

OCR A level AoS 1: Mozart Quintet for piano and wind

KS5

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OCR Area of Study 1: Instrumental music of the Classical period

Mozart's Quintet in E flat for piano and wind, K452, should be studied and contextualised within a number of other works in this area of study. Given its wind focus, the work should be studied alongside some of Mozart's other wind chamber music, including his Horn Quintet and wind serenades (all written at a similar time). Mozart's string quartets should not be dismissed since comparisons between string writing, textures and dialogue will be interesting. As with all prescribed works, understanding Mozart's (and his contemporaries') movements in Europe at this time is important for placing the work in context.

A suggested activity is to create a Classical timeline, plotting the key dates and compositions of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven alongside other key events of the period. This visual aid will give a useful overview for students. Some might prefer to create one of their own, or there's potential for researching individually and creating one together.

Context

Mozart had recently moved to Vienna (in 1781) and was employed by Prince-Archbishop Hieronymus Colloredo, living with and being part of his entourage. Mozart was ambitious, but in his employment, he was forbidden from earning money composing for or playing in concerts, which he found frustrating. Mozart was keen to work for the Emperor Joseph II, and was denied an opportunity to earn a fee of half his yearly salary in just one concert. The composer attempted to resign, but the Archbishop initially denied this. Soon after, the Archbishop dismissed Mozart, who decided to remain in Vienna and forge his career and reputation as a freelance performer and composer. The following few years were happy for Mozart: he flourished as a pianist and gained notoriety as a composer as well.

In 1784, Mozart composed no fewer than half a dozen piano concertos for his subscription concerts in Vienna. The first of them, No. 14 K449, was scored for piano and strings, but with oboes and horns *ad libitum* – giving the potential for work to be performed as chamber music without losing any essential material. He had written his three previous piano concertos in this manner (K413-415), but after this came a very different concerto. Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 15 in B flat, K450, brings the woodwind to the fore, with the oboes and bassoons being given the main theme in its first movement, and the long serenade-like melodies of its second movement are often scored for piano and wind instruments alone.

On 30 March 1784, just a fortnight after this Concerto was written, Mozart completed his Quintet in E flat for piano, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon, K452. Its premiere was two days later at the Imperial and Royal National Court in Vienna. Mozart proudly wrote to his father that 'I myself consider it the best thing I have written in my life' and that it had received 'extraordinary applause'. The work is, indeed, extraordinary. The dialogue and interweaving between the piano and wind occur subtly and naturally between and within phrases, with a similar lyricism to that found in many of Mozart's operatic ensembles. Despite the limited capacities of his instruments, the melodic material is designed accordingly: shorter phrases create and resolve tension at a rapid rate, but feel longer as they pass effortlessly between instruments.

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Quintet for piano and wind, K452, second and third movements

The Quintet is a typical three-movement work. OCR prescribes the second and third movements for close study, but as with all music, it will benefit the student to listen and understand the first movement as well.

- ▶ 1 Largo – Allegro moderato
- ▶ 2 Larghetto
- ▶ 3 Rondo: Allegretto







Analysis

The analysis below takes on board the elements of music with reference to the OCR A level specification. The elements are grouped slightly different from OCR in this resource (in order to save space) but the relevant ones are covered. Teachers should refer to page 13 of the specification for more details.

Second movement: Larghetto

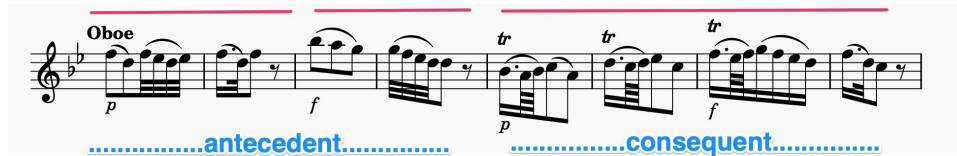
Structure and tonality

The structure of this movement is widely agreed to be sonata form, though Mozart's writing does not always strictly adhere to this form. New material is presented in the development section, and tonality strays in the exposition almost as much as it does in the development as well. It is on the tonic and dominant keys that we seek the anchor of this form, as well as the reappearances of the exposition's themes in the recapitulation. The first subject (a) and the second subject (c) are bridged by a transitional idea (b). The outline of the movement can be seen here (all themes are written at concert pitch):

