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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: the Composer's First Steps*

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Abstract. The article is based on the materials of the authors' monograph's *Mozart i ego vremya* [*Mozart and His Time*] (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2015). At the focus of the authors' attention are the questions of the creative evolution of the genius at the earliest period of his compositional activities. The attempt is made to recreate the earliest stage of Mozart's mastery of composition, and the conditions of the formation of his compositional skills are disclosed. Characterization is made in the article of the notebook of harpsichord pieces presented by Leopold Mozart in 1759 to Nannerl on her name day, which, after the course of a year, became Mozart's favorite tutorial music book. Analysis is made of the father's notes concerning the son's first steps — in performance and composition. It is marked that during the first year of his compositional practice, Mozart achieved outstanding results, having traversed the path from completely immature pieces of an improvisatory type to professionally accomplished works that appeared at the confluence of his personal experience and his father's instructions. Special attention is placed on the Paris Sonatas (1763–1764) and the *London Sketchbook* (1764), as well as the chamber sonatas written in London (1764–1765) and The Hague (1766). By their example, the evolution of Mozart's early sonata technique is traced. The conclusion is arrived at that the great European tour completed the period of Wolfgang's study period in regard to the instrumental genres, and the young genius obtained compositional skills comparable with the experience of composition of the mature masters.

Keywords: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Leopold Mozart, Nannerl Notenbuch, Paris Sonatas, *London Sketchbook*, Mozart's creative process

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Introduction

One of the best-known stories regarding the unusually early appearance of Mozart's compositional genius belongs to the pen of Johann Andreas Schachtner, who wrote it down in 1792 at Nannerl's request. It pertains to a clavier concerto "composed" by Wolfgang at the age of four or five. To start with the grown ups present just laughed as he played the wads of notes and chords that made up the composition; but then, as Mozart's father started observing the opus of his son more attentively, he exclaimed with tears of joy: "Everything here is so perfect, all is laid out in accordance with the rules; it's only a pity that we cannot make use of it, the solo part is of such difficulty that not one person would be capable of playing it." [1, p. 8] This story was first published by Schlichtegroll and then is related over and over again by various biographers. Konstantin Sakva quite justly questioned the veracity of this story, and came to the conclusion that it was untrue. [2]

From Improvisation to Composition: Mozart's Early Pieces

Seemingly, this pretty tale is a mere invention of Schachtner, who was given to sentimental reminiscence in his dotage. The actual documents unmistakably refute

it. Wolfgang did not write down his first pieces until he was at least eight years old, and before that his father did this for him. The earliest authentic autograph belonging to Mozart's hand is of a harpsichord piece in *C major*, written in all probability in the first half of 1764. [3, p. 1; 4]¹

So what were his true beginnings? The much famed, surviving notebook of harpsichord pieces given to Nannerl in 1759 on her name-day² by Leopold Mozart became Wolfgang's primer when he started music lessons. It is hard to tell how many pieces it contained originally, and which of them were written into the notebook subsequently, as Nannerl grew up and made progress. The autograph as it has come down to us today is made up of 43 pieces of different kinds. The greater part of its "didactic repertoire" evidently was composed by Leopold, but there are also pieces by Georg Christoph Wagenseil, C.P.E. Bach and two lesser known composers — Johann Nikolaus Tischer and Johann Joachim Agrell. Certainly the quality of many of these pieces leaves much to be desired. It is probably right to assume that this formed part of Leopold's cunning didactic policy, something he more or less admitted to in his *Violin School*: "Here are the pieces for practice. The more distasteful they are the more am I pleased, for that is what

¹ The dating of Mozart's early pieces is an object of research by Wolfgang Plath. He was able to establish the precise date of the writing of the Minuet which has traditionally opened the chronology of Köchel's work catalogue. Though Nannerl's faulty later reminiscences this became known as Mozart's earliest work, attributed to him as a five-year old. Köchel suggested that Leopold helped his son put the piece together and write it down. [3, p. 1] Plath was able to demonstrate that Mozart's handwriting in the autograph actually related to a much later date of creation than that indicated by the 65 year-old Nannerl in 1815, ad namely 1764 and not 1761. See: [4].

