

Analyzing the Compositional Characteristics and Performance Techniques of Mozart's Flute Concerto in G Major in the Classical Period: Taking the First Movement as an Example

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Abstract. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756.1.27–1791.12.5) was one of the most outstanding composers of the Classical period. His works are characterised by rigorous structure, clear harmonic function, and extensive use of homophonic texture. This paper examines the first movement of the ‘Flute Concerto in G Major’ as a classic example, systematically analysing its compositional features and performance techniques to reveal the classical period's musical paradigms as manifested in this work and to identify the key technical challenges in its performance. The paper employs documentary research to trace the work's compositional development and score analysis to conduct a detailed examination of its melody, harmony, and orchestration. The research found that by comparing multiple performance versions, it was revealed that the core of modern performance of this work lies not only in solid performance skills but also in a deep understanding of the emotional expression methods of the Classical period, which has positive significance for the expressiveness of modern flute performance.

Keywords: classical period, Mozart, flute concerto in g major

1. Introduction

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was one of the greatest geniuses in the history of European music. Born in Austria, he showed his amazing musical talent since his childhood, and later became a court musician and resigned to go to Vienna after he felt that his creativity had been restricted, and the period in Vienna was the peak of his creative career, leaving behind famous operas such as *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, as well as concertos and symphonies including the G major flute concerto and other monumental concertos. This period in Vienna was the peak of his creative career, leaving behind such famous operas as *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, as well as such monumental concertos and symphonies as the *Flute Concerto in G Major*. Despite the unrivaled melodic beauty of his compositions and their delicate structures, in which reason and emotion are intertwined, his own life was often troubled, and he eventually died at the age of 35. *Flute Concerto in G major, k.313*: Composed in 1778, this concerto is divided into three movements, with a

rigorous structure, very much a model of classicism, and a typical concerto structure. Most of the existing studies focus on analyzing the compositional characteristics and performance techniques of the concerto, as well as comparative studies of different versions. However, the existing studies tend to analyze only the performance techniques or musical structure but seldom explore the deep interaction between the two. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how the flute's legato and spiccato techniques in the first movement of the Flute Concerto in G Major correspond to the structural logic of the sonata's presentation, development, and recapitulation, and how the choice of technique affects the expression of musical emotion, which is worthy of further investigation.

2. From Mozart's musical style to the Flute Concerto in G Major

2.1. Mozart's life and times

Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria in 1756 into a musical family. His father was a violinist and composer at the court of the Archbishop of Salzburg, and his sister learned to play keyboard instruments at an early age. It was this strong family atmosphere that gave Mozart his early musical beginnings. Mozart began to study music at the age of 4 and was able to play simple pieces by the age of 5. His father took him on extensive tours later in life which showed Mozart's amazing musical talent and became known as a 'musical prodigy' [1]. In 1767, at the age of 11, Mozart completed his first opera, *Apollo and Chiacinto*. These early experiences provided Mozart with an important foundation for his subsequent compositions. Two years later, Mozart became a court musician, and although this position provided him with a steady stream of performances, at the time, music had to be subservient to religious practice, which greatly restricted creative freedom. In 1781 Mozart gave up this position and settled in Vienna. During this period, Mozart was at his creative peak and he produced masterpieces such as *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute*, etc., and was greatly admired by Haydn, but he died in Vienna in 1791 at the age of 35. At that time, Europe was in the second half of the 18th century, under the impetus of the Enlightenment, music began to gradually no longer be bound by the court and religion, Mozart's life was in the process of this transformation, and his experience and achievements to a certain extent also reflect the social status of the musicians at that time, reflecting the freedom and equality of the time and the positive and uplifting characteristics of the creative work [2].

2.2. Core characteristics of Mozart's musical style

At that time, Europe was in a very active period of thought and culture, and under the influence of the Enlightenment, music was no longer the exclusive entertainment of the upper class but went to the masses and Mozart's works are most characterized by its song-like melody [3], whether instrumental or opera, his works are always smooth and expressive, based on the Baroque inherited Haydn and Bach compositional style and then integrated various forms into the works to build a clear sonata form [4]. In addition, Mozart's compositions strictly adhere to the canons of the Classical period while focusing on emotional expression, making the works logical and rigorous at the same time emotionally rich. In terms of orchestration, Mozart is subtle and imaginative. For example, in the *Flute Concerto in G major*, Mozart combines the flute's dynamic and light timbre with the strings to create a sharp contrast. Mozart's musical style skillfully combines and balances the compositional rigor of the Classical period with the demands of personal expression, a balance that has made him regarded as one of the most outstanding composers of the Classical period.