Section	Main 'themes'	Bar numbers	Key
Exposition (bars 1-43)	First subject (a): 	1-8	B flat major
	Transition (b): 	19-22	B flat major Passes through G minor and other keys
	Second subject (c): 32 	32-40	F major
Development (bars 44-73)		51-56	E flat major
	Various textural and motivic developments follow this (see later)	57-72	Passes through a number of tonalities (see later)
Recapitulation (bars 74-end)	The first subject returns but is rescored in the ensemble, along with being heavily decorated (a')	74-91	B flat major
	The transition idea's shape has changed, though the rhythms are familiar (b'): 	92-95	Begins in B flat major, passes through C minor and explores other less related tonalities.
	The second subject's rhythm has changed a little (c'): 	113-end	B flat major

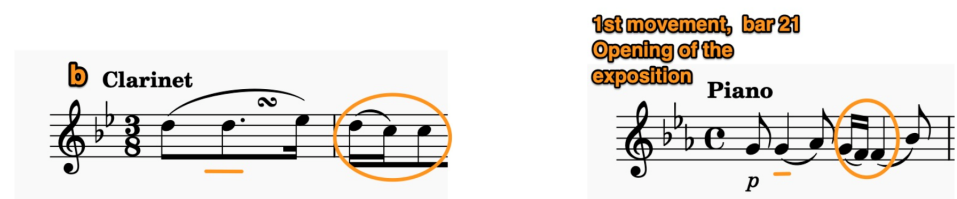
Melodic construction, phrasing and other devices

As mentioned in the Context section above, the melodies of this work are often shorter in order to accommodate the limitations of the instruments, but this does not compromise on the beauty or lyricism of Mozart’s writing. The first subject (a) is a typical Classical antecedent and consequent phrase of four bars each. The antecedent itself is made up of two bar phrases, with the consequent being a longer four-bar phrase, typical of Mozart’s writing:



To accommodate the wind players even further, Mozart also passes many of the melodies around the instruments, often in two-bar antecedent and consequent phrases. The result is effortless and long melodic lines.

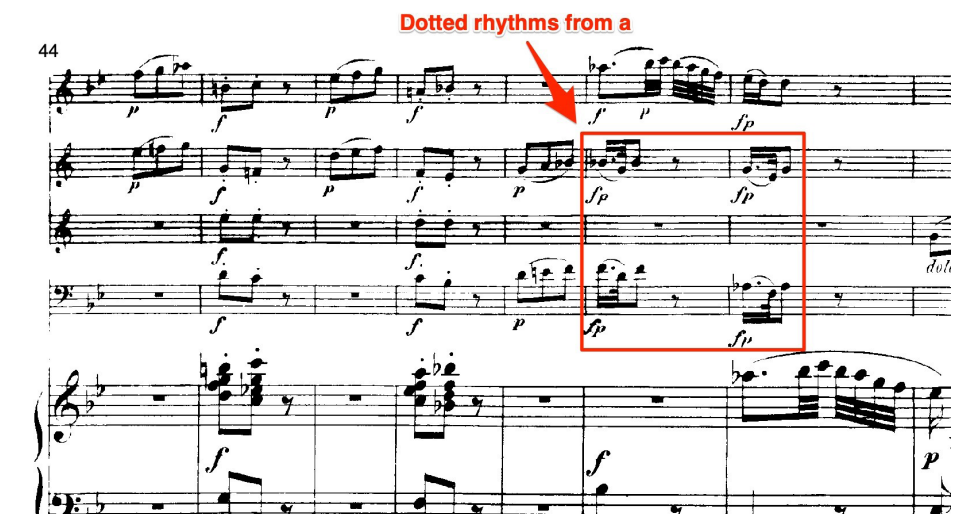
Melodies a and b are mainly scalic and conjunct, with occasional leaps. It is worth noting how similar idea b is to the opening of the exposition of the first movement. The rhythms are similar (with a longer second note), followed by a fall of a second:



Idea c contrasts a and b by having the falling 6th as its central idea, though its following melody returns to the scalic flourishes:



The development section presents new melodic material. Bars 44-50 act as almost a transition, though echoes of idea a can be found in the clarinet and bassoon:



Ornamentation and decoration are key features of the melodies and their development in this movement. The turn and the trill are used frequently throughout, and are fundamental parts of the melodies themselves. We hear Mozart's genius when ideas a, b and c return in the exposition and are not only rescored, but also significantly decorated.

At bar 74, it's the piano that restates the opening theme, but the second half of the first phrase (bar 76) is decorated with triplets. Instead of silences between the phrases, Mozart writes more scales to connect them. The changes and decorations of all three opening themes cannot be covered in detail here, but subtle changes of shape and additional decorative notes and ornaments make for a recapitulation that goes beyond a simple restatement of the original themes.

Harmonic language

As mentioned above in connection with the structure, the tonal journey of the movement is not quite as conventional as that of a typical sonata form movement. The music does move from the tonic to the dominant by the end of the exposition, and remains mainly in the home key in the recapitulation. These modulations, however, do not necessarily align with a first and second subject. Indeed, the second idea (b) is mainly in G minor, passing through other keys, and the idea c is in the dominant (F major).

