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MOZART OPERA BEYOND THE ROMANTIC ARRANGEMENT

Abstract. The article examines the evolution of operatic arrangements in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Vienna, highlighting the pivotal role of Mozart's operas in the history of adapting large-scale works for domestic performance. The essay situates these adaptations within a broader socio-political context marked by the French Revolution and economic constraints, which propelled the decline of large orchestras and spurred the rise of smaller ensembles. It explores the dynamic interplay between original operatic compositions and their "semi-complete" arrangements that demanded improvisatory input from performers, fostering a culture of co-creation. Analyzing contemporary catalogues and documented performance practices, the essay reveals how these adaptations democratized access to high art, influenced canon formation, and challenged emerging notions of musical authority.

Keywords: Mozart; opera arrangements; chamber music; adaptation; domestic performance; musical authority; canon formation; romanticism; Vienna; co-creation

OPERY MOZARTA POZA ROMANTYCZNĄ ARANŻACJĄ

Abstrakt. Niniejszy artykuł zawiera analizę ewolucji aranżacji operowych w środowisku wiedeńskim, pod koniec XVIII i na początku XIX wieku, podkreślając kluczową rolę oper Mozarta w historii adaptacji wielkoobsadowych dzieł na potrzeby wykonania w warunkach domowych. Autorka osadza opisywane praktyki w szerszym kontekście społeczno-politycznym – naznaczonym rewolucją francuską i ograniczeniami ekonomicznymi – który przyczynił się do upadku wielkich orkiestr i popularyzacji mniejszych zespołów kameralnych. W artykule opisano dynamiczne relacje między oryginalnymi partyturami operowymi, a ich skróconymi lub częściowymi opracowaniami, które wymagały improwizowanego wkładu ze strony wykonawców i sprzyjały praktyce współtworzenia. Analiza ówczesnych katalogów oraz udokumentowanych praktyk wykonawczych ukazuje, w jaki sposób tego rodzaju

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adaptacje demokratyzowały dostęp do sztuki wysokiej, wpływały na proces kształtowania kanonu oraz podważały kształtujące się pojęcie autorytetu muzycznego.

Słowa kluczowe: Mozart; aranżacje operowe; muzyka kameralna; adaptacja; wykonania domowe; autorytet muzyczny; kształtowanie kanonu; romantyzm; Wiedeń; współtworzenie

If only there were a theatre there [Salzburg] that deserved the name—
for that is the sole source of my entertainment here [Vienna].[1]

INTRODUCTION

When Mozart arrived in Vienna in June 1781, Europe was in the grip of a vogue for opera and a more general enthusiasm for theatre. Mozart and his colleagues were well aware of the demand for opera on the stage and at home and strove to meet it with their compositional and career choices. A list of Mozart's compositions in 1786, the highly productive year in which he composed *Le nozze di Figaro*, shows that he divided his time between opera (also concertos for the Akademien) and chamber music (list 1). Furthermore, much of the instrumental chamber music played in Vienna around 1800 was "chamber" arrangements of opera—translations of these large-scale vocal works for performance by a much smaller group of instrumentalists and vocalists than initially intended and often in domestic contexts.

Rondo (for Piano) in D, K. 485
Der Schauspieldirektor (*The Impresario)* K. 486
12 Duos (2 horns), K. 487
Piano Concerto in A, K. 488
"Spiegarti non poss'io" (for Idomeneo) K. 489
"Non più, tutto ascoltai…" (for Idomeneo) K. 490
Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491
Le nozze di Figaro (Opera buffa in 4 acts) K. 492
Piano Quartet in E flat, K. 493
Rondo for Piano in F, K. 494
Horn Concerto in E flat, K. 495
Piano Trio in G, K. 496
Trio for Piano, clarinet, and viola in E flat, K. 498
String Quartet in D (the "Hoffmeister"), K. 499
Variations for Piano in B flat, K. 500
Piano Trio in B flat, K. 502
Piano Concerto in C, K. 503

List 1. Mozart's compositions in 1786

[1] Mozart to his father, 26 May 1781; see Wilhelm A. Bauer et al., eds., *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen; Gesamtausgabe*, 8 vols. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962–2005), vol. 3, *1780–1786* (1962), 121. Translations are my own unless noted.

Opera furnished the richest source for later nineteenth-century arrangements, which expanded to include variations on popular numbers and potpourris of excerpts. Mozart's operas were and remained central to this arrangement culture. But by the mid-nineteenth century, publishers had diversified formats for different performers, listeners, and performance spaces. In this essay I consider practices of Mozart opera arrangement around 1800 and traces how and why they took hold, judged by social legibility, usability, and popularity. I then turn to the mid-century "Romantic" lens to ask two questions: first, whether these later practices constitute fundamentally new thinking; second, what role Mozart's opera arrangements played in nineteenth-century arrangement culture more generally.