2.3. Background and artistic value of the Flute Concerto in G Major

The Concerto for Flute in G Major was composed in 1778, the year in which he composed almost all the works he had ever written for the flute in his life, and most of his works for the flute were concertos, the most famous of which were also concertos. 22-year-old Mozart went to Mannheim to seek development after quitting his post as court musician, and during his journey, Ferdinand, a Dutch flutist, commissioned Mozart to write this work. Mozart was influenced by the Mannheim School in the composition of the Flute Concerto in G Major, and although he often complained about his dislike of the flute, he persevered and completed the work, which greatly elevated the status of the flute as a solo instrument and thus influenced composers for generations to come [5]. Meanwhile, the Flute Concerto in G Major is one of the representative works of the Classical period, reflecting the dialogue and interaction between the solo voice and the orchestra voice, the style changes from the joyful and lively first movement to the calm second movement, reflecting the balance between sensibility and rationality, and the whole inherits the fast-slow-fast tempo tradition established by Vivaldi, and establishes the basic structure of the Classical Flute Concerto through its practice [6].

3. Characteristics of the Musical composition of the first movement of the Flute Concerto in G Major

3.1. Structural layout and formal characteristics

The first movement of the Flute Concerto in G Major, as a musical work of the classical period, adopts the structural characteristics of the sonata form in its overall structure. However, the presentation part is different from the traditional sonata structure, which consists of two different presentation parts in the form of an orchestra ensemble and flute solo respectively, constituting the structure of a double presentation part. Table 1 shows the overall compositional structure of the work, the presentation part I and presentation part II are both composed of the structure of the main part, the connecting part, the secondary part, and the ending part [7]. In terms of tonality, the main section theme is in the key of G major, and the secondary section theme is in the key of D major, forming a tonal contrast relationship from the main key to the subordinate key among each other. The difference is that the length scales of the two presentations show significant differences. The orchestral ensemble in Presentation I is relatively small in size, while the flute solo in Presentation II is greatly expanded, doubling the size of Presentation I. Mozart's use of the orchestral ensemble in Presentation I is a very different approach to the flute solo, and the flute solo in Presentation II is a very different approach. Mozart's structural design of the Presentation II not only effectively enhances the musical hierarchy, but also significantly strengthens the prominence of the solo flute theme. In the unfolding section, Mozart skillfully employs modal progression, variation, and other compositional techniques to develop the main theme of the presentation section and the sub-theme, forming a dramatic conflict and contrast; at the same time, he also employs tonal shifts, further enriching the expressive power of the music. The recapitulation is a return to and summary of the material in the presentation section, but it is not a simple repetition, but rather an elaboration and variation in detail. In the recapitulation of the main theme, Mozart alternates between the flute and the orchestra, which emphasizes the melodic line of the theme and enhances the three-dimensionality of the music. When the secondary theme is reproduced, the tonality returns to G major, which echoes with the presenting part, realizing the unity of tonality and making the whole movement present a sonata-like structural characteristic (seen in table 1).

Table 1. From structure diagram

Double Exposition(Measures 1-90)								Development (Measures 91-149)	Recapitulation (Measures 149-219)			
Exposition I (Measures 1-30)				Exposition I (Measures 31-90)				Alternation of Primary and Secondary Materials				
Primary Theme	Transi- tion	Secondar- y Theme	Closing Section	Primary Theme	Transi- tion	Secondar- y Theme	Closing Section		Primary Theme	Transi- tion	Secondar- y Theme	Closing Section
1-12	12-15	16-23	23-30	31-44	44-71	72-79	79-90	91-149	149-162	162-189	190-197	197-219
G major		D major		G major		D major		D major→ a minor→ e minor→d minor	G major	G major	G major	G major