² The Notebook had a truly dramatic destiny. Already after Mozart's death Nannerl unbound it and gave away various single pages as mementos. What was left of the autograph changed owners several times, until the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna (the sister of Tsar Alexander I) did not give it to the *Mozarteum* in 1864. Several pages have still not been found. The last discovery of two missing pages with Mozart's first compositional experiments was made in 1954. [2]

I intended to make them.” [5, p. 88] One must assume that he wanted a child to learn to play by reading the music in front of him, so as not to form the habit of playing by ear.

Yet one could hardly call any of the pieces in Nannerl’s notebook “distasteful.” Rather they are everyday routine practice pieces, that is to say music that does not belong to the high category of church music, opera, symphonies and quartets. Nevertheless the notebook contains the full arsenal of styles from the mid 18th century: dance, sung arias, the touching and sentimental, the military, the virtuoso, not to mention *Sturm und Drang* — perhaps the only style missing was the learned polyphonic.³ Leopold’s anthology exemplifies a small compendium of piano music from that period, where each piece, without being in the least bit primitive is distinguished by clarity of structure, which lends great importance in establishing the correct basis for a musical education.

The progression from simple to complex is extremely gradual in the Notebook, but at the same time, each piece examines a new problem — either through encountering some rhythmic pattern or a play of textures, or in presenting a new form or specific *genre*. The key signatures also become more complex; the simple Minuets (there are 19 of them in a row) give way to more virtuoso pieces, a March, a Polonaise, a Scherzo, Variations, and lastly Sonata *Allegri*. On certain pages Leopold added technical exercises (based on arpeggios, chords, and trills), a table of intervals and three short examples of modulations using ground-bass techniques (incidentally the last of these is quite complex, a modulation from *C major* to *A major*). From a methodological

point of view, one can say that Leopold compiled an impeccable exercise book.

But once Wolfgang started his music studies Leopold’s attention was exclusively focused on his son’s progress. *Frühester Mozart* [6]⁴ — is how German musicologists define this unique early period of Mozart’s biography, which has no parallel with that of any other great composer. Beethoven wrote his first compositions at the age of 11–12, Schubert — at 14. Maybe only Prokofiev had similarly early beginnings, having composed his first piece at just over the age of 5 (it was written down by his Mother). In both Mozart’s and Prokofiev’s cases, it was thanks to their parents that their early written experiments were preserved.

Leopold also noted down his son’s first steps in music in Nannerl’s Notebook—to start with all that concerned his playing, then his compositions. It is not clear for what reason, but for a considerable amount of time the small pieces composed by Wolfgang were recorded, at least until 1764 — in the blank pages which divided the various groups of compositions in the notebook. The chronology is not always obvious, as his pieces are scattered throughout the book, but we can gain an overall picture from the table on next page.

What can be said about this list? Firstly that Wolfgang learnt pieces with extraordinary speed, sometimes literally within half an hour. Leopold must have felt sufficient pride in this achievement to record it directly into the Notebook — just as many loving parents mark their child’s rate of growth on a door jamb. Many years later Nannerl recalled that her brother could memorise pieces with great facility, and “played them faultlessly, in a pleasant manner and keeping the time

³ In speaking of “styles” we use it in the sense which it was used in the 18th century.

⁴ “The earliest Mozart”. This expression was used for the first time by Dent and Valentin.

