic writing brought by the string instruments, which intervene only in the consequent period.

The problem of interpreting and circumscribing this theme is still open, for a new idea follows which, at a quick glance, could be interpreted as a bridge theme. Nonetheless, its stable construction and its morphological and tonal static character give it the function of conclusion of the main theme. It is only in the last bars that, by a sudden turn of the situation – a chromatic modulation through a tonal leap which, in the context of the existing silence, comes as a real shock – the musical segment also asserts its transitive function.

Ex. 2: Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello in E Major, KV 542, Part I, Allegro

### 5. Trio in E

für Klavier, Violine und Violoncello

KV 542

A

Allegro

Violino

Violoncello

Pianoforte

4m

4m

4m

Allegro

f

p

f

p

f

p

x

y

yv

xi

xlv

z

Mi I f

V

I

II<sub>6</sub>

I<sub>6</sub>

11

f

p

f

p

f

p

y

II<sub>6</sub>

I<sub>6</sub>

IV<sub>6</sub>

V

I

19

lărgire interioară

2 m

II<sub>6</sub>

I<sub>6</sub>

(VI 3#) II

(V)

I

25

lărgire interioară

lărgire exterioară

Mi (VI)

IV<sup>#</sup><sub>7</sub>

I<sub>4</sub>

V<sup>#</sup>

VI

Si VII

do # VII

I

34 concluzie=tema punții

p

4m

4m

I p

42

complement cadential

p

f

Mi I V I I III-3#<sup>f</sup>  
do# V7

48

B1 dolce

p

dolce

do# 1q  
Si II IV V I

55

p

This example leads to the second technique for creating a theme as a main character, namely the association of two contrasting periods within the area of the same idea, representing the complementary facets of the human nature.

It is known that in classical sonata, the secondary theme, presented as a thematic group, through a chain of periods, is defined by its tonality – the modulation to the dominant or relative key requiring an ample functional development. The theme also includes sonorous forms with discursive-rhetorical significance: as a rule, **B2** is the amplification and the culmination, while **B3** is the conclusion of the idea exposed in **B1**. There are also cases when secondary themes become individualized, but they never embody contrary expressions. A main theme structured as a thematic group is an entirely exceptional case, most often encountered in Mozart's works like the first movements of the *Sonata for Piano in F Major, KV 332*, *Sonata for Piano in C minor, KV 457*, *Sonata for Piano in B flat Major, KV 570*.

We will refer below to the last of these, as it is a simple and typical example. (**Ex. 3**). The two periods of the main thematic group contrast with each other in all respects: morphologically – a tripodal period versus a simple, square one –, motivically – fluent, phrase-motives in the former case, versus incisive, short ones in the latter. The level of eloquence derives from these aspects. The themes are linked only by tonality and by the simple, cadential harmonic functionality. But even here there is a nuance: **A1** adds a new harmonic color by interpolating the subdominant in the sequence of the functions. Consequently, the 2nd period does not simplify a previously exposed image, as a conclusive period would, but adds complementary aspects and thus completes the image of the character.

Ex. 3: Sonata for Piano in B flat Major, KV 570, Part I, Allegro

Musical score for the first movement of the Sonata for Piano in B-flat Major, KV 570, Part I, Allegro. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of eight systems of piano and bass staves. It includes performance markings such as "Allegro", "p" (piano), and "f" (forte). It also features structural labels like "A", "A1", "Tema punții", and "B1". Chord symbols are provided below the bass staff, including Mib V<sup>9</sup>, I, V<sup>9</sup>, I, do VII, I<sub>6</sub>, Fa I, Sib V<sub>2</sub>, Fa V, V, Do V, I, and Fa V. Rhythmic markings include "α 4m", "β 4m (3+1)", and "4m". Fingerings and articulations are indicated with numbers and slurs throughout the piece.

The rondo themes contain more frequent cases of association of several characters within the area of the same idea, as an alternative to the strophic principle that dominates and leads to closed forms, lacking in dynamism. Such an example occurs in the final movement of the *Sonata for Piano KV 457*. The association of the two ideas – an inner and delicate one, and an extroverted, conspicuous one –, reminds of the significance of the strophe-refrain dialogue. Here we have a refrain within a refrain. Repetition reinforces the meaning.