The harmonic language of this movement is diatonic and functional, with most chords in root position or first inversion. There are moments of chromaticism and a significant tonal departure in all three sections, which create harmonic interest.

In bars 28-31 in the exposition, Mozart pairs diminished 7th chords with diatonic chords, enabling the music to pass through keys quickly, due to the diminished 7th chord bassline rise giving the impression of a first inversion dominant 7th to tonic rise. The result is a harmonic hemiola:

28

legato

cresc.

p

dim 7th - G dim 7th - Dm lb of C lc of F dim 7th - vi iib - lc - V7 - I

↑
Brief suggestion of dominant of dominant (C major)

F major (dominant)

In the development, it's falling pairs that create harmonic tension. In bars 58-61, half-diminished chords fall to dominant 7ths that are not resolved. In bars 62-65, the semitone descent continues to take the music further away from any related keys (a feature of the development section). After landing on the final dominant 7th chord in bar 65 (C7), the lack of resolution continues into bar 66, with a surprise open 5th, suggesting a brief passing through E minor:

* = half diminished chords

Repeated idea (persistent) to add to tension

Dim 7th - German 6th

German 6th - 2nd inversion suggests a potential cadence in G minor, but no!

D7 * G7 * C7

* F7 * Bb7 Gm/D Eb7/Db..... C7 E minor? Open 5th

In bars 67-73, the music begins to return to somewhere familiar, though this time is unsettled by a number of second inversion chords interspersed with diminished 7th chords, before the final one (bar 72) resolves in the cadential progression (Ic-V7-I) to return to the tonic key and the recapitulation. The harmonic rhythm has also slowed down:

Dim 7th Ic of C Dim 7th Ic of Dm Dim 7th Ic of Bb - V7 - I

In the exposition, in bars 101-108, the harmonic hemiola returns before the movement finally settles in the home key.

Texture and instrumentation

The piano was the focus of Mozart's composing and performing at the time of writing this work, and his new focus on wind instruments paved the way for some beautiful writing, culminating in his serenades a few years later. What he does with the writing is perhaps what led him to proclaim this as his finest work to his father. Within the confines and limitations of the wind instruments, Mozart passes the shorter phrases around the texture in a such a seamless fashion that the listener hears them as much longer lyrical phrases. The contrast in textures feel unnoticeable as they seem to merge effortlessly from one to another.

Exposition

The movement opens with a homophonic, hymn-like texture. The opening 10ths between the bassoon and oboe (in bars 1-2) are doubled by the piano in the following two bars. Bars 5-8 are fuller in texture as the wind instruments play homophonically with the piano providing the bassline. The opening idea is repeated at bar 9 with different scoring: the piano plays in 10ths while the oboe plays the dominant pedal (this was played by the horn in the opening). The oboe and clarinet take over in bar 11, the first of many exchanges of melody in this movement. The piano begins to accompany in a more conventional fashion of bassline and broken chords.

As theme *b* is passed around the wind instruments, the arpeggiated piano accompaniment begins to explore more of the range of the piano. The overall texture is melody and accompaniment from bars 19-27.

The transition into theme *c* (bars 29-31) brings the wind instruments into a homophonic texture as the piano accompaniment becomes more Alberti bass-like. When theme *c* arrives in bar 32, the texture returns to a melody and accompaniment, with the piano introducing the theme, while the lower three wind instruments play a repeated semiquaver accompaniment. At bar 36 the melody is repeated with the semiquaver accompaniment in the left hand of the piano. The clarinet imitates this idea a quaver later, and the bassoon plays rising arpeggios.

Development

Like the exposition, the texture is homophonic at the opening of the development, though far less lyrical. The punctuating cadences at bars 46 and 48 are abrupt, before a return to the lyricism of the movement. The new idea at bar 51 is accompanied by repeating semiquavers returning in the piano accompaniment.

A more complex texture ensues, and the turning motif being is passed around within it. The bare octaves of the left hand from bar 57 blur the already rapidly changing tonality. The repeated semiquavers continue in the wind instruments from bars 62-65, before moving to the bassline from bar 66. The long sustained wind lines remind us of a pensive operatic ensemble, while the piano plays ideas based on earlier themes.





Recapitulation




At bar 74, the opening idea returns, but this time in the piano first. While the textures remain similar to the opening, it is the decorated melodies that create new interest in this section.