No.	Date	Titles	Wolfgang's compositions	Leopold's Comments
8	Before 27.01.1761	Minuet in F		Wolfgangerl (Little Wolfgang) learnt this Minuet when he was four years old
19	Before 27.01.1761	Minuet in F		And Wolfgangerl also learnt this Minuet when he was four
41	Before 27.01.1761	Allegro in G		Wolfgangerl learnt this Allegro at the age of 4
31	24.01.1761	Wagenseil Scherzo in C		Wolfgangerl learnt this piece on January 24, 1761, three days before his 5th birthday, between 9.00 and 9.30 in the evening
11	26.01.1761	Minuet in F		Wolfgangerl mastered this Minuet and trio in just half an hour, at 9.30 pm on 26 January 1761, one day before his birthday
22	04.02.1761	March in F		Wolfgangerl learnt this March on February 4th 1761
53– 54	02–04.1761		KV 1a, b (here and below Leopold's hand)	A pieces by Wolfgangerl composed in the first 3 months after his fifth birthday
32	06.02.1761	Scherzo in F		Wolfgangerl learnt this piece on 6 February 1761
55	Around 11.12.1761		KV 1c	
56	16.12.1761	Minuet	KV 1d	
58	01.1762	Minuet in F	KV 2, Salzburg	
59	04.03.1762	Allegro in B	KV 3, Salzburg	
49	11.05.1762	Minuet in F	KV 4a, Salzburg	
61	05.07.1762	Minuet in F	KV 5, Salzburg	
48	16.07.1762	Minuet in F	KV 6, Salzburg	
46	14.10.1763	Allegro in C	KV 6, Brussels	
25	10.1763	Andante in F	KV 6, Brussels	
26	10.1763	Minuet in C	KV 6, Brussels	
24	21.11.1763	Allegro in B	KV 8, Paris	
47	30.11.1763	Minuet in D	KV 7, Paris	
62	1764	Minuet in G	KV 1/1e (this Minuet was the first Mozart's piece written in his own hand)	
20	1764		KV 9a/5a	
63	1764	Minuet in C	KV 1f	
64	1764		KV 9b/5b	

with great precision.” [7, p. 186]⁵ In addition he would practice at a time when most children are being put to bed, after 9 o’clock in the evening. It is clear that the Mozart household, although noted for its orderliness, was far from being ruled by arbitrary precepts, or at least in anything that concerned Wolfgang. Given his passionate love of music, practice time could equally be regarded for him as a kind of game, a reward, a holiday, something which afforded him unique pleasure.

Evidently Leopold, while proud of his son’s progress as a performer, was no less struck by the early awakening of his compositional gifts. He no longer notes down the keyboard pieces that his son has been learning, but turns his attention on dating the compositions. And furthermore, if Leopold writes the affectionate and diminutive form, *Wolfgangerl* beside his first compositional experiments, then he records in far more official style the *Allegro KV 1c*, dated 11th December 1761, as the work of “Sgr. Wolfgango Mozart,” although he was but a five year old boy. Yet obviously his son’s status has already changed in Leopold’s perceptions. Just a month later, he took his children to Munich for three weeks, where they were received at the court of Maximilian III Joseph. In all probability he was trying out the measure of a grown-up name in Italian style, so as to heighten

the impression that Wolfgang’s young age and extraordinary abilities would make, and which — if only symbolically — were commensurate with those of Italian court musicians.

The attempt to recreate the initial stage of Wolfgang’s composition studies raises two pertinent questions. First, what was the relationship of “his own” work to that from the “outside” world? What were the connections between Mozart’s first compositional experiments and the music which he almost certainly played by other composers. It is clear that his repertoire was not restricted just to those pieces that Leopold had noted, although we can only be certain that he played the pieces listed earlier. And secondly — how were Mozart’s compositional skills formed?

Konrad Küster devoted about a third of his voluminous monograph to Wolfgang’s early works: in response to the first question he denies any obvious similarity; if one speaks about thematic relationships then he is right of course. [8] It was only later that Mozart started actively absorbing the melodic intonations of other composers. Nevertheless certain inter-connections are already evident. His second composition, a piece in *C major* of 12 bars duration (KV 1b) hangs together by using several small cell-motives, which relate to different textures (Example No. 1).

Example No. 1

W. A. Mozart. *KV 1b*

⁵ Letter from Nannerl to Schlichtegroll. April 1792.