### **Episodic themes or characters**

The fact that Mozart's strategy of thematic invention arises from his stage instinct and experience results from the multiple melodic ideas caught in the flow of the development. The main character is surrounded by a true constellation of minor heroes.

An extreme example occurs in the first movement of the *Piano Sonata in F Major KV 547*, through the individualization of seven distinct profiles: the principal theme, the bridge theme, the secondary themes (**B1**, **B2**, **B3**), the conclusion theme, the development theme. (**Ex. 4**) The motifs, the writing and the harmonic implications differentiate these themes, while the usually symmetric morphologies give them stability. The common discursive functions can hardly find their place – each idea being reinforced and closed through repetition in the consequent phrase. The only dynamic moment is created by the conclusion theme. It is therefore by no accident that this is the only one treated in the development section.



4 B2 (4 + 5)

5 B3 (5m + 5m)

6 Tema conclusivă (4m + 4m + 4m) + 2 complementul cadențial

The musical score is written for piano and consists of six systems of staves. Each system contains a treble and bass staff. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and ornaments. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Dynamics like *sf* and *p* are used. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

7 Tema dezvoltării (8m + 8m)

Tema conclusivă în dezvoltare

A first conclusion can now be drawn. The dramaturgical dimension is not directly proportional with the number of characters. The stage is populated, but most of the characters are mere figurants, simple ornamental presences, watching the drama unfold.

### The abandonment of theatricality or the single theme

At the opposite pole is the construction of the sonata according to the monothematic principle, by infiltrating imitative polyphony in the structure of the homophonous discourse. This is one of Mozart's most outstanding contributions to the compositional technique. Let us see its implications on dramaturgy.

Already in the exposition, the main theme of the sonata form (the first movement of the *Piano Sonata KV 576*) is treated through *fugato* techniques, first in a consequent period, upon its first presentation, and then in the beginning of the secondary group – both moments being accomplished through conclusive ideas conceived as accompanied melodies. (Ex. 5) It is therefore obvious that the discursive function dominates the portraying one. Thus, the contrasting idea appears only toward the end of the exposition, in B3, after a long modulatory process prolonged with the help of the polyphonic technique. Although a second theme occurs, its only role is to color the expository segment, while in the development the emphasis falls again on the main theme and its polyphonic development.

Ex. 5: *Piano Sonata KV 576*, part I, *Allegro*

A (4m + 4m)  
Allegro  
(f) (stacc.) (p)  
Re

Av (4m + 4m)  
(p) (f)  
Re I

Tema conclusivă → Punte (4m + 4m + 3m)

Re I

Re I6 →

*(p)*

*(cresc.)*

*f*

Re I6

Re V

B1=Av(6m)

B2 (4m+4m) Tema conclusivă pentru B1

La

B3 (4m+5m+3m) Temă contrastantă

La

Concluzie (4m (+1))

X

### The metamorphosis of the idea or the hidden facet of the character

The metamorphosis of the character-idea is a dramaturgical solution that was seldom used by Mozart – a master of ornamental variation, expressing, in the spirit of rococo, the structuring level of tonal functionality. In a few moments, however, his musical and theatrical intuition works ahead of time, anticipating the Romantic thinking.

The *Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano* KV 542 contains several solutions of transformation of the idea. First, in the reprise of the first movement, the main theme is exposed in the homonymous minor key, with deformations of the harmonic trajectories and inherent morphological amplifications. (This procedure is very frequent in Beethoven, but here again, not in the primary theme area.) A powerful expressive effect is thus achieved.

A similar case occurs in the second movement – under the form of a variation-rondo, where the C couplet is created by modulating to the homonymous key, while also involving rhythmic-melodic transformations of the refrain-theme. In this case, the transformation over time and from a

distance assumes the realization of an evolution inside the B couplet, whose themes derive from the same idea, without being a variation thereof.

