

Bruce Cooper Clarke

Paul Badura-Skoda: An Homage

On the 6th of October 2009, Paul Badura-Skoda, the great Austrian concert pianist, will be 82 years old. Perhaps he will mark the occasion in Vienna, surrounded by friends and admirers. But it is just as likely that he will be elsewhere in the world – in Paris, or Buenos Aires, or Sydney, or Singapore – for he has traveled the world over in the course of his long life as a concert pianist, bringing the joy of his musical talents and his gifted interpretations to literally thousands of persons.

Born in 1927, he was all of 18 years old when he entered the Vienna Conservatory. Two years later, he won first prize in the Austrian Music Competition, initiating his studies with Edwin Fischer. In 1949, Wilhelm Furtwängler and Herbert von Karajan were inviting him to play in concert. His career as musician and performer had begun and still goes on.

I first heard the name “Paul Badura-Skoda” in the late 40s. A friend of mine, a classical music enthusiast who closely followed the international concert scene, called my attention to this new and exciting young performer.

In 2005, Fate in the person of the American concert pianist Mary Robbins of Austin, Texas, intervened. Mrs. Robbins had performed with Paul Badura-Skoda, playing Mozart’s piano concert in E-flat for two pianos K.365, and was in touch with him. Noting that he and I were both living in Vienna, she wrote the two of us suggesting we should meet. Paul joined my wife and me for lunch and we had a thoroughly enjoyable time, he speaking of his activities at the moment and me telling him about my writing and translating concerned with Mozart biography.

He spoke of his project then in train to re-record a substantial number of the Mozart piano concertos, working once again with the excellent Prague Chamber Orchestra. It had been many years since he had last recorded the Mozart concertos with this orchestra and he wanted these new recordings to be part of his legacy to those who share his joy in the music of Mozart.

I cannot offer you, Dear Reader, the recordings themselves. But I can give you the program notes contained in the CDs that have been issued so far. For you see, Paul Badura-Skoda is that rare performer who also prepares his own program notes, “written from within”, so to speak. Paul is not only a superb interpreter of Mozart’s oeuvre for the piano, but he is also a profound student of music, a man of great intellectual curiosity and accomplishment. Reading and writing in several languages, he provides us – his audience – with his insights into Mozart’s legacy to us all, these concertos of imperishable depth and beauty.

Wir danken Dir, lieber Freund, und wünschen alles Gute zum Geburtstag!

BCC, Vienna, September 2009

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These CDs appear on the Transart label (www.transartproductions.com) and can be obtained at good record stores or through Amazon and other internet providers.

Piano Concerto in A Major, K.414

With good reason this work is one of Mozart's best-liked piano concertos. It contains a wealth of beautiful melodic ideas and expresses that inimitable Morzartian charm and wit that brings joy to every heart and even smiles to a depressed soul.

It is the first of the three concertos – K.413, K.414, and K.415 – composed together as a cycle in 1782. They are chamber concertos that can be performed either with a full orchestra or with strings, only leaving out the wind instruments. They can even be performed as a piano quintet.

In a letter from Vienna written to his father in Salzburg on December 28, 1782, Mozart himself gave a fitting description of these works: "These concertos are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult; they are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural, without being dull. There are passages here and there from which the connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction; but these passages are written in such a way that the less learned cannot fail to be pleased, although without knowing why." (This is a description that obviously could also fit later concertos, such as that in F major, K.459.)

As with all his concertos, this one has its own individual characteristics. For example, it is the first of Mozart's concertos in which the opening *Tutti* contains three different themes, all of them related to each other by the fact that they feature the descent from the fifth E downward. And more amazingly still: the same is true of the themes of the second and third movements as well! The opening theme of the first movement reappears in a near-literal quotation during the second movement. The most astonishing novelty, however, is the fact that, in the cadenza to the final Rondo, the orchestra participates as if the cadenza were an improvisation between two different partners! Only when the rondo theme reappears, played by the piano, does this unique cadenza come to an end. (Let it be noted, however, that the idea of an orchestra playing cadenzas, but without the piano, originated with Haydn. Mozart would go on to write a full cadenza for five instruments later when he composed his *Quintet in E flat for piano, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and horn, K.452.*)

The *Andante* middle movement begins *sotto voce* with muted strings and is written in a serious, even sad, vein. Its beautiful main subject is not original with Mozart, however, but is a quotation from the overture to the opera, *La Calamità dei Cuori*, by Johann Christian Bach, the youngest of Johann Sebastian Bach's sons. This is hardly a coincidence: J. C. Bach, who had made a deep impression on the young Mozart when they first met in London in 1764-65, had died on the 1st of January 1782. In a letter to his father of

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April 10, Mozart wrote, "I suppose you have heard that the English Bach is dead? What a loss to the musical world!" This *Andante* movement would appear to be an elegy for Mozart's old friend. This is one of those infrequent instances where a movement in the major key (but with some passages in the minor) can powerfully evoke sadness and sorrow. A particularly beautiful effect is the continuation of the first piano solo which, in its harmony, anticipates the *Ave verum corpus* K.618.

But in the third movement, Mozart gently leads us back to the serenity of the beginning: it takes nearly half a minute before the first joyous forte is struck by the orchestra. A mysterious *unisono* motif which pervades the whole rondo is reminiscent of the serious mood of the *Andante* movement. It is interesting, too, that the solo piano does not start with the rondo theme but with a sort of improvisation foreshadowing a theme of the last movement of the *C major sonata* K.330, written a year later in 1783 (and not in 1778 as assumed by Köchel). It is this theme that will be picked up by the orchestra in dialogue with the piano towards the end of the cadenza, leading the work to a happy close.

Paul Badura-Skoda, January 2006

Piano Concerto in E flat Major, K.449

Completed on February 9, 1784

On May 26 Mozart wrote to his father " ... *this is a very special concerto, and written more for a small rather than for a large orchestra.*" On another occasion, Mozart stated that this concerto as well as K.413 and K.415 could be performed as a chamber music work with strings only. It also has a special significance, being the first entry in the new catalogue of his works which Mozart continued to fill until his death. Albeit written for Barbara Ployer, "*who paid me well*" (Letter of February 20), Mozart himself played the first performance on March 17, about which he wrote three days later: " ... *the new Concerto I played appealed extremely well.*" The dedication to Miss Ployer could be the reason why Mozart replaced a technically demanding passage in the middle of the opening movement by an easier one. I played the earlier version which in its dramatic juxtaposition of orchestra and piano foreshadows one of the highlights of the future C minor concerto from 1786. (It is interesting to note that the very opening of that of that concerto is a nearly exact inversion of the main theme of K.449.)

„...a very special concerto.“

No other concerto seems to have so many singular traits. K.449 is the only one in which the opening *tutti* modulates to the dominant key of B flat major. This necessitates a modulation back to the tonic by means of an insertion, a kind of fantasy for the strings which never reappears again. And yet it has a sort of corresponding passage later, a free dialogue between piano and orchestra at the end of the development section with no thematic link to the rest, either. Another characteristic of this concerto is the nearly humoristic continuation of the opening theme. It reminds me of a Bavarian folksong: *Heut kommt der Hans zu mir, freut sich die Lies*. As if in protest, a sudden outburst in C minor follows suit, with an oscillating motif in the first violins which could be interpreted as a symbol of flames. Strangely enough this "flaming" motif reappears unexpectedly at the final trill of the solo piano, and leads surprisingly to an interrupted cadence in C minor where "according to the rule" the orchestra should enter in E flat major!