MOZART OPERA ARRANGEMENTS AROUND 1800

The adaptation of large-scale vocal works for intimate, domestic performance not only made operatic music accessible to a broader audience but also set in motion the processes of adaptation and reinterpretation that would become central to later debates on musical authority. This trend was driven partly by the social and political circumstances, especially surrounding the French Revolution, which made private and semi-private music-making feasible and appealing, creating a demand for chamber music within the reach of the enthusiastic amateur. Political turmoil and inflation curtailed court orchestras while simultaneously boosting small-ensemble music in homes and salons, creating both the audience and the market that arrangements met. In his *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag*, published just after Mozart's lifetime (1796), Johann Ferdinand Ritter von Schönfeld reports on the dwindling of private orchestras, which corresponded to a flourishing of smaller ensembles—which were much more affordable in times of steep inflation:

> Whether it is a cooling of the love of art, or a lack of taste, or domesticity, or other causes, in short, to the detriment of art, this praiseworthy custom has been lost, and one orchestra after another is disappearing until, except for that of Prince Schwarzenberg, almost none are in existence. Prince Grassalkowitz has reduced his orchestra to a wind band with the great clarinettist Griessbacher as director. Baron von Braun keeps his wind band for table music.[2]

This decline in large ensembles and the rise of smaller groups created a fertile ground for chamber arrangements. Meanwhile, the rage for opera, especially Italian opera, continued unabated, as Johann Gottlieb Karl Spazier noted in his observations about Vienna in 1793:

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[2] J. K. F. Schönfeld, *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst* (Wien: Schönfeld, 1796), 77–78.

> It is apparent from some recently received news about the state of theatre in Vienna how much taste there is for musical, and particularly Italian musical plays. Within a year (from November 1791, until December 1792), Italian opera was performed 180 times. A single opera seria was performed 24 times. Ballets were seen 163 times.[3]

The persistence of Italian opera, especially recent *opera buffa* by composers from Vienna, performed hundreds of times in a single year, underscores not only the enduring popularity of this genre but also its role in shaping a culture where adaptation became essential for disseminating complex works in more accessible, domestic formats. This social context not only reshaped performance practices but also prefigured later debates about adaptation and the shifting locus of musical authority—as explored in the essay on Handel and on adaptation in London and Paris elsewhere in this volume.

Overwhelmingly, opera features in contemporary music catalogues as the preferred genre to be arranged for chamber ensembles in this era. Johann Traeg's 1799 catalogue shows how opera and theatrical music infiltrate, via arrangements, into all areas of music making—particularly from stage to salon (list 2 shows *Figaro* arrangements). Traeg (fl. 1779–1805) ran Vienna's most encyclopaedic manuscript and print dealership for mixed-ensemble music in the late eighteenth century. His catalogue bears witness to a genuinely opera-centric culture in what we usually think of as the era of sonatas, string quartets, and symphonies, especially in Vienna. Among opera types, *opera buffa* was the most popular, which suggests, among other things, that Vienna's supposedly "instrumental" late-eighteenth-century sound-world was, in practice, saturated by operatic material, often circulating in domestic formats.[4]

> Chamber Music/Instrumental Music/Quintetti aus Opern und Ballets…, p. 60
> 112. Mozart, Le nozze di Figaro (à detti) arr., von Kucharz; (1ter und 2ter Akt à 2 violini, 2 viole e vllo arrang.) [MS]
>
> Chamber Music/Instrumental Music/Quartetti à diversi instr., p. 75
> 490. Mozart, Le nozze di Figaro (à Clarinetto V, Viola e Vllo) [MS]
>
> Chamber Music/Instrumental Music/Duetti à 2 Violini, p. 87
> 36. Mozart, Le nozze di Figaro [MS]
>
> Chamber Music/Instrumental Music/Duetti à 2 Flauti Trav., p. 93
> 263. Mozart, Le nozze di Figaro [MS]

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[3] J. G. C. Spazier, "Über Wiener Theaterwesen," *Berlinische musikalische Zeitung* 13 (May 4, 1793), 51.

[4] See especially Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen and Klaus Pietschmann, eds., *Jenseits der Bühne: Bearbeitungs- und Rezeptionsformen der Oper im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2011); and Andrea Klitzing, *Don Giovanni unter Druck: Die Verbreitung der Mozart-Oper als instrumentale Kammermusik im deutschsprachigen Raum bis 1850*, Abhandlungen zur Musikgeschichte 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020).