It cannot be excluded that the bravura cadential passage is influenced by the concluding bars of the *March No. 22* (Example No. 2),

Example No. 2

Nannerl's Notebook. *March No. 22*

and the effective *martellatto* in the first three bars uses a similar technique to that found in the *Allegro in G major No. 41* (Example No. 3).

The beginning of the piece is almost identical to the beginning of the *Marcia No. 23*. (Even if Leopold did not record that his son learnt it, the boy could easily have known it.) Thus the pieces Wolfgang learnt had more than an indirect influence on his own composition. And indeed it would have been surprising if, when improvising he did not start experimenting with the diverse techniques, genres and styles that he had absorbed in his piano studies. In general, all of Wolfgang's early pieces are a confirmation of his experience as a performer.

His development in the context of his early compositional experience is a more complex issue, since we have to take into account the quality of the material. All the more because in the very earliest Mozart, we are dealing with a child gifted with a unique and extraordinary musical talent. During the 1761–1764 period, not only the fact that he started composing so early, but the incredible speed and intensity of his progress testify to Mozart's extraordinary

gifts. His early "opuses" can be divided in three groups: 9 small pieces and minuets, composed in Salzburg (1761–1762); sonata movements, written in Brussels and Paris during his first extended concert tour (1763), and 4 pieces, conjecturally dated 1764.

The initial stage can be viewed as a transition from improvisation to composition. Not one analyst has a sympathetic word for the first piece, with its varying structure and its descending melodic line over a range of two octaves. In it, and also in the KV 1b, the only visible features of formed structure can be found in the thematic cell and cadential resolution (Küstner). In addition we should note an intuitive search for motivic variation (Example No. 1).

On the other hand, the two pieces written down in December 1761 are a completely different matter! In them Wolfgang (most probably, not without some help from Leopold) uses with great assurance the components of small binary form in one case with, and the other without recapitulation. Here everything is in its right place: the first period, the development section, and the repeat signs which divide one part from the other, and there is even a modulation. It is true that the development is very simple, consisting mainly of a literal repetition of the motives and a greater definition of harmony through the use of an interrupted cadence to join the two identical phrases in the concluding section of the *Minuet KV 1d*. This detail hardly merits mention, but for the fact that the interrupted cadence then became a favourite device of Mozart's, which he used persistently in this initial period (i.e. in KV 3),

Example No. 3

Nannerl's Notebook. *Allegro No. 41*

and also in the recapitulation (i.e. in KV 2, 5, *Minuet KV 6*). It is of special interest since this particular harmonic cadence is not to be encountered even once in any of the pieces by the other composers in Nannerl's Notebook, neither in the Minuets nor in the sonata *Allegros*. One might surmise that Leopold gave a theoretic explanation of an interrupted cadence to the boy — just as he will have in the ground-bass exercises when he explained modulation. Undoubtedly it was due to his father's pedagogical efforts that Wolfgang mastered these techniques.

Between January and July 1762 Wolfgang composed five more pieces in Salzburg. He continued enriching his fund of compositional skills. The chief innovation lay in his predilection for sequences, something which evidently appealed to the young composer's taste; indeed he used nothing else

but sequences in his development sections. Three of these pieces can be perceived as scholastic exercises, set by Leopold: KV 2, KV 5, and the Minuet from the *Sonata Cycle KV 6* are all written using the same bass. The boy's performing skills were evidently well developed, judging by the inventiveness and diversity of the instrumental texture, with its marked virtuosity and brilliance. And apart from these pedagogical indications, perhaps the most important innovation of all lay in the concept that the smallest details can serve as material that gives rise to a subsequent play of motifs, a typical feature of Mozart's piano music.

In the charming *Allegro in B flat major, KV 3* (Example No. 4), the first period already boasts a small constructive element (6+6), resulting in the following configuration with the various motives: *abb acc*.