The second movement in B flat major represents a more serious mood. In Mozart's terminology *Andantino* is slower than *Andante*; thus this is one of the most tranquil movements to be found in his piano concertos. (There are two *Adagio* movements in his violin concertos, though.) Yet, behind this

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appearance of calm one can sense a feeling of unrest, even anguish, which soon leads to a passionate outburst by the orchestra. The solo piano starts with the opening theme, varying it as if giving its own commentary. Fine gossamer passages lead to an eloquent dialogue with the orchestra. A very unusual feature is the first return of the ritornello in the "wrong" key of A flat major, one note too low as it were. This leads to a series of "romantic" modulations, foreshadowing Schubert, until this *Andantino* ends blissfully in its original key.

The third movement, a serene *Rondo* with elements of sonata form, offers a delightful combination of a dancing theme with elements of "serious" counterpoint. The piano picks up the opening tutti theme, developing it into brilliant passagework. Quite inadvertently one hears a melodic figure which will reappear 5 years later in the first movement of the Clarinet Quintet, where it will play an important role. The development section features the minor keys and energetic canonic imitations between the soloist and the strings. The re-exposition of the dancing theme leads to a pause followed by a resolute *Allegro finale* in six-eight meter, which brings this delightful work to a happy close.

Another special feature of this concerto is worth mentioning: its frequent "futuristic" modulations into distant keys. Already in the recapitulation of the 1st movement (at 5:39) the music returns from B flat minor to E flat major via G minor – Richard Strauss couldn't have done better – the *Andantino* touches after 3:43 the very foreign key of B minor and, as if to top things, the final *Allegretto* even reaches (at 3:43) the "absurd" key of D flat minor – extraordinary!

*Paul Badura-Skoda
February 2005*

Piano Concerto in D Major, K.451

Completed on March 22, 1784

The year 1784 marked Mozart's breakthrough as composer and performer of his piano works. Already three years earlier he had written about Vienna: "*This is definitely the land of the piano!*" (letter to his father of June 2, 1781). In March he organized three "academies", in which he played his newest concertos: on the 17th K.449, on the 24th K.450 and on the 31st K.451. (A further academy, in which he probably performed K.450 and K.451, followed on April 1st). About the first concert he wrote on March 20, "*The hall was overcrowded.*" Within one month Mozart played 21 times while still finding time to compose several works – an incredible feat! Obviously in 1784 the piano occupied a central place in his activity: he wrote no less than 6 piano concertos, at the expense of his symphonic output; only six symphonies – albeit his greatest ones – were created in his last years. Later in spring he sent the concertos K.449, K.450, K.451 and K.453 to his father in Salzburg, stating in the accompanying letter:

I am unable to choose between the two concertos (K.450 and K.457); both are concertos which make you sweat, but the one in B flat is the more difficult one. By the way, I am curious to know which of the 3 concertos in B flat, D and G is your and my sister's favourite, and also curious whether your judgment agrees with the general populace and my opinion. (Letter of May 26, 1784)

We don't know the answer, but it is very possible that the D major concerto found preference: it is the most festive, ebullient, and exhilarating of the three; for the first time since the early K.175 Mozart employed trumpets and timpanies as obligato instruments in a concerto. The first movement has the character of a brilliant overture, the piano part adding new ingratiating facets and virtuoso passages. The intimate second movement has the character of a *Romance*: its "sweet" tenths and thirds foreshadow the central movement of the D minor concerto. And the sparkling Finale with the rhythm of a country dance finishes after the cadenza as a fast waltz, ending with a fanfare not unlike the Blue Danube Waltz of a century later!

It is therefore not surprising that this successful work – alas, neglected today – drew the attention of publishers even during Mozart's lifetime. A possible Paris edition of 1785-1787 could never be identified, but in March 1792, shortly after Mozart's death, it was published by Bossier in Speyer (who had earlier published K.453).

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We owe Neal Zaslaw credit for the discovery of a hitherto unknown review which throws light on the early reception of Mozart in Germany:

To every friend and admirer of the Mozartean muse this composition ... can be nothing but very precious. The original style of composition, which is unmistakable here, the fullness of harmony, the striking turns of phrase, the skilled distribution of shade and light, and many other excellent qualities, all give us cause to feel very deeply the loss of Mozart, a paragon of his era. The concerto under review is in D major, and is one of the most beautiful and most brilliant that we have from this master, in the ritornellos as well as in the solos. The opening Allegro takes up the first twelve pages (of the piano part), and we miss nothing in it but the figuring of the bass line in the tuttis. The Andante in G major that follows next is a kind of romanza in 4/4 – very elegant and touching. The finale is an Allegro di molto in 2/4, which, however, turns into 3/8 on the last page but one. In this movement the greatest difficulties certainly prevail, but there are also exceptionally beautiful modulations. It is only to be regretted that this masterly keyboard concerto is impracticable in smaller musical circles because of the number of instruments for which it is scored (and which are in part obligato instruments), and is usable only with a strong, well-manned orchestra. The engraving is very clear and correct, and does true honor to Councillor Bossier's printing shop. (*Musikalische Korrespondenz der deutschen Filarmonischen Gesellschaft* (Speyer, May 16, 1792, columns 153-154), quoted from Neal Zaslaw: Notes to the recording of Mozart's complete Piano Concertos on DGG 1991 by Malcolm Bilson on a period piano.)

The reviewer shows a remarkable understanding of Mozart's style when he speaks of "frappante Wendungen" (striking turns). Unusual passages are among the main features which set Mozart apart from most of his contemporaries. Such a striking turn appears already in measure 43 of the first movement, namely after 1 min., 11 sec.: suddenly the familiar D major atmosphere is abandoned when under the syncopations of the higher strings (a premonition of the D minor concerto) the staccato basses descend to distant tonal regions until the dominant of B major is reached five bars later. This is followed by a gradual return to D major quasi in "reverse gear." A similar modulation follows, this time based on a descending chromatic bass line. Of course these "eccentric" passages have a deeper meaning, as if Mozart wanted to tell us: this luminous D major realm is not as safe as it appears; there are tremors, undercurrents which threaten "the best of worlds." Fortunately that destabilization lasts only a short while and soon the music returns to the familiar happiness of D major, tonic and dominant. It would not be Mozart, had his "tremors" not had repercussions later, not only in the first movement but also later in the finale with bold modulations at its center.

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The above quoted review contains also a valuable hint regarding figured bass playing during the orchestra ritornellos. Its complaint about the missing figures represents one of many proofs that the solo piano was expected to play alongside with the cellos. Contrary to the prevailing practice of falling silent during the tutti (based on late 19th century habits), I am joining the orchestra in a discrete way, particularly in the 3rd movement.

Each of Mozart's concertos has its own personal traits. In this one the woodwinds are not doubled in the *Andante*, but appear as soloists. Flute, oboe, and bassoon form a Trio in juxtaposition to the piano and to the rest of the orchestra. Perhaps it was this "trinity" which inspired Mozart to insert groups of ternary rhythms within the prevailing binary meter of two and two. These hidden rhythms of three half notes produce a poetic floating effect, as if lifting the music a few feet above ground. This is felt particularly at the introduction to the central C major episode, when bassoon, oboe and flute enter in succession preparing the ground for the *solo aria* of the piano, a tune which could have been written for a soprano voice. (This modulation from E minor to C had a predecessor in the first act of *Idomeneo*, a discovery by the late Marius Flothuis). The vocalism in C major was originally written down in an abbreviated way as a sort of skeleton. Upon request of his sister Mozart confirmed that something had been left out here and sent her the completed version. In contrast to later overcrowded embellishments in other works, this *something* added by Mozart himself remains graceful, with only few notes added. (Mind you, Mozart did not even entrust this filling-in to his gifted sister!)

