**Mozart’s Symphonic Development: Return to and Escape from Salzburg**

WOLFGANG A. MOZART • Symphony No. 28 in C, K. 200/189*k*

WOLFGANG A. MOZART • Sinfonia concertante for oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon and orchestra in E flat, K. 297*b*/AnhC 14.01

WOLFGANG A. MOZART • Symphony (Overture) No. 32 in G, K. 318

WOLFGANG A. MOZART • Symphony No. 36 in C, K. 425, ‘Linz’ Symphony

That Mozart had an uneasy relationship with Prince-Archbishop Hieronymus von Colloredo is well known. Colloredo’s Enlightenment reforms, condemned by many as crypto-Lutheran, did not go down well in Salzburg, just as the slightly later, often similar reforms of Joseph II would meet resistance in the Habsburg monarchy. In some respects, music suffered, whether at the Archbishop’s court or in the Cathedral that had once been Biber’s playground. However, curtailment of some ‘official’ musical activities led, in some instances, to greater opportunities elsewhere in the city, for instance in the founding of a private orchestra by Colloredo’s nephew, Count Johann Rudolf Czernin. And so, although Mozart (his father, Leopold, still more so) kept at least one eye upon possibilities in Vienna, his compositional activity, especially during the early years of Colloredo’s rule, was impressive both in quantity and in quality. Whereas symphonic composition had hitherto been for the most part something Mozart had done outside Salzburg, between Colloredo’s unpopular election in March 1772 and the end of 1774 Mozart wrote at least seventeen symphonies. Many of these works he thought of highly enough to perform in Vienna many years later. Indeed, one might think of much of the rest of Mozart’s symphonic career, at least as far as the *Linz* Symphony, as a tale of returns to Salzburg and subsequent escapes therefrom, or *vice versa*.

Mozart’s Symphony no.28, in C major, was probably one of the last, most likely composed in November 1774, possibly the previous year. As was the case with most of the symphonies of 1773 and 1774, the work benefited from a relatively large wind section (two oboes, two horns, two trumpets). What we consider prophetic should also be seen as typical. The city as whole, more so than the court orchestra itself, was well off for woodwind players; a commentator such as Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart noting ‘especially distinguished’ performers in the city. Moreover, woodwind performers, generally trained to play more than one instrument, would often double. Their solo excursions in this symphony are already highly individual, almost operatic: for instance, the horn writing in the minuet. Strings, of course, nevertheless provided the backbone.

In four movements, this is a symphony on the grand, public scale that C major often suggested to the composer. The *Allegro spirituoso* opens with a descending, declamatory C major arpeggio, lest we stand in any doubt. Terraced dynamics hark back to an earlier age; the pristine, ornate delicacy of *piano* strings’ response is very much Mozart’s own. It is some time before he leaves the tonic, moving, as expected, to the dominant for the second group; note here the duetting oboes; in Mozart, the symphony is rarely distant from the opera, and *vice versa*. Tonal disorientation at the onset of the development seems to peer far into the Mozartian chromatic future, yet also signals thoroughgoing theatrical command. The F major *Andante* sets pairs of oboes and horns against muted strings with typical operatic style. Following a swift yet sturdy reinstatement of C major in the Minuet, it and the ensuing Trio offer chromatic surprises aplenty within its modest – at least to post-Beethovenian ears – frame. Dislocations in the extraordinary finale are generally of a different nature, Mozart’s ability to elicit and to intensify tension through variation of phrase length strikingly mature, not least for an eighteen-year-old. High spirits are hard won in this sonata-form movement.

Yet, the composer, as we know, proved restless. We now move forward to one of Mozart’s most celebrated excursions from Salzburg: to Paris in 1778, in fruitless search for employment. Much ink has been spilt on the subject of the embattled *Sinfonia concertante* for oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon and orchestra, K 297*b*. We know that Mozart composed a work for flute, oboe, horn, and bassoon for a visit from Mannheim wind players to the *Concert spirituel* series in Paris, where such works were highly fashionable, but that work’s relationship to our *Sinfonia concertante* is unclear. Some scholars have dismissed it out of hand; some have thought it ‘genuine’, whatever that might mean. Robert Levin has, in his book-length study, argued, taking his leave from Samuel Baron and Barry S. Brook, that the orchestral part is not Mozart’s, but rather a nineteenth-century reconstruction; nor, Levin argues, is the first-movement cadenza. Changes have been made to the solo parts too, he believes, changes made without reference to the missing orchestral parts. Levin has offered his own reconstruction, which looks likely to prove as controversial as whatever the nineteenth-century manuscript may be that Otto Jahn discovered in the 1860s. Richard Maunder concluded his highly critical review of Levin’s *Who Wrote the Mozart Four-Wind Concertante?* with the words: ‘I fear that the answer to the question … must be: we don’t know, but the evidence suggests it wasn’t Mozart.’ Maunder suggested a nineteenth-century wholesale forgery. Is there perhaps something of JC Bach (or school thereof, in which we should surely consider Mozart anyway) here? The Neue Mozart Ausgabe, not unreasonably, places the work in a supplement, alongside other ‘doubtful or spurious’ works. Does it matter? Yes and no; it depends, as is always the case, on what our primary motivations might be. Is there music of high quality here, music too good to have puritans snatch it from us? Undoubtedly. Let us for the moment, then, leave on one side issues of attribution and authenticity, work in the spirit of Mark Everist’s admirable *Mozart’s Ghosts* and consider the riches of what we have. They were impressive enough, after all, for conductors such as Karl Böhm, Herbert von Karajan, Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, and many others, to record the work.