Chamber Music/Instrumental Music/Duetti à 2 Flauti Trav., p. 94
244. Stumpf, Favorit Gesänge aus der Opera Figaros Hochzeit von Mozart arrangirt. für 2 Flöten erstes Heft. N.B. Auf diese Art werden alle neuen Opern der berühmtesten Komponisten für 2 Flöten arrangirt. von Herrn Stumpf heftweise erschienen [Printed]

Chamber Music/Instrumental Music/Harmonie Stücke zu 6 Stimmen, p. 108
160. Mozart, (Figaro) à detto (2 Clarinetti, 2 Cor, e 2 Fag.) [Printed]

Chamber Music/Clavier Music/Sonates à Clav. è Violino, p. 140
148. Delvez (Fr.), Sonate p. le P. Forte, avec accomp. d'un Violin, composed de divers themes favoris de deux Operas: La Fête de Soleil, de Bramins & le Mariage de Figaro [Printed]

Theatral und Sing/Deutsche Arien, Duetten, Terzettn &c. &c., pp. 188–89
11. Mozart, Gesange aus (Figaro) Nro. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Nro. 6, jedes Nro. [Printed]
43. Mozart, Arien &c. aus (die Hochzeit des Figaro) [MS]

Theatral und Sing/Italienische und franz. Arien und duetten…, pp. 206–7
29. Mozart Aria dell'Opera le Nozze di Figaro (Non più andrai) nebst noch verschiedenen Arien und Duetten (alongside other arias and duets) [MS]

Theatral und Sing/Italienische, deutsche und französische Arien Duetten Terzetten, mit Begleitung, pp. 213–14
11. Mozart, Verschiedene Arien, Duetten &c. aus le Nozze di Figaro. Don Giovanni. Ilia ed Idamante. die Schule der Liebe. [MS]

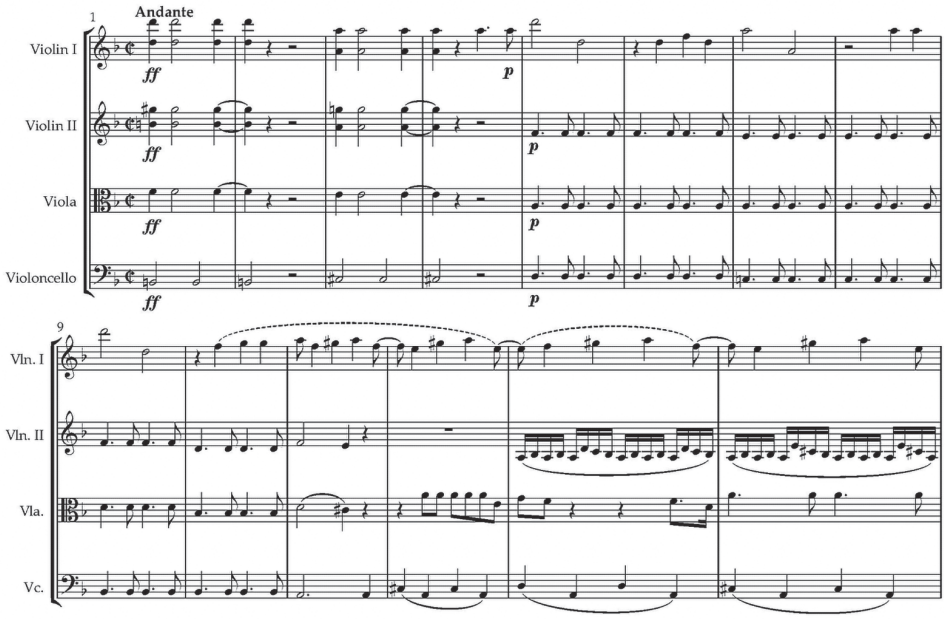
List 2. Transcription of Figaro arrangements available in Johann Traeg's music catalogue (Vienna, 1799)

List 2 details a diverse range of arrangements—from duos for clarinets and duets for flutes to arrangements for six-part ensembles—demonstrating how publishers like Johann Traeg capitalised on the demand by reworking operatic material for various instrumental combinations.[5] This variety highlights the commercial success of such adaptations and their role in forging an opera-centric cultural identity in Vienna.