The scintillating Finale movement, a Rondo, speaks for itself and hardly needs a commentary. The spirited dialogue between soloist and orchestra might lift the listener (unless mentally heavyweight) three feet into the air!

Paul Badura-Skoda, March 2005

Piano Concerto in G Major, K.453

Composed for Barbara Ployer, completed on 10 April 1784 (as stated in the autograph score), entered in his catalog of works on 12 April 1784.

First performance by Barbara Ployer in Vienna on 13 June 1784 under Mozart's direction (together with K.449 and the Sonata for Two Pianos K.448).

On May 27, 1784 Mozart entered into his notebook of expenses the purchase of a starlet bird for 24 kreutzer and noted below the theme of the last movement of this concerto as the bird sung it with two minor mistakes, adding, "Das war schön!" ("That was beautiful!"). Apparently he bought the starlet because it could sing the tune already (it must have heard Barbara practicing it), but not in order to give it singing lessons as some commentators assume.

This little anecdote has a deeper significance: In the course of my artistic career I have observed repeatedly that Mozart's music touches people from all social classes, from all cultures. It even "speaks" to animals, as can be seen from this occurrence. Blackbirds were listening attentively when I practiced Mozart with open windows, sometimes singing along, joining in with their enchanting trills at times; and the dog of Mrs. Ohga, wife of former Sony Corporation president Norio Ohga, would rush in from the most distant room - and try to sing along! - whenever the D minor Fantasy, his favorite piece, was played. Why has Mozart such a universal appeal? It must be more than happy inspiration or lovely tunes - others, after all, have also invented beautiful melodies. There must be something more profound behind Mozart's themes. Perhaps Edwin Fischer found the best answer when he wrote, "Mozart's music is pure love". It is a love which comprehends the whole of creation, reminding us of St. Francis preaching to the birds!

The G major Concerto is the fourth from this fruitful period of 1784 to 1786, when no less than 12 concertos were composed - an explosion of creativity unique even for Mozart. Albeit his plans for new operas did not succeed at this time, he was nevertheless on the pinnacle of his fame as Vienna's best-liked piano composer and performer. During the spring season of 1784 he performed no less than 23 times within 46 days in public and private concerts. It is a sheer miracle that he still found time and energy to create these masterworks, of which each concerto has its individual traits. Only rarely was a concerto performed more than once. Mozart's audience was eager to hear a new work every time - what a contrast to modern times!

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One might say that this G major Concerto is even "more unique" than the others. No other concerto starts with the first violins only, joined soon by the rest of the tutti. As a sort of compensation, the first violins are silent after the cadenza when - most unusually - only the basses enter. When the rest of the strings come one bar later, they do not play the expected G major harmony, but rather a "romantic" chord of the minor ninth, which in reality is a seventh chord with augmented octave! The piano part, too, has its own individual traits, such as a series of broken triads which foreshadow Chopin's first etude in C major. In the "fantasy" development section Mozart dispenses with preceding themes but introduces instead a series of unexpected harmonies, an embellishment which modulates to distant keys until the dominant of E minor is reached. A "magic" modulation of a short tutti (strings only) leads from E minor to C minor and G minor, thus preparing the recapitulation in the original key.

It is typical for nearly all mature works by Mozart (but are there any truly immature ones at all?) that a serene atmosphere is repeatedly darkened by serious, even tragic, episodes. This is most evident in the second movement, where an unexpected passionate outburst follows the tranquil, contemplative introduction. Here the piano assumes the role of a dramatic soprano in a scene of an opera seria. In the central part of the Andante, Mozart modulates again to the most distant tonalities, anticipating Schubert. It is a stroke of genius how Mozart finds his way back from C-sharp minor to C major in only four measures. The sun is rising! An emotional climax is the wonderfully poetic cadenza with the ensuing epilogue in which the piano enters a last time into a dialog with the orchestra - serene, as if reconciled with the preceding moments of sorrow? This blissful ending reminds me of the end of Schumann's *Davidsbündlertänze*.

The dance tune of the last movement - a brilliant set of variations - is one of those inspirations which a listener may whistle to himself after the first or second hearing even if he is not a "starlet bird." Even in this merry piece, rich again in dialog, there appears a tragic variation in the minor key, with weird, bold harmonies. But after this interruption the prevailing mood reasserts itself again. After a short cadenza follows a presto finale in the style of an opera buffa - unique again! - and brings this rich work to an effective, brilliant close.

Paul Badura-Skoda, 18 April 2004

Piano Concerto in B flat Major, K.456 "Paradise-Concerto"

Completed September 30, 1784

The Concerto K.456 is the fifth of the series which Mozart created in a compositional frenzy for piano music. Besides these concertos, he also wrote the piano quintet K.452, the sonata for violin and piano K.454 and the passionate piano sonata in C minor K.457. Only the string quartet in B flat major K.458 interrupted the flow of piano works which was continued afterwards with the piano concerto K.459.

If for nearly a century the concerto K.271 had been named after the nonexistent "Jeunehomme", one could label this concerto K.456 with much more right as "the Paradise concerto" after the blind pianist Maria Theresa Paradis (1759-1824) for whom it was composed. Most likely she played it in her concerts in Paris and London during a concert tour. Mozart himself performed it in Vienna on February 13, 1785 in an academy given by the singer Luisa Laschi.

Apparently Mozart was motivated by the blindness of the person who commissioned the work: great leaps over the keyboard or the crossing of hands, frequently found elsewhere, had to be avoided here. With exception of the stormy B minor episode in the final movement, a delicate tender "feminine" character is prevailing, possibly as a musical portrait of the dedicatee. Especially the sweetness of the first movement with its "romantic" harmonies has few counterparts in other works.

The first movement starts with Mozart's favourite march rhythm that is also found in the piano concertos K.451, 453, and 459, in the violin concerto K.218, and in numerous orchestral marches. While the opening measure in all those cases is nearly identical, it is the second measure which is different. Here the "feminine" ending c-a-b flat is introduced that gives the whole phrase an elegant character which will prevail in the entire movement. The orchestral introduction brings two secondary themes – an innovation in the concerto form since the concerto K.414 – and ends with another march motif, actually a military signal, but played here delicately by the violins and the woodwinds.

In the following solo exposition the piano quotes all the themes heard in the opening *tutti*, adorned, varied and enriched by virtuoso passages. In its course a new unison passage is introduced (found earlier in the sonata in G major K.283 and in the G major concerto K.453), which leads to the second subject.

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After the energetic orchestral *ritornello* in the middle of the movement – a reference point found in nearly all concertos until the 20th century – the piano re-enters with a sort of improvisation leading into a development section based on the signal tune heard at the end of the opening *tutti*. This development, moving through various keys, leads to another solo of elegiac character. A *crescendo* on the dominant (pedal point F) leads then to the return of the opening theme which had not been heard for about 10 minutes. The pleasant sensation of entering familiar ground at the beginning of the recapitulation may be well compared to the feeling of home coming after a journey to distant regions. After that return, the “home sweet home” tonality of B flat major will not be abandoned any more until the end of the *Allegro*.