Example No. 4

W. A. Mozart. *Allegro KV 3*

Allegro

The recapitulation is resolved most ingeniously through reducing the repetition of the thematic motives, producing a chain of *abb cc* (without the middle repeat of the a). Altogether this piece has a freshness that is lacking in the analogous *Minuet* written by Mozart's father (No. 17 in the same Notebook, see Example No. 5)!

What Leopold achieved through observation of the rules is transformed by the five-year old Wolfgang into the object of a game. Later, in the first *Minuet* written in the boys' own hand (KV 1/1e, probably dating from 1764) Mozart showed even greater originality. He leaves untouched the quadrilateral structures of the dance, but imposes jaunty *hemiola*

on the metric periodic structure which are at variance with the unhurried pace of the bass-line, thereby achieving an effect of daring (Example No. 6).

Such playful metric and rhythmic effects are not to be found in a single one of the two dozen minuets written by other composers, which Wolfgang could have known from his sister's Notebook.

In his first year as a composer, Mozart attained quite outstanding results, from his initial immature improvisatory pieces, (a kind of "groping in the dark"), to fully professional and independent pieces, built on his own experience and his father's instructions. Leopold's approval can be deduced from

Example No. 5

Nannerl's Notebook. *Minuet No. 17*

Example No. 6

W. A. Mozart. *Minuet KV 1/1e*

the use of the “didactic” *Minuet KV 6* (from the group of pieces composed on the same bass line) as a *Trio* in his own large-scale *Serenade in D major*. Such practical recognition was undoubtedly a source of pride for both father and son.⁶

The First Attempts at Mastering the Sonata Genre

The next stage (1763/64) in Mozart’s development saw mastery of sonata form as it existed in the mid 18th century, used initially in the keyboard works (written for Wolfgang’s own instrument), and then in arrangements for harpsichord accompanied by violin. And it was under such a designated title, no longer familiar to today’s musicians, that the edition of these four sonatas appeared, published in Paris by Leopold at his own expense. The first collection (*Sonatas KV 6* and 7) had a dedication to Princess Victorie, daughter of the French king, by “the seven-year old composer” (his father had hastened to add his age on the title page). Mozart himself transmitted the works to the Princess at Versailles. Upon Melchior Grimm’s advice, the second collection (KV 8, 9) was dedicated to the Countess de Tessé, a Lady in Waiting to Princess Maria Josepha of Saxony, to whom the Mozart family had been presented. The four sonatas represent a kind of cross-roads, where the pupil is in many cases still evident — particularly in those movements that had been written earlier, back in early 1763 in the version for keyboard that Leopold had recorded in Nannerl’s notebook. The greatest quantity of errors occur in the *Sonata Allegro*

KV 6, where a somewhat monotone Alberti bass never stops for an instant, and where for some inexplicable reason the theme in the development is given in the tonic key.

Musicologists vie with each other in the attempt to find traces of outside influence in these works. In general the concept of piano sonatas “accompanied by violin” arose from Johann Schobert. He was the first to group such sonatas in Pairs and not in half-dozens, as was usually the case. [8, p. VIII] This was a convenient system for the young composer, who had yet to build up a reservoir of such works. Leopold had no time for “that scoundrel Schobert,” [7, p. 126]⁷ but this did not prevent his son from falling under the influence of this outstanding master. Others, including Abert have remarked on the influence of Schobert in the active use of both hands in KV 7 and KV 9 (“Schobert’s outbursts of passion”), and of Einstein and Edward Reeser (who noted that the theme of the finale in KV6 paraphrases the first movement’s main theme from Schobert’s *Sonata op. 1 No. 2*). [9, p. IX; 10, pp. 118–119; 11, pp. 123–124] Several musicologists also took note of other influences such as that of Wagensiel and Eckhardt. On the one hand, dependence on outside influence can be seen as an attribute of the pupil’s learning capacity. Yet what undoubtedly has greater significance, — the very fact that musicologists talked for the first time of influences in relation to the early Paris Sonatas testifies to a new stage in Mozart’s formation as a composer. If his first pieces were useful as a first step

⁶ Plath was the first to draw attention to these filial/parental borrowings, and did not refrain from lyrical commentary: “One need not have great imagination to guess how much vice-kapellmeister Leopold might have exclaimed after public performance of his new *Serenade*: “What you just heard and found so attractive was not written by me but my small son! Now he will play you the piece on the harpsichord in the form that it was originally conceived.” [4, p. XIX] (“Indeed this was a completely plausible situation”, authors’ comment.)