In general, opera arrangements provided much sociability through music-making, entertainment, and recreation. This last point should not be underestimated during political unrest, financial constraint, and social upheaval. Arrangements offered structured sociability: parts circulated recognisable tunes among players, cueing "dialogue" and turn-taking. To be sure, the first violin dominated some string quartet arrangements, but arrangers usually provided opportunities for interaction and exchange—and this was particularly possible in Mozart ensemble arrangements, where, as the composer's wife Constanze Mozart exclaimed to Mary Novello, one experiences, "the extraordinary *difference* of the melodies he has assigned to the

[5] For a detailed discussion of Traeg, his enterprise and roles in Viennese musical life (in relation to the symphony in particular), see David Wyn Jones, *The Symphony in Beethoven's Vienna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chap. 2.

various characters".[6] In the example below (example 1), an excerpt from the final movement of an early string quartet arrangement of *Don Giovanni*, the Commendatore is represented by the first violin, but in measure 10, that part takes on an eerie circular chromatic motif, last heard in the overture. In measure 12, viola chips in with Leporello's nervous chatter. This interplay of instrumental voices creates a layered sonic experience and suggests the contemporaneous notion of the performer as co-creator—a key theme in discussions of adaptive musical practices found in the other essays in this volume. In domestic quartets and four-hand performances, arrangements could function as social scripts: they enabled coordinated participation across mixed skill levels and facilitated conversational listening. Evidence from prefaces and publisher marketing underscores this sociable use.[7]



Example 1. Excerpt from the finale of an early string quartet arrangement of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, act 2, scene 15, mm. 1–21

[6] Vincent Novello, *A Mozart pilgrimage: being the travel diaries of Vincent & Mary Novello in the year 1829* (London: Eulenburg, 1975), 94, my emphasis.

[7] Maribeth Clark, "The Quadrille as Embodied Musical Experience in 19th-Century Paris," *Journal of Musicology* 19, no. 3 (2002): 503–26; *Mark Everist, Mozart's Ghosts: Haunting the Halls of Musical Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 75–125.

Alongside Harmonie (wind band) arrangements, string-quartet versions were widely used in upper-middle-class settings; however, piano arrangements (solo and four-hand) were soon to take over. In Traeg, arrangements for quartets of music from operas and ballet are particularly numerous, with over 41 entries, including numbers from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Don Giovanni, Die Zauberflöte*, and *Le nozze di Figaro* by Mozart. Traeg was by no means the only or most prolific publisher/purveyor of arrangements in Vienna, but, through documented business with Constanze Mozart and persistent advertising and cataloguing of Mozart's music, he actively championed Mozart arrangements. In his own Mozart publications, Traeg favours keyboard arrangements (list 3).

K. 621 Marsch aus *Titus*, Clav.
K. 588 Marsch aus *Così fan tutte*, Clav.
K. 621 Marsch aus *Titus*, Clav.
K. 588 March aus *Mädchentreue*, Clav.
K. 588 Ouverture *Così fan tutte*, V. u. Guit.
K. 588 *Vergißmeinnicht*, Ges. u. Guit.
K. 527 Ouverture *Don Juan*, Pfte.
K. 621 Marsch aus *Titus*, Guit.
K. 429 Duet aus *Figaro*, Guit.
K. 429 Duettino aus *Figaro*, Guit.
K. 429 Arie aus *Figaro*, Guit.
K. 429 Ouverture *Figaro*, Pfte a 4 m.
K. 384 Ouverture Entführung, Pfte a 4 m.
K. 298 Quartett f. Fl, V, A, Vc
K. 527 Duet aus *Don Juan*, Ges. u. Clav.
K. 527 Arie aus *Don Juan*, Ges. u. Clav.
K. 527 Arie aus *Don Juan*, Ges. u. Clav.
K. 527 Ouverture *Don Juan*, Clav.
K. 620 Ouverture *Zauberflöte*, Pfte.

List 3. Transcriptions of Mozart opera arrangements published by Johann Traeg & Son, in order of ascending plate number (duplications represent different publications)

Numerous publishers of this era cashed in on Mozart arrangements and built their publishing reputations around his name. Enticing title-page vignettes, like the one shown in figure 1, functioned as *aide-mémoire*, helping the performers recall a staged performance or as publicity material to encourage them to get to know the music. This image takes us beyond the time of Traeg into the nineteenth century, when a great variety of arrangements of Mozart's *Figaro* were published by Maurice Schlesinger, Carlo Artaria & Co., and others, further cementing the role of published arrangements as educational tools and commercial products. Piano arrangements become prominent at this stage, alongside the ever-popular quartet arrangements and the duets for two flutes or violins. Artaria cashed in on Mozart opera arrangements

in 1806, the fiftieth anniversary of Mozart's birth, using the title "Quodlibets" (medleys) to designate collections of excerpts from favourite Mozart operas (*Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Die Zauberflöte*, and so on).

Figure 1. Maurice Schlesinger's publication of the piano score of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with title page vignette, Paris, 1822

HOW DID THESE ARRANGEMENTS COMPARE TO THEIR ORIGINALS?