At the same time, in the exposition of the first movement, to which we return again (**ex. 6**), the secondary theme receives, upon its third statement, a new and profoundly contrasting coloratura. This is due, first, to its being introduced in the discourse by a (surprising) dramatic cadence, then, to the treatment it undergoes (imitative procedures) and, last but not least, to its underlying harmony: major-minor play, abrupt and precipitated evolution, determined by the chromatic modulations. The moment has an overwhelming theatrical effect. After the repeated statement of a simple, serene and symmetrical theme, we discover the hidden nature of a controversial and meandering character.

Ex. 6: Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano KV 542, part I, Allegro

63

*dolce*

*dolce* (6m+6m)

*dolce*

Si I V I

71

*f*

B1v

V VI Sol I IV I<sub>4</sub> V

78

*p* *cresc.* *f*

*p* *cresc.* *f*

*p* *cresc.* *f*

sol I I<sub>6</sub> mi VII I

Si IV V

85

*p*

V I *p*

### **The inner drama or the monothematic development**

Regarding the construction of the drama by developing the idea as a whole, we notice that Mozart does not create a real plot. The development sections treat a single idea. The other formulations that occur – themes of the exposition, new figural motifs – complete the image and create the dynamism, suggesting the evolving **atmosphere** of the moment. The external dialogue is replaced by disruptions and by abrupt and often broken evolutions, determined by a harmonic thinking that was quite advanced for the late half of the 18th century, as well as by the rhetorical interruptions.

In the first movement of the *Sonata KV 576 (ex. 7)*, the cadential motif of the exposition has the role of creating the necessary break. In no more than four bars the key shifts from A major to B flat major: a real turning stage! After the polyphonic-imitative development of the main theme and a harmonic evolution by leaps (from G minor to the dominant of B minor: Fa #), the arpeggiated motif of the beginning returns. At the two extremes of the development segment, this always differently harmonized motif creates light and shadow effects, a dim atmosphere – a static, floating structure –, artistic techniques that will eventually characterize the impressionist style.

Ex. 7: Sonata KV 576, part I, Allegro

Et.1

la Sib V I

← La M

sol

Et.2

sol mi VII 6<sub>4</sub> la V (Mi I) la I fa# VII 6<sub>4</sub>

si V (Fa#) si I

Et. 3

si V ————— Fa # fa #

*p*

*p* si I V <sup>5</sup> Si

mi Mi La Re V

*(cresc.)*

Repriza

*(p)*

*(p)*

The last example is the development of the final movement of the *String Quartet K.V. 465 (Dissonance)*. It is a dense development, built on dialogue techniques between two motifs that are related by mirror symmetry (the motifs are drawn from the themes of the exposition, which, in its turn, is non-conflictual), representing two facets of Mozart's himself. The ascending motif is continued melodically and developed over large sections, while the short, descending one evolves through continually interrupted and strangled segments. The polyphonic structure, the sonorous density, the extremely ambitious tonal palette (C minor – G-sharp minor), the rhetoric suspensions, the alternation of motifs, the culminative development in the second part, suggest, more than anywhere else, the state of a conflict, but this time, that of an inner conflict. It is Mozart's way of telling us that no matter how tense our relationship with the world may be, the tragedy is not there – the drama is within ourselves!

Ex. 8: String Quartet K.V. 465 (Dissonance), part IV, Finale

Et.1

$\alpha$  (din tema A)

do

*p*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

do V

Et.2

$\alpha$  Mib V  $\frac{6}{8}$

$\alpha 1$  (din B1)

Mib *p* fa VII I

Fa sib VII sol VII *f* mi V



Although in the *Dissonance* Quartet we have a typical case of semantic continuity – from the gloomy prologue, that unique Mozartian page of the false relationships, to the interrogations in the first two movements, and then to the whimsy and pathos in the minuet and trio, to the denseness of image development in the end, in an affirmative and victorious, but still responsible sense – in most of the works, the drama is not imposed through insistences and returns, but is rather a personal and thus unsolvable one. Therefore, all we can do is put on the mask of indifference, detachment and joviality, as Mozart does.

All of the aspects presented above – the theme as main character, the themes as minor characters, their evolution and transformation – require a diachronic study, to trace the evolution of Mozart's attitude towards the stage during his brief life, and of his conception of the world. They also require a statistical study to emphasize the frequency of these procedures, one that I would certainly be delighted to pursue.