Third movement: Rondo: Allegretto

Structure and tonality

Much like many final movements of the Classical period, this is in rondo form. Naturally Mozart adds some unconventional sections, and links the motivic material between the different sections. The structure is ABACA (C includes a cadenza). The overall structure, main themes and tonality are shown in the table below (bar numbers quoted below take the two-beat anacrusis as bar 1, as is done in some editions, but be aware that other editions begin bar 1 from the first full bar):

Section	Main 'themes'	Bar numbers	Key
A (bars 1-40)		1-17'	E flat major
		17 ² -33'	E flat major
			
B (bars 41-72)		41-44	B flat major
	Transition material	45-72	B flat major
A (bars 72-88')	Only the first theme is presented here.	72-88'	E flat major

	<p>New theme:</p> 	89 ² -98 ²	C minor
	<p>Material from second theme of A:</p> 	98 ² -104 ¹	C minor
<p>C (bars 89-207)</p>	<p>Triplets in the piano with sustained chords in the wind chords.</p>	104-122	C minor Passes through related keys via cycle of 5ths
	<p>Syncopated idea:</p> 	123-130	B flat major
	<p>Return of theme from section B, followed by the second theme of section A.</p>	131-150	E flat major
	<p>Transition passage towards cadenza.</p>	151-159	E flat major
	<p>Cadenza includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Counterpoint in wind ▶ Triplets return in piano ▶ New material ▶ All the instruments play in the cadenza, so it is measured and not free, like in traditional solo cadenzas 	160-207 ¹	E flat major
<p>A (bars 206³-214¹)</p>	<p>Coda – octaves in the piano broken into quavers and then triplets (from C), sustained wind playing which then turns into chordal punctuations (heard in B) to close the work.</p>	214-end	E flat major

Melody, phrasing and other devices

As seen above, the melodic ideas from all three sections can often be linked to each other.

Section A

In the first theme of this section, the melody is based on the rising broken chord (which usefully outlines the tonality as well). Where the melody rises, it is followed by a fall. This is the same for the second theme: though faster, the quavers fall and then rise:

2nd theme

Section B

The first half of this theme is a joyous dotted theme, with the second half reminding us of the syncopated rhythm from the first movement:

41

The transition material is something which we will hear at the end of the work:

52

Section C

This section opens with falling melody in the notes of the new key (C minor) with the melody again, returning to original pitch. This is then repeated and imitated by the horn two beats later (bars 89-96). This leads into a C minor version of the second theme of section A.

The sustained wind chords from bars 105-122 remind us of the operatic ensemble, with notes only moving (usually by step) to accommodate the change of chords.

As mentioned in the table above, we hear the theme from section B in E flat major (in bar 131), followed by the second theme of section A in bar 138. The cadenza reminds us of the learned Baroque style of counterpoint with its continuing suspensions.

At bar 178, the new melody combines a large leap with a scalic descent, which is passed around the texture:

The closing passages of the cadenza are a playful interplay based on three falling or rising notes over a tonic pedal. These three notes become pairs, before leading to the opening of section A:

Harmony and tonality

In this movement, the tonal functional harmony is coloured with moments of chromaticism, suspensions and the occasional chromatic chord. The movement does contain more dissonances, but they are prepared and resolved conventionally in Mozart's typical style. The cycle of 5ths is also used to move quickly through keys, but overall, the tonal journey passes through related and expected keys.

The pause on Ic before the cadenza is a typical feature of this moment in a movement. It is resolved with a V⁷-I cadence after the cadenza to lead us back into Section A.

Suspensions

Suspensions are a key feature of the cadenza in particular. In bars 160-166, the suspensions are prepared and resolved in a rising melody, and then fall in bars 167-178. The passage in Section C (bars 105-121) also contain suspensions, though not as frequently as the cadenza. The music here also passes through a cycle of 5ths.

Chromatic notes and chords

The chromatic notes found throughout many of the melodies decorate them without disturbing the overall tonality. There are too many to name but perhaps some notable decorations include the chromatic decorations of the auxiliary triplets in the piano in bars 68-70.

Occasional diminished chords occur before cadences (eg at bar 62), with a German 6th at bar 196. Though not spelt out as an augmented 6th chord, the resolutions of the notes of the chord to the notes of Ic of E flat major are clear.

Textures

While predominantly melody and accompaniment, there are moments of textural variety in this movement. It's important to note that (like the third movement), rescoring of ideas (and therefore changing the timbre) is one of Mozart's main ways of changing the texture.

Mozart's variety in piano texture is worth noting in particular. His cascading arpeggios fill out the textures but perhaps most notable are the octaves broken into triplets. These first occur in bar 104, while the wind instruments play sustained chords. They return in bar 214, first of all starting as quavers and then moving to triplets by bar 222.