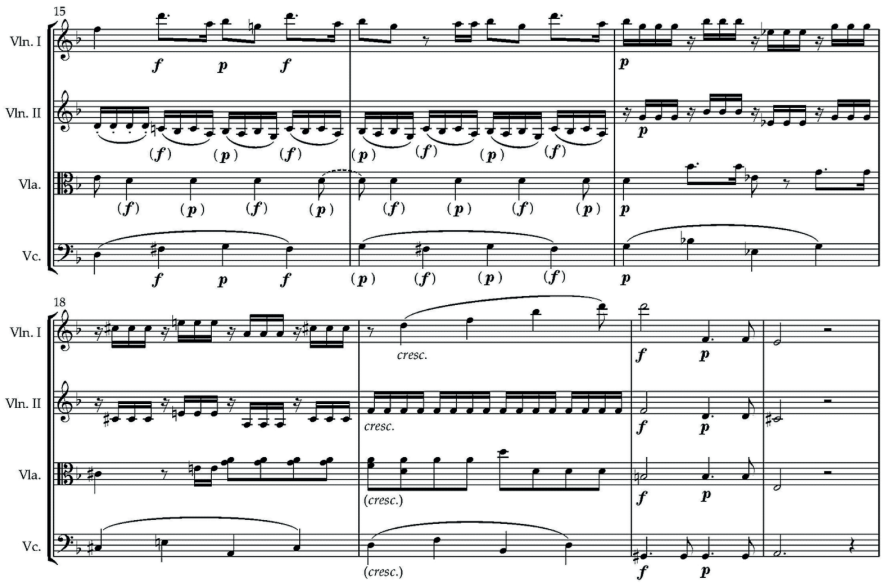
In what follows, I use 'completeness' to mean coverage—which numbers from an opera are included and in what order—rather than a value judgement about textual totality. For contemporaries, the salient criteria were usability in small rooms, social legibility among musically literate players and listeners, and popularity (recognisable, well-liked numbers), not compliance with later ideals of exhaustive, fixed texts. Read this way, the reception of opera arrangements turns on how effectively a selection could be realised in performance, shared, and enjoyed. By 1815, Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Don Giovanni*,

Le nozze di Figaro, *Così fan tutte*, *Idomeneo*, and *La clemenza di Tito* were all available to Viennese music lovers in selective, number-based string-quartet and -quintet arrangements. In terms of coverage of original numbers from the respective works, arrangers typically favoured overtures, popular arias, and compact ensembles. Issued in coordinated sets and series, such editions were not regarded as "incomplete" by contemporaries but as practical, portable realisations for small forces. Piano-vocal scores were also available and tended to have more coverage of the original numbers, partly because of their function in rehearsal and for gaining an overview of the original work. Catering to a rapidly growing and highly musically literate middle-class market, all of these large-scale arrangements helped perpetuate the composer's popularity with the domestic music market and served an educative function by helping players and listeners to get to know large-scale works in an era in which tickets and scores were expensive or not always available. Contemporary catalogues and pricing indicate a middle-class target market: editions were designed to be attainable and legible for domestic use, even if not uniformly inexpensive.

A second dimension of this coverage concerns realisation in performance. Without modern critical apparatus, performers were expected to supply balance and continuity, and—where needed or considered important—to emend slips. Back then, amateur performance did not amount to sight-reading through scores that had been carefully edited to reflect composers' performance expectations in detail. Published parts were not infrequently marred by textual inconsistencies, as contemporary correspondence laments. Amateurs thus sometimes acted as de-facto correctors—see the Beethoven–Steiner exchange for a typical complaint.[8]

In practice, this meant that amateur performers were responsible for tidying up the arrangement to the degree they wanted or needed to enjoy and follow the music satisfyingly. For instance, Figure 2 shows the erroneous repetition of measure 30 in the first violin of No. 13 in the arrangement of *Die Zauberflöte*—there is an added measure in all parts in this number. Performers familiar with the work would spot an error and could probably resolve the problem collaboratively. Such discrepancies compelled performers to collaborate in real-time. This extempore and flexible aspect highlights the dynamic and participatory nature of performance during this period. Example 2 contains a more challenging passage, in which performers would need to take steps to achieve vertical uniformity if they sought to observe Mozart's operatic original. This is from the Finale in Mollo's string quartet arrangement of *Don Giovanni*, act 2, scene 15. In measures 15 and 16, the fluctuating dynamics crucial to invoking the sublime in this music are wholly missing from the lower strings.

[8] For an example involving Beethoven and Steiner, see my *Beethoven's Theatrical Quartets, Opp. 59, 74 and 95* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 47.