⁷ Letter of February 1, 1764.

in acquiring compositional skills and were set as didactic tasks, it is here that one may detect a first glimmer of the boy's latent individuality. And in talking of detectable *influences*, the implication is that most technical problems have been resolved, allowing Mozart to react to and absorb new artistic impressions.

Indeed the issue is not limited to the matter of influence. In an unavoidable confrontation with the mannerisms of his elder contemporaries, Mozart's voice is neither weak nor timid, but distinctive and independent. As Abert has noted so astutely, he bears himself confidently in the company of the famous. [10, p. 119] This boy, who could ask Wagenseil without any embarrassment to come and turn pages for him at his *Klavierabend* in Vienna, now felt on equal terms as a composer with him and his elder colleagues.

Many of the features that characterize the mature Mozart already started to become visible in the Paris sonatas. The Allegro of the *Sonata KV 7* is the first example of a sonata with many themes, and of particular note are the two second subject themes, if only in their embryonic outline, while furthermore a new contrasting theme appears in the development. This almost excessive thematic variety, a feature noted by nearly all researchers of Mozart's instrumental music — is already distinctly evident in this work by the 8 year-old boy. It is precisely this generosity of thematic ideas that allowed Küster to conclude that it was in these sonatas that Mozart chose to follow a different path from his Father, who remained an adherent of monothematic sonata forms. [8, pp. 133–134] This in itself testifies to many things; on the one hand to the independent position of the young composer, who pursues his natural inclinations, and in the other to the wisdom of his Father as teacher: while instructing and correcting he did not stifle his son's aspirations, even in those cases where their ideas did not coincide. If in the sphere of everyday life Leopold insistently attempted to subordinate Wolfgang

to his will, (even as an adult he was to feel much restricted by this vigilance), then in everything concerning creative matters he firmly believed in his genius. This is probably why there is not the slightest hint of a levelling out into an "average" student-like approach, even in the earliest of Wolfgang's works.

Another feature distinctly evident in the Paris sonatas is the lyrical tone so much to be associated with Mozart, where the music displays a spiritually elevated while remaining both touching and fragile. The *Adagio KV 7*, an Aria, is seemingly the first such example of such lyricism; the slow movements of the sonatas by Mozart's elder colleagues show nothing approaching it. Here we have a foretaste of Italy with its refined *cantilena* and supple melody, whimsical rhythm with syncopated sighing and twisting chromaticism — and all this *before* his trip to Italy (Example No. 7). The *Adagio* gives rise to the most wonderful retrograde effect: that which so fascinating and touching in Mozart's mature piano sonatas and concertos suddenly appears in the music of the eight-year old boy with stunning clarity. The thematic idea fascinated the young author to such an extent that he attempted to reproduce it in the first movement of the *Sonata KV 9* (Example No. 8).

This similarity, which has hitherto slipped the attention of musicologists, is exemplary to a degree, for such an intonational relationship between themes within the sonata cycle is a feature of mature instrumental thinking. In the Paris sonatas this principle asserts itself with spontaneity and some ingenuity — both movements in question are written in *G major*, although coming from different sonatas and even different collections. Nevertheless, the extraordinary speed of Mozart's growth in mastery remains a matter of wonder, all the more so when we consider his capacity to achieve such diverse imagery while employing the same type of musical language.