A novelty in Mozart's piano Concertos is the variation form of the second movement. It is in the elegiac key of G minor, a tonality which in other Mozartian works in the same key often expresses pain and tragedy, even despair, as e.g. in Pamina's aria “*Ach, ich fühl's, es ist verschwunden*”. Here, however, the impression of suffering is less acute, possibly because Mozart seems to have expressed rather the anguish of a young woman experiencing her first deception in love, than his own personal feelings (perhaps another portrait of Miss Paradis?). Whatever we read into this set of variations, orchestra and piano are interwoven here in such a masterly fusion that words fail us. The gentle lament of the theme and the first solo variation is gradually intensified until a storm breaks out in the third variation. The ensuing tender G major variation, like a comforting hand, seems to come from another celestial realm. But pain prevails again in the last variation, a condensed variant of the second one, and leads to a tragic coda where it is not veiled any more, but glaringly open.

The third movement is a “hunting finale” in 6/8, a type of concert piece which Mozart had employed earlier with success in the final movements of the concertos for horn and orchestra K.412, 417 and 447 as well as in the piano concerto in B flat K.450. The resemblance with the final movement of the earlier work cannot be denied: both of them start with an impudent piano solo, both have similar secondary subject and *virtuoso* passages, but K.456 is technically less demanding than its predecessor. However, it would not be Mozart if in the latter there would not be novelty: he introduces here bold, surprising turns not found in any other concerto. Just in the middle of this movement our suspicion that everything runs the ordinary smooth way is suddenly dispersed by a truly exciting modulation into the distant key of B minor. Not only this! The two meters of 6/8 and 2/4 are juxtaposed here: a passionate tune in 2/4 played first by the bassoon and subsequently

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developed by the piano is accompanied by the strings in 6/8 time. The suggestion of a thunderstorm is enhanced by quick rising figurations in the violins and the piano – age-old symbols for lightning. (One is reminded of the chorus "*Sind Blitze, sind Donner...*" of Bach's St. Matthews Passion.)

This sudden outburst of fury may be interpreted as a protest against the general idyllic mood found in the rest of the concerto. This is the true Mozart! As suddenly as it had appeared, this "thunderstorm" ebbs away and leads into the recapitulation of the secondary theme (enriched now by small variants) in the main key of B flat major that is not to be abandoned any more until the end of the movement.

From now on it is all "sugar and cake." Only in Mozart's original cadenza there appears a reminiscence of the former thunderstorm with similar "lightning" passages: a fine piece of musical psychology long before Wagner. After the cadenza the piano enters in even closer dialogue with the orchestra than before until the "happy end" is reached. It is noteworthy that in Mozart's original score the piano joins the orchestra in the two final chords, a convention which reaches well into the 19th century even though these chords were sometimes not printed into the solo part.

Paul Badura-Skoda

Piano Concerto in F Major, K.459

Completed in Vienna on 11 December, 1784

The first posthumous edition of this concerto (by Johann André) mentions on the title page that this concerto was performed by Mozart on the occasion of the coronation of Emperor Leopold II in Frankfurt on October 15, 1790. If this is true, it was a clever choice. Like the other Coronation Concerto (K.537) played on this occasion, it has pleasant themes that are easy to grasp and is written in a joyful vein only rarely interrupted by those moments of melancholy and sadness which are typical for Mozart. On the other hand there exists a remarkable contrast between both works. While in the "great" Coronation Concerto the solo piano is protagonist, there prevails in this work a constant lively dialog between piano and orchestra (particularly with the wind instruments). This goes to such an extent that in large sections of the first movement the piano is accompanying other instruments. Unlike in other concertos, there is an amazing amount of polyphony to be found in the F major Concerto: imitation, canon, fugue. Indeed, the words Mozart used to describe the earlier Concertos K 413-415 would apply equally well to this work:

These concertos are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult. They are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear and natural, without being superficial. There are also passages here and there from which connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction, but these passages are written in such a way that the less discriminating cannot fail to be pleased, though without knowing why. (Letter to his father, 28 December 1792)

The F major Concerto happens to be Mozart's fastest concerto: It is the only one in which the first movement has cut time, an indication generally found in concluding movements only. Another exception is the Allegretto indication of the second movement, faster than Andante or Larghetto found in the central movements of other concertos. And the lively Allegro assai of the last movement reminds one of Mozart's remark about the Abduction: " ... and I believe that one will not be able to sleep here even if one had not slept at all the night before." (Letter to his father, 26 September 1781)

It is noteworthy that the concerto starts with Mozart's favorite rhythm: four quarter notes with a dotted rhythm on the second beat, which he used innumerable times as a starter for march-like movements. The amazing thing is that Mozart never repeated himself, finding every time a different consequent to this antecedent. Here the rising fifth F to C between the first

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and second measures is a characteristic trait: This march-like theme dominates the whole first movement, appearing many times in ever new harmonic variations, delicate, triumphant, elegiac - even romantic in the original cadenza! In his fine analysis of this concerto Neal Zaslaw observed that this march rhythm appears in no less than 165 out of 400 measures! (*Introduction to the CD box on Deutsche Grammophon with Malcolm Bilson and John Eliot Gardiner, 1991*)

Despite its fluent tempo the second movement is of enchanting beauty. It gains in depth of feeling from the repeated insertions of episodes in the minor key which produce the effect of a shadow on a serene sunlit landscape, a nearly "Schubertian" effect of sudden melancholy. One of its highlights is the canonic imitation of the opening motive between winds and piano.

The third movement starts with an impudent theme in the rhythm of a country dance played alternately by the piano and the wind instruments. Quite unexpectedly the strings enter in the 32nd measure with a vigorous short fugue. A fugue within a piano concerto! Such a thing had never happened before. This one is a happy fugue starting right away with a stretta of the theme, a procedure usually reserved for the end of fugues only. This opening tutti finishes with a quotation of the opening "country dance" theme and an epilogue which anticipates the Papageno duet from the Magic Flute by seven years. The fugal theme reappears several times during the sparkling solo episodes. But that is not all: at the recapitulation a real conflict arises when the two subjects encounter each other in a dramatic double fugue - a symbol of fighting in which the "galant" opening theme apparently finishes the winner. But the "learned" fugal theme is not defeated yet: it reappears later and has its final word in the cadenza, after which our dance tune emerges elegantly, leading to the Papageno theme presented as a duet between piano and winds. In this concerto the "learned" and the "galant" form a unique symbiosis - a stroke of genius!

Paul Badura-Skoda, 25 January 2004

Piano Concerto in C Major, K.467

Entered in works catalog 9 March 1785

As with the Piano Concerto in D Minor K.466, this concerto reveals the miracle, the inconceivable supremacy of Genius over simple talent. Each of them was composed in less than a month. The Concerto in C Major was begun in February (immediately after the première of K.466, therefore) and finished (according to Mozart's entry in the catalogue of his works) on 9 March 1785. Again, it was première'd straight away (a concert announcement of 10 March 1785 mentions a "recently completed" work for pianoforte). The mere fact that Mozart had time to compose this concerto in less than four weeks is quite remarkable. A good copyist today would need twice as long as that just to copy it out! Yet there is no sign of haste in the neat writing of the autograph (apart from a few ornaments in the 2d movement which are obviously meant to be improvised, but these are easy to complete with the help of similar passages in other works). However, the real miracle lies in the fact that Mozart was simply able to compose such a work: it would take a "normal human being" – and a gifted one at that – 100 years to perform such a feat!