Example 2. Excerpt from the Finale in Mollo's string quartet arrangement of *Don Giovanni*, act 2, scene 15, mm. 1–17

It should be noted, however, that quartet players at this time, even the professional performers who were starting to be heard in public, were not necessarily given to much rehearsal, as Edward Klorman has argued.[9] Priorities varied: domestic players may well have valued continuity and melody over vertical uniformity. Full scores were rare in the domestic market before mid-century; parts were the norm, so performers' awareness of vertical uniformity was largely aural rather than visual.

Some original editions of arrangements, because of their "deficiencies" (by modern editorial standards), provided yet more scope for performers to exercise some arrangement or compositional skill. In the 1806 Artaria string quartet arrangement of *Figaro*, for instance, the viola player must delete an entire bar near the end of No. 4 to add up the parts. Bowing, articulation, and other finer details of interpretation were typically left up to the performers.

A related type of realisation was the (re)-addition of text. In this era, many textless (*ohne Worte*) arrangements for string quartet (and other ensembles) of operas and other texted theatrical works exist. Most of these versions were produced for two pragmatic reasons:

[9] See Edward Klorman, "The First Professional String Quartet? Reexamining an Account Attributed to Giuseppe Maria Cambini," *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 71, no. 4 (2015): 629–43.

This opera is here completely transcribed into quartets, which combine the double advantage that they satisfy the admirers of Mozart's music as quartets by themselves but can also be used as accompaniment to the vocal parts instead of the instrumental parts, either alone, or with the piano reduction. Transferred in this way, the following have already been published by this publisher: DON JUAN, TITUS, DIE ENTFÜHRUNG and so forth.[10]

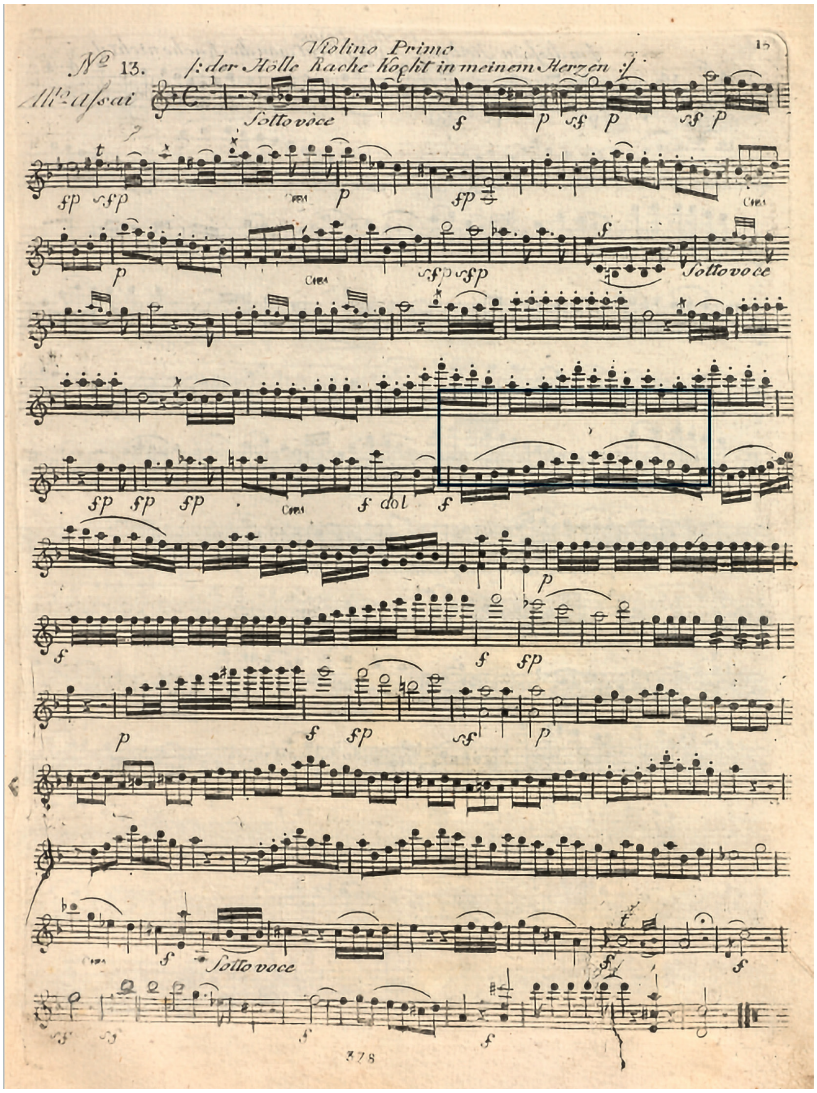


Figure 2. Repetition of measure 30 in the Artaria string quartet arrangement of *Die Zauberflöte* (Vienna, 1792)

[10] Mozart, *Le noce di Figaro (Die Hochzeit des Figaro), Opera de W. A. Mozart arrangée en quatuors à deux violons, alto & violoncelle, livres I et II* (Bonn: Simrock, 1800).