Example No. 7

W. A. Mozart. *Adagio* KV 7

Adagio

Example No. 8

W. A. Mozart. *Sonata* KV 9

Allegro spiritoso

What served as an impetus for such a leap forward? Undoubtedly the most important stimulus was travel, providing the boy with an immense number of new musical impressions, as well as allowing him to associate with the most distinguished musicians. In this respect Mozart's visit to London represented the climax.

Among the many new acquaintances in the British capital we should highlight two in particular: the castrato singer Giovanni Manzuoli, who gave the boy lessons in singing, and of course Johann Christian Bach, who undoubtedly became for Wolfgang a great musical authority for many years. This is illustrated by the famous story of how they made music together, when the Master sat the boy on his knees and then the two of them played together a sonata and a fugue.

Such an encounter with Bach must have left a deep impression, as did other of his new musical experiences in London. While there the Mozart family will surely have attended opera productions in the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, performances of Handel's oratorios, as well of concerts of instrumental music, and not least will have enjoyed friendly meetings with Johann Christian Bach and Carl Friedrich Abel.

Mozart's level of compositional technique can be judged by the so-called *London Sketchbook* (1764). Plath, who made a study of all the peculiarities of Mozart's hand writing considered that it signifies an important new stage: the boy started writing down his music independently, at his own initiative. [4, pp. XXII] In the musicological world,

opinions on the *Sketchbook* remain for the most part impartial; Abert, for instance considers that it should dispel all the myths that Mozart was already a formed master when he came to London. His verdict is severe: “We should really transfer from the son to the father a large portion of the praise, rendered until now to the finished compositions of that period.” [10, p. 97] Abert’s main objections are directed to the carelessness of the voice-leading, especially in those pieces, which aspire to polyphony. Time and time again the dissatisfaction of the German musicologist is aroused by Mozart’s inability to develop the musical material within the great mass of thematic elements in the sketches. Abert’s evaluation of Wolfgang’s poor handling of polyphony is perfectly justified. The mass of mistakes is at schoolboy or beginner’s level — i.e. in the 7th piece KV 15g (Example No. 9).

This goes to show that Leopold did not edit these works, neither did he interfere in the process of their creation. In regard to those notorious “bits that follow on from each other,” [Ibid.] such a negative valuation is a reflection of Abert’s own ideas, for he could not reconcile himself to such a peculiarity in Mozart’s way of thinking. For a musician such as Abert, brought up according to the traditional German 19th century ideas about form, these “un-German” qualities would have obscured the reputation of an exemplary master.

In reality the *London Sketchbook* should not be perceived as a collection of ready pieces.

It is a kind of musical diary, where Wolfgang’s imagination was in no way repressed, and he tries out with equal enthusiasm new techniques in harmony and in textures, acquiring thematic examples in various genres. There exists the opinion that the *London Sketchbook* contain creative impulses that Mozart would later realize in his mature works. [12] Researchers express the opinion that some of the pieces were intended for the harpsichord while in others one can detect features of orchestral writing (Nos. 28, 29, 35). Strictly speaking, the *London Sketchbook* cannot be considered as a collection of sketches, as for instance in the case of Beethoven. Mozart never returned to them, and they can be called sketches in so far that the majority of pieces are not in any way developed or brought to a conclusion. In such pieces, which reflect a firm mastery of his lessons of musical theory there are fewer errors or none at all, whereas in those where the young master had not acquired a confident mastery, errors were natural and unavoidable.