This concerto is as perfect as a crystal. In the first movement, the main theme and the second theme – "the masculine and the feminine principle" – are in harmony, just like an ideal couple. It is almost palpable: the second theme would easily allow itself to be combined contrapuntally with the first theme! That Mozart should let a good four minutes slip by before we hear this second theme is a device he had already used in earlier concertos. But that, even before the arrival of this theme, Mozart should present us with two melodic inspirations, independent of the main theme, and which could also be taken for the second theme – though they are not – is more or less a deceit! The second of these motifs is remarkable. This is due to the minor key. Its beginning anticipates Beethoven's *3d Piano Concerto*, its continuation is exactly the same, note for note, as the beginning of the *Symphony in G minor*, which he composed three years later! But why this digression into the somber, sad world of the minor mode? No doubt because, without these apparently alien elements its progression would be too calm, too smooth. Thus, the second subject, which is introduced soon afterwards, stands out even more clearly against this somber background, and at the same time, the minor mode of the thematic development introduces another new motif, a plaintive melody in E minor, which gives us a foretaste of Chopin. One final accomplishment in the formal structure: the initial motif also provides the conclusion to this movement.

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The central movement of this concerto became such a great "hit", because of a film in which it was used as the leitmotif for a love story, that people go into record shops and ask for the "Elvira Madigan concerto"! This is a good thing in a way, but it is a pity that this peacefully flowing *Andante* was so hopelessly dragged out in the film. When we play this movement with the correct tempo now, we are often branded as "lacking in feeling". Yet the indication, in Mozart's own hand, *Alla breve* (cut-time) – like his earlier epistolary remark on the central movements of concertos – leaves very little room for doubt: this movement expresses *Träumerie, rêverie* – to me, it is like a peaceful dance through eternity. This movement seems to have been set in motion even before the first note, and it continues to resound in the soul after the last note. (Marcel Marceau's performance to this movement is unforgettable!) The bold, "painful" dissonances of the second motif are a sort of reminiscence of the "Dissonance" Quartet K 465, which Mozart had finished two months previously.

The third movement, a sparkling, virtuoso "Rondo-Sonata", takes up the basically serene mood of the first movement and once again carries it to frankly exuberant gaiety, which, even in the underlying minor harmonies – it would not be Mozart without them – can no longer be seriously dampened. It must also be mentioned that the orchestra has much more than a simple accompanying role. There is a permanent musical dialogue between the solo piano and the strings or the wind instruments, and, for their part, they also have frequent dialogues. And as usual with Mozart, there is a network of more or less obvious or hidden motival relationships between the three movements.

All this in only four weeks! We could imagine Mozart spending all his time working on the concerto, with the most intense concentration – but far from it! During that period, Mozart had to look after his father, who was demanding to say the least: the latter was his guest from 11 February to 25 April; he also had to supervise the numerous transits of his precious piano – a Walter – which was used for several concerts: on 13 February, he played a piano concerto (probably K.456) in the presence of the Emperor Joseph II; on 15 February, he gave the second performance of the *Concerto in D minor*, on the 18th, he played at one of his benefit concerts, and on the 21st, at a concert given by the French oboist Le Brun; on 25 February and 4 March, he gave two more benefit concerts. On top of all that, there was a

Piano concerto in C Major, K.467 – page 3

quartet evening with Joseph Haydn on 12 February, during which, along with his father and two friends, he played three of the quartets dedicated to Haydn, to say nothing of Musical Evenings for the nobility and Mozart's presence at subscription concerts for other musicians. Finally, Mozart gave quite a lot of private lessons during this period. So how did he find the time to compose this concerto (and the cadenzas which, unfortunately, have disappeared)?

And did he not have to practice this extremely difficult concerto, too? Everything leads us to believe that he had such a perfect mastery of technique, like Bach before him, or Paganini after him, that he did not need to. One of Paganini's admirers tells how he followed him to a great many towns in the hope of catching him practicing. The poor man was disappointed: Paganini did not practice once before his concerts! Perhaps Mozart in his maturity did the same; in the numerous documents and letters by him or about him that have been preserved, there is never any mention of rehearsing.

Perhaps the greatest miracle, however, lies in the fact that after this concerto Mozart was able to compose another six concertos, all of them just as perfect: 600 years of solitude!

Paul Badura-Skoda, January 2006

Piano Concerto in E Flat Major, K.482

Entered in his works catalogue as completed 16 December 1785

On the day of its completion, Mozart performed this concerto between the acts of a concert presenting Dittersdorf's oratorio *Esther* (see Neal Zaslaw's commentary to this concerto in the booklet accompanying Malcolm Bilson's recording, DG, 1991). Leopold Mozart in Salzburg writing to his daughter in St. Gilgen on January 13, 1786, told her that Wolfgang played this concerto in one of "3 subscription concerts that were hurriedly arranged" taking place on December 9, 16, and 23. This suggests that the "official" first performance of K.482 occurred on December 23. In the same letter, Leopold reported that popular acclaim had caused Mozart to repeat the *Andante*, calling that "an unusual occurrence indeed". (In modern times, applause in the middle of a concerto almost never happens; I wonder why.)

Of course, it could be that Mozart had actually finished the concerto a few days earlier than its catalogue entry. Whatever the case, the short span of time between composition and performance is the most likely reason why there appear to be a few incomplete notations in the piano part, blank spaces where Mozart probably improvised the missing notes. And how many notes are missing? In this CD of the 2008 recording, I have tried to give two different answers to this question: in my earlier recording (2006) I played more free embellishments in the last movement. It is added here as an "encore" at track 7; you can hear the difference with the 2008 version at 5:32 and 10:40.

Where Mozart's works have the same key, they often share common traits. There are obvious similarities between K.482 and the earlier so-called *Jenamy concerto* K.271, also in E flat major and a work of genius indeed. The ample use of horns in the outer movements, the tragic middle movement, and a spacious tranquil section in the final rondo (never found elsewhere in a piano concerto), these are such traits that have been noted by many commentators. Some of them even daresay that K.482 is less inspired than K.271, which was Mozart's obvious model for the later work. I could not disagree more!

As I see it, Mozart wanted to prove the mastery at writing a full scale concerto that he had acquired in the nine years since composing K.271, while at the same time adding new facets: an enlarged formal pattern and the addition of a nearly independent ensemble of woodwinds featuring two clarinets, two bassoons, and one flute. This wind group plays such an important role, especially in the second and third movements, that the spirit of the *Concerto grosso* seems to hover over it. Yet, as we can see

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and hear, the unity of form, the “Mozartian” flow, has never been put in question – a true miracle!

The enlargement of the form and the incorporation of the *wind concertino* have also led to substantial differences in the piano part. In K.271, the solo piano is incorporated in a symphonic way into the structure as a whole, taking up and elaborating nearly every motif of the orchestra. In K.482, on the other hand, the solo piano plays a much more independent role. This even goes so far that in the middle of the solo exposition, there appears a “non-motivic” solo passage of 15 measures, one that strictly speaking is “unnecessary” in terms of form and yet is so beautiful that its loss would severely damage the movement’s total effect.

Another feature different from K.271 is found in the development section. In K.271, it is strictly thematic based on the main subject; in K.482, it is nearly completely free, a fantasy-like “piece of embroidery”, a modulation touching the serious minor keys of C minor (anticipating the *Andante* to come), F minor, and B-flat minor (recalling a dramatic passage in the same key during the solo exposition).

Although there is much more we could say about this gigantic first movement (second in length only to that of K.467), we must not fail to mention one of Mozart’s happiest inspirations: a horn theme that appears only twice, once at the end of the orchestra introduction and again in the recapitulation towards the end of the movement – *and for a third time in my cadenza*. The theme starts with the notes E flat-G-F-B flat and is, in the view of Olivier Messiaen, “one of Mozart’s most enjoyable ideas” – nobody but Mozart could have created it. (See Messiaen’s *Les 22 concertos pour piano de Mozart*, Paris, 1987.)