So these *ohne Worte* arrangements were produced to provide additional chamber music for domestic settings and to serve as accompaniments for vocal performances. Their existence underscores the adaptive flexibility that these arrangements both allowed and, at times, required.

An example of the second use of arrangements described in the above quotation, accompanying the vocal parts, is mentioned in Leopold von Sonnleithner's recollections of Viennese musical life in the early nineteenth century, published from 1861 to 1863.[11] This second category was very common, allowing middle-class performers something between a piano reduction and a full orchestra. In early nineteenth-century salons, vocal music was often accompanied by a quartet or quintet arrangement. In the case of Field Marshal Lieutenant Schall von Falkenhorst, for example, Sonnleithner cited the examples of the finales of *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*, each of which was accompanied by a quintet.

Read in contemporary terms, then, "completeness" seems to be a misnomer regarding these opera arrangements: more relevant are coverage (which numbers are included by the arranger and publisher) and the degree of realisation performers supply in practice. These relate to the yardsticks that mattered to contemporaries—social legibility, usability, and popularity—rather than later ideals of exhaustive textual fidelity. But what of poetic incompleteness with respect to the original text—the way certain arrangements invite imagination and recollection?

"ROMANTIC ARRANGEMENTS"

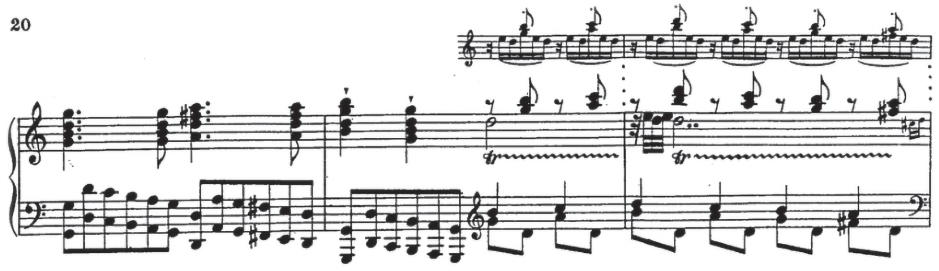
To anticipate: some domestic versions do evoke silhouette and recollection, yet this need not imply an ideology of striving toward a unified "work"; where such effects surface, success is still judged by social legibility, usability, and popularity. A prominent modern account, associated with Peter Szendy, elevates this percept into a category he terms the "Romantic arrangement". He locates a mid-century "moment", especially around Schumann and Liszt, in which arrangement and original appear as complementary gestures toward an ever-unattainable work.[12] Szendy's overall conception of what he terms the "Romantic arrangement" is indebted to the Romantic fragment as theorised by the Jena circle (A. W. and F. Schlegel, Novalis) in the *Athenaeum* (1798–1800), with its emphasis on imaginative "completions" and

[11] Leopold von Böcking, "Leopold von Sonnleithners Erinnerungen," in "Leopold von Sonnleithners Erinnerungen an die Musiksalons des vormärzlichen Wiens," edited by Otto E. Deutsch *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 16, no. 2 (1961), 157.

[12] Peter Szendy, *Listen: A History of Our Ears*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

works *im Werden* (in process).[13] Szendy is surely right that arrangements can invite imaginative completions. But the earlier yardsticks of arrangements-as-social-practice persist and form the dominant context for Mozart arrangements into the nineteenth century; in these settings the "process" nature of arrangements reflects practical mediation more than mid-century ideology.

According to Szendy, Romantic arrangements are quite particular in their flexible (and pluralistic) elaboration of a musical idea. In Szendy's reading, Liszt's inclusion of *ossia* in the score provided performers with explicit alternatives, revealing the inherent flexibility of the musical material (see example 3). But the *ossia* passages might also canalise performers toward maximum "completion", edging performers more toward fidelity and canonisation than open-endedness. Szendy's further claim—that this flexibility is soon eclipsed by a tightening work-concept—is illuminating for certain mid-century repertories, but too monolithic if taken as a period-wide transition. Crucially, opera's "workness" was already plural before and across any such tightening: variant libretti, performance cuts, transpositions, and local performing forces complicate any singular text. Situating arrangements within this operatic ecology clarifies that they participate in, rather than violate, the work's plurality.[14]



Example 3. Ossia passage in Franz Liszt's *Fantasie über Themen aus Mozarts Figaro und Don Giovanni*, p. 697

Following Thomas Christensen's account of four-hand piano transcription as an historical frame of musical reception, I read these arrangements as mediations that both transmit and transform operatic works.[15] This helps clarify why "imaginative completions" were not arbitrary ad hoc fixes but socially legible ways to render absent

[13] For relevant discussions of the romantic fragment, see my *Beethoven's Theatrical Quartets, Opp. 59, 74 and 95* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 206–8.

