

Let's Celebrate Mozart

BY MARIENNE USZLER

Happy Birthday, Wolfgang!

This is the year to join in the worldwide celebration of the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birthday. There are bound to be Mozart performances somewhere near you, whether these are symphonies, concertos, operas, recitals, choral concerts, or chamber music programs. There is good reason to celebrate and much music from which to choose. It is truly astounding how many remarkable and beautiful compositions Mozart produced in his very short lifetime. Even more noteworthy is the fact that he wrote brilliantly in every form and medium popular in his day, something not true even of Haydn or Beethoven.

The Source

This Minuet is included in *The Notebook for Nannerl*. Originally begun by Leopold Mozart for Wolfgang's sister, this collection is much like those compiled by Bach in the *Notebooks for Wilhelm Friedemann* and *Anna Magdalena*. It contains music by Leopold, Wolfgang (copied by his father), and more difficult works by then-contemporary composers such as Wagenseil, Tischer, and Agrell. A few of the anonymous pieces are

now credited to Leopold. Wolfgang's earliest compositions, written when he was five, are included. We will never know how completely "original" these small works are since they survive only in Leopold's hand.

A Maverick Minuet

Although it's dance-like, this Minuet sounds almost like an improvisation. In the first half, there are three ideas, each in a different style. The first four measures contain a hidden duet between the right hand and bass line, but the music gives a skipping impression as the hands "tip toe" back and forth. In measure 5, the duet melody (still hidden) begins to glide more smoothly, impelled by the rocking legato bass. The section ends with a flourish (is the lady swishing her skirts?) and a proper curtsy.

What adds spontaneity to these three ideas is the number of

24

In the first three measures of this early Mozart minuet, both hands have equal say in presenting the melody. The lower voice leads and the right hand plays catch up! Keep the thumb light in the left hand. At measure 5, the melodic interest shifts to the upper voice. Many large intervals make up the second half of the minuet.

Minuet in F Major

(from *The Notebook for Nannerl*, K. 6)

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756-1791)

Allegretto (♩ = 100-112)

measures allotted to them. The first two are expressed in four measures each. We anticipate another pair of balanced four-measure phrases, or at least another single idea of four measures. Instead we're surprised by a two-measure twirl-and-curtsy.

The second half opens with another rocking motif, now in the right hand. It arches up, then steps down primly as the bass line comes to meet it in contrary motion. Transposed repetitions of the second and third ideas follow, diverted by—another surprise—a deceptive cadence in measure 20. The final measures are Mozart's way of saying, "This is the four-measure round off you were expecting the first time!"

Discover the Melodies

Shape the phrases by playing the melodic lines as a duet. In Mm. 1-4, play the lines together, skipping all the left-hand Cs,

11

14

17

20

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before playing the notes as written. In Mm. 5-8, again skip all the left-hand Cs and also the repeated right-hand eighth notes. (When you put the right-hand repeated notes back in, just shake them out of your sleeve.) The graceful duet can then be shaped in four-measure phrases. Be ready to move your right-hand fingers in Mm. 9 and 10. Switching from the thumb to the second finger on the repeated Bs will help you play these notes cleanly. Play through all the sixteenth notes in the last group with a gentle crescendo to the dissonant B in measure 10.

Work out the second half in the same way. First shape the duet lines, then insert all the repeated notes. Make a crescendo through Mm. 17 and 18 into the sixteenth notes in measure 19. This is the highest point in the dance, and the deceptive cadence in measure 20 will be a dramatic surprise. Let the sixteenth-note groups that follow taper off to the final, polite curtsy.

More About Mozart

Use this anniversary celebration to expand your knowledge of Mozart. The Internet offers some interesting experiences. Here are a few attractive websites and what they offer.

A Sightseeing Tour

www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/shows/mozart250/multimedia/hotspots.html

- See • Buildings and places important in Mozart's life
Read • Brief commentary that explains the Mozart connection

An Abundance of Treats

www.npr.org
Check Music in the left column
Then scan down the right-hand column to click on Mozart's 250th.

- Hear • Leif Ove Andsnes play with the Vienna Philharmonic
• Mitsuko Uchida discuss what it means to perform Mozart
• Music Mozart wrote trying to find work in Salzburg
• About the women in Mozart's life
• The little birthday song that Mozart wrote for a boy named Frederick and much more ...

Got Dice?

<http://sunsite.univie.ac.at/Mozart/dice/#about>

Mozart wrote a musical dice game (Musikalisches Würfelspiel, K516f). It was published shortly after his death. The idea was to throw dice to choose measures that could be combined to create a classical minuet.

- See • A table with 176 Minuet measures and 96 Trio measures

- Rules for using your dice to create a Minuet and Trio
- Hear • The Minuet(s) you compose!

In His Own Hand

www.bl.uk/collections/treasures/mozart_broadband.html
Mozart kept a record of his compositions in the last seven years of his life.

- You can • Learn about Mozart's Thematic Catalogue
• Open the book, page by page
• Read a translation of what's on every page
• See Mozart's writing by magnifying the text
• Hear what's on every page. III

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