It speaks for the sensitivity of Mozart’s first audience that they immediately recognized the greatness of the tragic *Andante* second movement. In structure, it is a variation movement based on a sorrowful theme of 32 measures, an unusual length for a variation subject. The theme begins with the string orchestra playing with muted strings in the violins and is then taken up and elaborated by the solo piano. The flow of variations is interrupted twice by two episodes in the major featuring the wind instruments. These episodes seem to be unrelated to the rest of the *Andante* and create the impression of a group of friends seeking to console an unhappy, despairing individual – the soloist; but all in vain, as it would appear. At the end of this tragic movement, the concluding motif of the first of the episodes is transposed from E flat major to the basic key of C minor – as if friends finally were moved to join in the lamentations of their unhappy companion.

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Yet life goes on, there is hope, there is joy! The last movement – the crown of the concerto – starts with another of Mozart's happiest inspirations, a serene tune no one else could have invented. Although it is written for the solo piano, in fact it has the character of a horn tune, more so even than the themes in the final movements of his horn concertos, K.417, K.447 or K.495. This charming theme restores anew the serenity of the first movement. It is played first by the solo piano, followed immediately by the chorus of the full orchestra happily joining in. But Mozart, being aware of its original inspiration, brings this theme back to the horn at the very end of the movement, when the solo horn plays it at last in unison with the flute and the solo piano.

The rest of the exposition is a succession of lovely tunes and brilliant solo passages with a display of virtuosity rarely found elsewhere. After the expected return of the solo theme and its repeat by the full orchestra, the orchestra then develops the end of the theme (measures 6 and 7) in symphonic fashion until – suddenly – it stops on a long chord (just as happens in a similar place in the *Jenamy* concerto K.271).

What follows then is a peaceful, dreamlike intermezzo in A flat major with the wind group alternating with the solo piano and the accompanying strings. This *Andantino*, even more beautiful than the *Menuetto cantabile* of K.271, belongs to Mozart's most sublime inspirations: music too eloquent for words.

But this "dream" cannot last: it "dissolves" into a mysterious modulation back to the main key of the concerto, a modulation carried out by the *pizzicato* strings with syncopations of the piano against a background of delicate wind harmonies in *pianissimo*. After a sustained pause on the chord of the dominant, a brief piano improvisation leads back to the vitality and the exuberance of the rondo's main part, running full speed into the cadenza.

In playing my own cadenza, I took the liberty of following an ingenious idea of Edwin Fischer by quoting again the tune of the *Andantino* – a happy moment briefly recalled. And then, after this last respite, the original rondo theme takes command again and leads this great concerto to its triumphant close.

Paul Badura-Skoda

Piano Concerto in C minor, K.491

Completed on March 24, 1786

What went through Mozart's mind when he composed this tragic work shortly before finishing the exhilarating, exuberant *Marriage of Figaro*? We shall never know, but one thing seems certain: all his setbacks, all his suffering went into this concerto while in the predominantly joyful *Figaro* there was hardly room for the expression of pain.

Everything in this concerto is unusual. To begin with the autograph score: unlike Mozart's neat manuscripts this score combines sketch, working copy and finished version. Like in no other work, we can gain here insights into Mozart's working process and his struggle for perfection. The original idea was there from the very beginning. However, subsidiary themes and solo passages often needed improvements or changes of position. Thus the piano part in particular, first only notated as a draft, was often worked over again. In certain places several versions were written on top of each other. Sometimes, when there was no room left in the piano part, Mozart used the lines above and wrote new piano passages in the system of trumpets and tympanis (in one case – first movement, m.332 – the note G written before for trumpets and tympani nearly disappeared under the piano passages and is still left out by all the editors – a clear error!). Only in a few cases original abbreviations were not carried out and left incomplete. In most cases they concern the continuation of previous passages in a similar pattern where hardly any doubt may arise (yet some interpreters have taken these abbreviations literally and performed long notes instead of sixteenths). A first draft of a second movement (K 491 a) was written on a separate sheet not attached to the score. After only three measures, Mozart abandoned it, apparently because it was not simple enough. To achieve simplicity is not a simple matter!

Mozart used in his concerto all the symbols for the expression of the tragic known in music of the Classical period and indeed long before. They are:
 minor key, chromaticism, diminished sevenths in
 melody and harmony, chords of the Neapolitan sixth,
 descending themes or motives

To these Mozart added a personal formula for the expression of pain and anguish, namely the encircling of the fifth G by its neighbouring semitones A-flat and F-sharp. These 3 notes create a poignant effect found also in the Masonic Funeral Music K.477, in the Piano Fantasy C minor K.475 and in the slow movement of the E-flat major Concerto K.482, all composed 1785-86.

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The only other symbol for tragedy not found in this concerto are "painful" dissonances. One is reminded of Mozart's aesthetical confession: "Music has to remain beautiful even when expressing the ugly". (See his letter of September 26, 1781 about the Abduction: "...because the passions, whether violent or not, never ought to be expressed up to the point of disgust, therefore music too – even in the most horrific situation – must not offend the ear. . .and must remain Music. Therefore, I have chosen not a foreign tone for that aria, but a friendly one. . . .")

This relative lack of dissonances and the beautiful dreamlike wind ensembles may lead more than one listener to find this work enjoyable, even serene. In no other concerto did Mozart use such a rich wind section including both oboes and clarinets. These wind episodes, particularly in the 2nd and 3rd movements, have a "soothing" effect; indeed, they nearly form a "Concertino" within the piano concerto, suggesting a ray of hope beneath a tragic foil.

Mozart's themes undergo transformations: a consoling subsidiary theme in the major key might later become sad and melancholy. Only the main theme of the first movement is unable to undergo any metamorphosis: its key signature is the minor mode, which establishes the tragic frame of the whole work. When the relative key of E-flat major is reached during the piano exposition, the main theme is quoted by the flute. However, instead of the expected major key, it immediately detours into E-flat minor, thus making room for a "Romantic" modulation not found elsewhere in Mozart.

First movement Allegro

Even the unsophisticated listener who is not familiar with these symbols, will feel that something out of the ordinary is taking place in this concerto. The very beginning, in unison without underlying harmonies, has a menacing effect, like the silence before a thunderstorm. And surely a passionate outbreak of the full orchestra follows soon. This main theme, asymmetrical, consisting of a quiet, brooding phrase of 4 measures followed by a poignant chaconne rhythm, will come to dominate the whole 1st movement. It is omnipresent: in the upper register or in the bass, or as a rhythmic counterpoint to solo passages. The epilogue of the long orchestral exposition, quoting the chaconne rhythm again, is like a premonition of the *Rex tremendae majestatis* in Mozart's Requiem.

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Against these "forces of destiny", a solo piano (or Mozart's even weaker fortepiano) seems hopelessly inadequate. Obviously a solo start with the main theme (frequent in other concertos) was out of the place here, because an *antithesis* must have been intended: "Fate" represented by the powerful *tutti*, as opposed to "Man", the struggling individual. Therefore the piano enters with an expressive, lamenting melody which seems to come from a different world, the world of the suffering individual. As a logical consequence of this juxtaposition, the solo piano never quotes the tutti theme (only in my cadenza I took exception, quoting the main theme as a gesture of protest against destiny). Yet such a metaphor is too schematic. "Fate", as represented by the orchestra, has also human traits and "Man" (piano) is not only a helpless subject but enters in dialogue with it. Especially during the "friendly" subsidiary themes (major key) an intimate dialogue is reached with single instruments or whole groups, an interaction not to be found elsewhere in Mozart's concertos. Only towards the end of the development section is a real conflict reached, when the excited arpeggios of the piano alternate with the tutti and produce an astonishing intensity of sound (even if a period piano is used). But resignation follows: In the recapitulation all themes are played in the minor key. After the cadenza, the piano reappears – another unusual feature – playing broken harmonies as an accompaniment to fragments of the Chaconne motive in the winds. The first movement ends *pianissimo*, in hopeless resignation.