[14] On this subject see Nicholas Till, "The Operatic Work: Texts, Performances, Receptions and Repertories," in *The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies*, ed. Nicholas Till (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 225–54.

[15] Thomas Christensen, "Four-Hand Piano Transcription and Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Musical Reception," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52, no. 2 (1999), 255–98.

materials audible in domestic settings. It also clarifies why scholarly preferences for a "sober concert repertory"[16] have long undervalued so-called "trivial" categories—notably opera-based sets—even though they reached (and shaped) a broad market.[17] In this ecology, arrangements coexist on a par with "originals", but the operative axis is less Romantic striving than use, circulation, and pedagogy.

This perspective reframes *ohne Worte* reductions. A Szendy-style reading treats nineteenth-century piano reductions "without words" as invitations to imaginative completion—a quintessentially "Romantic" posture. Yet practice and markets often point elsewhere. From the 1810s, publishers pursued international reach; issuing reductions without text eased circulation across languages, a logic reinforced by anti-reprint strategies after the 1829 Leipzig cartel.[18] Many such editions also functioned as aide-mémoire—half-accurate silhouettes that cued recollection of staged experiences; contemporary reviewers could even praise the imaginative "completion" they demanded.[19] In short, *ohne Worte* frequently signals portability and reach rather than Romantic idealism.

Some high-profile mid-century arrangements would have had a further, normative function: they told audiences what—and how—to listen, helping to stabilise canonic hearing habits rather than dissolving them.[20] Beyond the concert hall and virtuoso salon, the same circulation mechanisms worked at scale in everyday life: As William Weber nicely puts it, Italian opera served as a nineteenth-century domestic soundtrack; Rossini, Verdi—and, we can add, Mozart—were "banged out" on pianos and sung in the streets, with arrangements extending access beyond the stage. Price points and formats suggest real (if uneven) affordability and uptake across musical households.[21]

For Szendy, the work-concept coheres around Schumann/Liszt; he makes an exception for Italy because opera's prevalence sustained a more fluid ontology. My view is that opera is not an exception but a countervailing force across Europe well into the later nineteenth century: its collaborative production, variant texts, and arrangement-driven dissemination kept "workness" porous even as critics such

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[16] Christensen, 257.

[17] Robert Waissenberger and Hans Bisanz, *Vienna in the Biedermeier era, 1815–1848* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 261.

[18] Klitzing, *Don Giovanni Unter Druck*, 235.

[19] See, for example, the review of Beethoven's Eroica Symphony in an anonymous 1807 piano quartet: *Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger* 1 (1829), 199; Wayne M. Senner, Robin Wallace, and William Meredith, eds., *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by His German Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1999 and 2001), 2:41, my emphasis.

[20] For further arguments of this nature, see my *Cultivating String Quartets in Beethoven's Vienna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 190–4.

[21] Email communication to the author from William Weber, 2022.

as Eduard Hanslick championed autonomy. Different scholars date consolidation variously (around 1800; earlier with Bach; or mid-century), and practices of fidelity in performance appear in multiple courts and traditions before 1800; this plurality of timelines cautions against a single "moment", while acknowledging local accelerations.[22]

In this light, Mozart's opera arrangements are not precursors of a mid-century revelation but the centre of gravity for the period's arranging culture. The evidence traced earlier—Traeg's 1799 listings that seed *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* across duos, quartets, Harmonie, and keyboard formats; the domestic interchange of "character-voices" in part-sharing; the practical, socially legible "completions" that small rooms demanded—shows a stable ecology in which Mozart's theatre music circulates as chamber music, creating, rather than forfeiting, status. What later critics called canonic habits often grew from this domestic traffic rather than in opposition to it: arrangements taught listeners how to hear large works by using Mozart as everyday material, long before virtuoso paraphrase codified any ideology. If the nineteenth century tightens the "work-concept" in some public arenas, opera's plural, mobile ontology persists, and Mozart's stage works remain exemplary precisely because their numbers and textures continue to invite redistribution—into living rooms as much as concert halls.

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[22] See, in particular, Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); and Harry White, "'If It's Baroque, Don't Fix It': Reflections on Lydia Goehr's 'Work-Concept' and the Historical Integrity of Musical Composition," *Acta Musicologica* 69, no. 1 (1997): 94–104.

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