The writing for woodwind inevitably has us think of Mozart’s later operas. Wes should also, however, recall the Salzburg precedent mentioned above, the established importance for Paris of the *sinfonia concertante* as a genre, and certainly not least, the demand of concert audiences and performers for concertos from every instrument, witnessed by Pierre-Louis Ginguené in his 1791 *Encyclopédie méthodique*: ‘Instrumental performance has now reached so advanced a state of perfection that there is no instrument which cannot claim to shine in a concert. … The flute, the oboe, and the clarinet, have long had their concertos. Even the horn has concertos, and the sad bassoon has not foregone that advantage. I have heard the nephew of the great [Johann] Stamitz play concertos for the viola; concertos for the violoncello have made the reputation of more than one famous artist, and concertos have now been composed for the double bass.’ Whether in the opening movement, with its ‘triple exposition’, first orchestral, then twice with soloists, in the elegant and serene *Adagio*, or the deliciously catchy, unquestionably ‘operatic’ theme to the finale and the beguiling progress of its ten (highly Parisian!) variations, there is surely at least as much for us to enjoy here as there was for early audiences – whoever they may have been (or not). It is up to us whether we pick up on the details that seem to ring truest, or those that might seem to jar; as for the puzzle of all three movements having been written in the same key, E-flat major, let us leave that too for another day.

Mozart’s return to Salzburg from Paris in January 1779 seemed happy at first; yet, whilst having gained additional duties (and money) as court and cathedral organist, greater exposure, however unpleasant at times, to the musical world beyond Salzburg made it unlikely that he would linger in Salzburg long. Colloredo was unimpressed by the amount of music Mozart was writing for other occasions, arguably in contravention of a narrow reading of his contract. The one-movement G major ‘Symphony’, K. 318, was one such work. It bears witness to his time in Paris, written, unusually for Mozart, in the style of an *opéra comique*. Its first section, marked ‘Allegro spiritoso’, combines with formal balance *and* a keen sense of drama directional liveliness and grandeur. Following a charming *Andante* interlude, which not only delays the expected recapitulation but permits Mozartian woodwind balm to work its healing magic, the final *Primo tempo* section reverses the ordering of first and second subjects, again offering more than a hint of the opera house.

Speaking of Mozart’s ‘earlier’ symphonies, ‘even the *Linz*,’ Charles Rosen claimed that ‘Mozart … had striven for brilliance rather than majesty’. On the contrary: this symphony, as surely as Webern’s Passcaglia, op.1, with which Christoph von Dohnányi once so revealingly paired it, offers a typically Mozartian, typically Classical, rejection of the either/or. Rosen should have listened to Otto Klemperer. Donald Tovey was closer to the mark arguing that it ‘ranks with the supreme last triad of symphonies, the great concertos, and the great quartets and quintets, as one of Mozart’s most perfect instrumental works’. Written for a concert on the way back to Vienna, following another unhappy return to Salzburg, this time to introduce Constanze to Leopold, the *Linz* Symphony is in the ‘full’ four movements and offers a first-movement introduction of a grandeur, if not necessarily a compositional method, we perhaps more readily associate with Haydn and Beethoven’s symphonic work.

The work’s development sections (first, second, and fourth movements) are concise, even terse, by Mozart’s standards, let alone those of later composers. Tovey’s comparison with Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony, with respect to the place the work takes in Mozart’s personal development of symphonic style, is intriguing and, I think, revealing, rendering the *Prague* Symphony analogous to perhaps the Fifth and/or Sixth, which seems about right. That, again, however, is really a question for another day, save that Mozart’s œuvre, always the work of a young composer, even when, unlike the *Linz*, it is‘late’, tends always to invite the question: ‘what if…?’ For the moment, let us marvel at Mozart’s melodic profusion *and* thoroughness of thematic working in the first movement; the emotional depth – trumpets and drums signalling a new slow-movement solemnity – of the second; the well-nigh perfect marriage of Viennese minuet ‘chivalry’ and ‘feminine’ Trio charm in the third; and, last but not least, the energy with which a thematic abundance at least similar to that in the first movement carries forward the finale to its head-long, apparently effortlessly developmental conclusion.