Second movement Larghetto

After this despairing ending, the second movement appears like a blissful dream, a friendly vision. It is a principle in Classical music that in serious, tragic works, the central movement offers a serene contrast. Also in the theatre, tragedies usually contain contrasting hopeful scenes, and such scenes must not be too happy lest they destroy the unity of the piece. In this concerto Mozart succeeded very well by choosing a five part Rondo form ABACA + Coda. The *Larghetto's* main key is E-flat major, the relative key to C minor, while the episodes are in C minor and A-flat major respectively. In the "serious" C minor episode, the main tune is given to the austere sound of the oboes while in the second episode the "sweet" clarinets dominate. Thus a perfect contrast to the outer movements is achieved. Had Mozart chosen only one episode in C minor this movement might have offered not enough positive contrast while a single episode in a major key would have rendered this movement too light, too harmless.

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The stroke of genius, however, is the enchanting main tune, first "sung" by the piano and then repeated like a chorus by the orchestra. Only Mozart (and perhaps later Schubert) could invent such a simple melody in which very few notes contain the deepest meaning. Undoubtedly inspired by the singing voice this theme could be sung easily with an underlying text like "Lovely Elisabeth/dearest to my heart/Let's be together/never shall we part." Not only this theme but also other motives in this movement contain so very few notes that the soloist's task has become a very delicate, subtle one: to convey the deepest feelings with these few sparing notes. The soul is here fully exposed, quasi naked. Of course the question arises whether these notes represent only a skeleton which demands embellishment. The fact that even good composers like Hummel or Cramer were unsuccessful in doing this, speaks against it. These apparently simple melodies are not skeletons but an ultimate condensation. Who would dare to "enrich" Mozart's *Ave verum* by adding notes to it? (The objection to embellish does not concern the two fermatas [pauses] which certainly require short lead-ins.)

Third movement Allegretto

After the blissful ending of the *Larghetto*, the return to the minor has a rather depressing effect. This movement is a set of variations on a gloomy march tune – a rather rare form for a final movement. In this case there is nothing to equal the serene playfulness usually associated with variations. Quite the contrary: The inexorable succession of these variations has nearly a hypnotic effect. A particular feature of this theme is a sort of refrain with a new harmony, the *Neapolitan four-six chord*, a variant of the normal Neapolitan chord which – by its unusual voice-leading – emphasizes the uncanny atmosphere of this movement. The inexorable succession of variations is alleviated twice by episodes in major keys only loosely related to the theme (thus, in fact, one could call this movement a combination of variation- and rondo form). The second episode in particular conveys a distinct impression; it is the only moment in the whole concerto that the variant key, the "bright" C major, appears. Could it be possible that there would be a "happy end" as in the D minor concerto written a year earlier? No, such a solution would be foreign to the immensely tragic character of the C minor concerto. Therefore the work returns after this Fata Morgana of hope to its prevailing dark gloomy atmosphere. After a pause, the theme reappears in an accelerated version leading into a sort of *danse macabre* as if haunted by furies – and finishing thus this unique work.

Paul Badura-Skoda, December 2003

Coronation Concerto in D Major, K.537

A Unique Case

(Entered in works catalogue as of 24 February 1788)

There arise quite a few questions surrounding this work which have never been answered satisfactorily. The most obvious question is: why did Mozart compose a new piano concerto early in 1788, having already at his disposal no less than 12 masterworks in this genre (from K.449 to K.503) written in Vienna earlier, or even 15 if we include the concertos K.413-415 from the 1782-83 period?

The most plausible answer would be that the work was commissioned. Yet no such thing is known (in fact, during the years 1786-90 there was a low ebb of commissions.) Thus the most likely answer is that Mozart wrote it for himself with a certain purpose in mind (indeed, there is some speculation that an "Academy" took place in Vienna in the summer of 1788, but no definite proof has been found yet; of course, he would have played this new concerto on that occasion). His purpose is not difficult to guess if we consider the fact that Mozart performed this work twice abroad, namely on April 14, 1789 in Dresden and (nearly certainly) on October 15, 1790 in Frankfurt on the occasion of the coronation of the emperor Leopold II. It follows that the Coronation Concerto was destined for concert tours.

In view of this, the nature of the orchestra's accompaniment becomes meaningful: on the one hand, it presents the "festive" symphonic setting as does the majestic Concerto in C major K 503; on the other hand, the typical dialogue between piano and other instruments is missing here during the extended solo episodes. Not a single time in this concerto does the piano lend harmonic support to other instruments by accompanying themes played by them. No, here the piano remains always the star, the protagonist. The lack of dialogue with other instruments, sometimes considered a shortcoming - even by the eminent scholar Marius Flothuis - turns out to be a "futuristic" idea: from here it is only a small step to the concertos by Chopin where the orchestra sets an impressive long-drawn frame (alas, not as well orchestrated as in Mozart's scores) but has little to say once the soloist enters. Even Rachmaninov is more conservative than Mozart: in his second piano concerto the main theme is played by the orchestra while the piano "accompanies".

It is a high achievement of Mozart's genius that still every instrument of the orchestra gets interesting, valuable musical tasks. Of course, the simpler orchestration and the nearly total lack of dialogue fulfils a practical purpose. Less rehearsal time is needed and the part of the solo pianist is not hidden. In view of a "touring concerto", Mozart's entry into his work catalogue

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takes on new and special meaning: he wrote, "*A piano concerto in D major for 2 violins, viola and bass, 1 flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets and tympany ad libitum.*" Maybe Mozart meant that only the trumpets and tympani could be left out, yet in fact, the concerto is written in such a way that a performance only with strings could be feasible though with considerable loss of tone colour. From this point of view, the layout reminds us of the earlier concertos K 413-415 and K 449, which according to Mozart's own statement could be performed without winds. Yet here the range of expression is wider: there are moments of sadness and melancholy missing in those earlier concertos. Besides, the scope is much larger, more symphonic than chamber music-like. Indeed, the first movement is one of the longest among all concertos. (If the concluding *tutti* after the cadenza were not that short, it would even surpass in length K 467). As to be expected the solo part is very brilliant – not only the composer, but also the performer is inviting admiration; and yet the piano part is less difficult to perform than in the concertos K.450, 467, 491, and 503. While on tour one has less opportunity to practice.

But the concerto K.537 poses still another riddle! While in the manuscript the notation for the orchestra is neat and finished, the piano part is left for long stretches with blank spaces for the accompaniment. Thus the whole second movement contains only the right hand part. The most plausible explanation for these omissions would be lack of time. However, 14 months passed between the notation of the score and the first known performance. Why this hurry?

Only two possible answers may be given: either Mozart was hoping for an earlier performance or else he was kept busy with the composition of other works. Despite the fact that few compositions were marked in his catalogue, it is known that he composed immediately afterwards three new arias for *Don Giovanni* for the Vienna performance of May 7, 1788, all of which required previous sketches and considerations. And only one week after this concerto, he finished the bravura aria K.538 for Aloysia Lange, his early love. Even though the first draft for it dates from ten years earlier, the writing of these 212 measures must also have involved considerable emotional stress.