Nevertheless Wolfgang’s independent work showed perceptible results, which were evident for instance in the piano sonata for four hands (KV 19d, dating from the spring of 1765) and in the two collections of chamber sonatas written in London (in 1764 — early 1765) and Hague (in the beginning of 1766). The four-hand sonata which Leopold in his enthusiasm had hastened to announce as the first of its kind [7, p. 130]⁸ (incorrectly

Example No. 9

London Sketchbook, KV 15g

⁸ “In London Wolfgangerl wrote the first movement of a sonata for four hands. Such four hand sonatas never existed until now.” However the original of the letter has not been preserved. In the copy there is no mention of the sonata, and this statement only exists in the variant offered by Nissen. See: [7].

as it surmised) was written for Wolfgang and Nannerl's London performances. Furthermore it was so closely tied to this event that in the fabric of the writing one can detect traces of the particular instrument — the two manual harpsichord made by the noted harpsichord-maker Burkhard Tschudi, on which, most likely, the sonata was first performed on May 13th. [12, p. VII] In certain places the two pianists' parts overlap, and if played on a single keyboard their hands would literally collide, which is in itself an explanation for the necessity of the double keyboard instrument, and certainly was not a sign of the ineptitude of the young composer. Two cycles of chamber sonatas, the first for piano, violin (or flute) and cello (KV 10–15), and the second for piano and violin (KV 26–31), were published by Leopold, once again at his own expense. And indeed this time the sonatas were bound into collections of six.

In the year that passed since writing the Paris “series”, Wolfgang attained a much greater freedom in composition in all the new works, and it is obvious that the sonata cycle has ceased causing him difficulty. The first thing that strikes one in the chamber works is that what was previously his chief defect has been overcome through giving increased independence to the violin (flute) part in relation to the piano part. Dialogue and interchange, as well as counterpoint in the two melodic lines are typical features of the new style. Concerto-like elements can be found in the four-hand sonata, even if they are used somewhat naively and childishly. Now the young virtuoso is allowing himself a display of his pianistic skills, although often the textures, especially in the first movement show the mark of a mechanical division of the piano part into two “half-parts”. In fact neither in the four-hand sonata nor in the chamber works is there any hint

of monotony in the rhythm or in the textures, something, which is still present in his first sonata experiments. But above all diversity is achieved through embedding the polyphonic elements within the homophonic writing. All this proves that the exercises in the London notebook were not carried out in vain.

Abert correctly identifies a change of orientation in Mozart's sonata technique. His example here is Johann Christian Bach, in particular his Six Piano sonatas op. 5. German models have been replaced by Italian, on which much of the London Bach's work was based. [10, pp. 120–122] It is usually accepted that the tuneful themes in Wolfgang's sonata and the appearance of Rondo finales are connected with Bach's influence. Nevertheless, as always with early Mozart, exceptions are evident in assigning to these influences any constant rule. It is in the Paris sonatas that he makes his first steps in mastering sonata form, and here his individual voice shines through, eradicating any obvious sign of imitation; now, with newly — acquired confidence and ease in the genre, it is evident that the young composer has achieved a considerably higher degree of independence. One would be hard put to find a theme in Christian Bach's music similar to the one which initiates the first sonata movement of KV 28 (Example No. 10) — we cannot pinpoint any precise derivation for this vocal, italianate model, but the structure of its motives (*abb*) is clearly rooted in opera, as is the long opening harpsichord trill.

In regard to the overall composition and structure, these works by the young composer are hardly inferior to those of his elder colleague, neither in their scale and brilliance within the contrasts nor in thematic variety and invention. Rather these features are, if anything super-abundant, but this is probably the fault of too much imagination rather than any lack of schooling.

Example No. 10

W. A. Mozart. *Sonata KV 28*

Allegro maestoso

Resume

The Grand European tour in reality put an end to Wolfgang's compositional apprenticeship in all that concerned the instrumental genres that were most in demand at the time. If we remember that in London and the Hague the young Mozart wrote his first symphonies, professional works in their own rights (KV 16, KV 19, KV 19a and KV 22), then it is clear that he had acquired a weighty compositional experience and had already drawn near

the level of mature composers, and indeed on occasion could stand equal to them. [13] Already in childhood, Mozart's talent for self-education became evident, which, according to Adeline Mueller, allows us to consider him the embodiment of auto-didacticism. [14, p. 15] However, the impetus for the development of this talent was undoubtedly given by his father, [15] who managed not only to direct, but, most importantly, not to interfere with the manifestation of his originality.

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