Of course, he could have completed the missing parts later for the 1790 performances but didn't feel inclined to do so, apparently being his own performer. One is reminded of his playing the piano-violin sonata K.454 with Miss Strinasacchi from nearly empty pages, with only the violin part written out in the score. He filled in the piano part later when the work was published and had often to cram in many notes in too little space.

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Only after Mozart's death were the missing parts in K.537 completed, most probably in 1794 by Johann André, the first publisher to whom we also owe the reference that this concerto was played at the coronation (he might have seen a document which was lost later). André was a gifted musician. While in a few places his reconstruction is quite accomplished, there are others in which he failed with wrong voice leading, wrong harmonies, and clumsy setting. Altogether his work might deserve a mark of "satisfactory", perhaps a letter grade of C minus. Because André did not mention that a great part of the accompaniment was due to him, it was believed for nearly 150 years that every note was by Mozart. Only in about 1935 when the first Urtext edition appeared did the facts become known. (One is appalled by the thought of what would have happened if the original manuscript had been lost.) Apart from obvious mistakes in André's rendering it can be said that he was too "gabby", talkative, printing typical Alberti figurations where Mozart almost certainly would have preferred rests.

It was mainly this unsatisfying completion which influenced a somewhat negative opinion of the whole work by Mozart; I was one of those few who considered the Coronation Concerto as a less convincing work by Mozart (see *the German version of Eva and Paul Badura-Skoda: "Mozart-Interpretation" Vienna 1957, pp.288-295*). Only when I seriously attempted to play the work years later, I found out that it was the partly awkward accompaniment by André that seriously impeded the value of this fine concerto. From then on I felt the necessity to embark on a new completion which should give more justice to Mozart. From the outset I recognized the working principle: identical or similar passages in other Mozartian piano works should serve as models. If a theme was played by the orchestra before or after the solo entrance, the piano ought to follow the harmonic progressions of the tutti (a principle not adhered to by André). My self-imposed task turned out to be much more difficult than I had imagined at first. Studying Mozart's accompaniments in most of his piano works I discovered a wealth of invention. What appeared often so natural had been in fact the result of a refined process of sublimation. Many of my reconstructions were made intuitively. Later on did I "see" that my setting of mm. 128-135 in the first movement was influenced by a similar pattern in the opening Allegro of the Concerto K.595, namely mm. 106-113. Likewise in the larghetto of K.537, mm. 21-24, my accompanying harmonies are derived from the Adagio of the piano sonata K.576. During my attempt for a more Mozartian reconstruction I also got some inspiration for writing new cadenzas and lead-ins in place of Mozart's cadenzas which are lost. I hope my completion will please listeners and induce pianists to perform this beautiful concerto more frequently.

Paul Badura-Skoda

Piano Concerto in B flat Major, K.595

Completed on January 5, 1791

Did Mozart have a foreboding that the year 1791, which started with the composition of this concerto, would be his last one? Apparently this seems not to have been the case. In fact, after the disastrous year of 1790, this year started well: Mozart was in good health and at another peak of creativity and new commissions were forthcoming. The Concerto K.595 was printed in August of the same year. In January and February Mozart wrote a series of dances for the Vienna ball season; shortly thereafter he composed a true work of genius, his Fantasy in F minor K.608 for the mechanical organ of count Deym, followed by the sublime Piano Variations K.613 and his last String Quintet K.614 (a commission from Johann Tost).

In only 6 months he composed the *Magic Flute* which became such a success that Mozart – had he lived longer – would probably have solved all his financial troubles. The sheer amount of works created in this year is staggering, even for Mozart: rather as a side product the opera *La Clemenza di Tito* (written in only 19 days!) was composed as well as the Clarinet Concerto K.622, the Ave Verum K.618, and of course the torso of his Requiem Mass. A jewel like the *Adagio for Glass Harmonica* (K 617 a) was not even considered worth of being entered into his catalogue of works.

The only parallel to such a superhuman achievement can be found in Schubert's last year, when the 31year-old genius, haunted by the premonition of his early death, created one masterpiece after another. It seems that Mozart, too, despite the appearance of well-being, had similar premonitions: When in December 1790 he said goodbye to his friend Haydn who was about to sail for London, he burst into tears: I am afraid, Papa, we shall never see each other again. (Whereupon Haydn got slightly annoyed, thinking that Mozart had meant him and replied that at 58 years he had no intention of dying just yet).

Back to our concerto! Mozart himself played it on March 4 at a benefit concert for the clarinetist Joseph Baehr. This was the last time that the Vienna music lovers, who for years had turned their back on Mozart, could hear his wonderful playing.

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The general character of this concerto is serene. Yet behind this appearance of serenity one can sense a deep sadness expressed in those frequent turns to the minor key. Or is it an expression of unfulfilled longing? The mood of a letter written months later, on July 7, to his wife, could have prevailed already then: *... I cannot explain to you my emotion; there is an emptiness – which in fact is painful – and a certain yearning which is never satisfied and therefore is continuing, even growing from day to day ... even my work does not give me pleasure ... when I go to the piano and sing something from the opera (the Magic Flute), I have to stop immediately, it stirs in me too much emotion – Basta!*

It is amazing how this underlying feeling of melancholy has been recognized by various commentators. Olivier Messiaen wrote in his account of "the 22 concertos by Mozart", in 1990: *"Despite the joy of the finale one can sense behind every note a feeling of resignation and renouncement."* And Friedrich Blume: *Everything seems to be drawn into a fine mist which makes the colours appear milder. "Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben" ("In the reflection of colours we seize life.")* (Goethe, *Faust II*). And in the Preface to the Eulenburg score No. 4899 (ca. 1935): *It is rather a blissful loftiness than irony or resignation, a detachment from early matters ... one notes the song-like simplicity of its themes leading to the Magic Flute and the Requiem.*

This special emotional character is also reflected in the structure. No other concerto starts with a calm, graceful melody preceded by a whole measure of mere harmony to set the mood. This melody is subdivided into three groups of 4 1/2, 3 and 2 1/2 bars, interrupted twice by a "fanfare" of the wind section, as if saying "See what a master!" This fanfare signal plays an important role later in this movement, changing its character from encouragement to protest or questioning. (It also has a structural significance, being a kind of response to the mere harmony of the introductory measure.)

A perfect symmetry is found in the opening theme of the second movement: starting with the E flat, it rises first to the upper fourth, A flat, followed by a descent to the lower fourth, B flat. Themes containing only very few notes tend to have a lofty, prayer-like character. A short chromatic connection between bars 4 and 5 recalls the only chromatic passage in the ritornello of the first movement. Another unifying element of this concerto is the rising and falling triad of B flat major found in both the opening of the first and the third movements, the theme of which foreshadows the Lied written immediately after this concerto, *Longing for the Spring*, K.596. It was to be Mozart's last spring.

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One word about the cadenzas: they take themes and motifs from the respective movements and – like in a kaleidoscope – put them into different combinations and illuminations introducing new virtuoso passages as links. Mozart's cadenza to the 3rd movement is his longest – hardly a "frozen" improvisation but rather a perfect organism fitting seamlessly into the rest. It is a fortunate occurrence that Mozart's autograph came to light in Russia a few years ago. Thus the questioned authenticity of the lead-in to the third movement could be proved to be Mozart's.

Paul Badura-Skoda, November 2004