3.2. Internal details and associated elements

Presentation Part I is mainly for the orchestral ensemble, with bars 1-12 of Example 1 being the main theme, which is in the key of G major. If the orchestra is reduced, the top melodic voice is the flute's melodic voice. Through observation, we can find that in the first phrase, bars 1-4, the melodic character starts with a four-degree jump, and after a big jump of an octave, the melody pitch is led to the highest point, and after the melody reaches the high point, the melodic development will come back down with a gradual downward movement and finally ends above the B note; the second phrase, bars 5-12, is a changing and repeating relationship with the first phrase, and Mozart lowers the overall pitch of the flute melody part by an octave in the second phrase, and the overall pitch of the flute melody part is lowered by an octave. In the second phrase, Mozart lowers the flute melody by an octave and expands the phrase by using a modal progression, making the melodic line of the main theme smooth and singable. The main theme ends on a G major dominant chord, creating an open section. This harmonic progression allows the main theme to connect more smoothly with the connecting sections, enhancing musical coherence and fluidity. This theme creates a grand acoustic effect through the orchestral ensemble, setting the tone for the entire movement. (seen in figure 1)

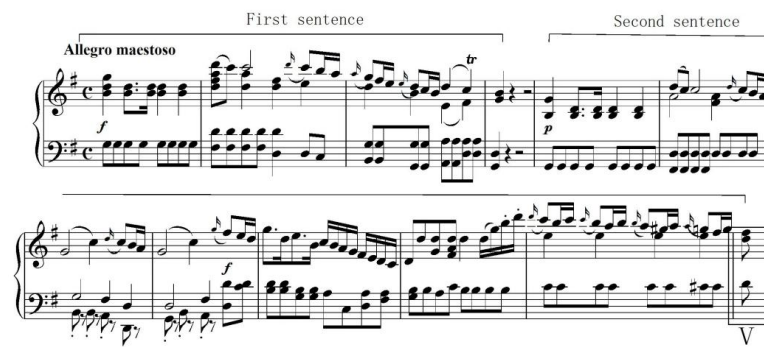


Figure 1. Exposition I

Presentation II highlights the flute solo part, which takes full advantage of the flute's tonal characteristics and virtuosity. Measures 31-44 of Example 2 show the main theme of Presentation II, with the same soprano voice as the flute. Compared with Presentation I, the first phrase repeats the melodic line, while in the second phrase, Mozart further expands the melody by using continuous sixteenth-note rhythms to emphasize the flexibility of the flute; at the same time, he also skillfully

employs the techniques of ornaments, skipping and vibrato, which make the melodic line more delicate, dynamic and expressive. Unlike the main theme of Presentation I, the main theme of Presentation II ends on the main chord of G major, forming a closing section. This design makes the solo flute part more structurally complete and enhances the stability and sense of closure of the music. (seen in figure 2)



Figure 2. Exposition II

The Expanded section begins at bar 91, where Mozart skillfully fuses and develops the main and secondary thematic material of the flute voice in the Double Presentation section. In bars 91-99 of Example 3, Mozart deforms and expands the motivic material of the flute part to derive a melodic line that is characterized by fusion. This kind of musical compositional technique of deriving motivic material is common in the music of the classical period, which not only strengthens the inner tension of the music but also forms a close logical connection between the unfolding part and the double presentation part so that the unfolding part can be introduced smoothly. In addition, the tonal development of the unfolding section breaks the stable relationship between the dominant and the subdominant in the exposition section and frequently makes tonal shifts and excursions. Firstly, it shifts from D major to A minor, and then from E minor to D minor, which not only enriches the musical expression of the unfolding section but also paves the way for the tonal return of the recapitulation section. (seen in figure 3)



Figure 3. Development group

The recapitulation begins at measure 149 and is a return to the material of the second part of the exposition. When the main theme is restated, it undergoes a simple variation, using triplets to enrich the texture of the music and contrast with the exposition. The following transition and secondary theme largely reproduce the melody of the second part of the exposition, with only minor decorative variations to certain phrases, adding layers and nuance to the music. Notably, during the restatement

of the secondary theme, the music returns to the key of G major, echoing the key of the main theme and achieving tonal harmony and unity. The coda is the concluding section of the entire piece. To highlight the unique timbre and expressiveness of the solo flute, Mozart employs a cadenza, pushing the flute's playing technique to its limits. Measures 215-219 in Example 4 are the final cadenza, whose highly ornamental musical features and relatively free playing style not only summarize and elevate the previous musical materials but also provide a brilliant conclusion to the movement. (seen in figure 4)



Figure 4. Reprise

4. Exploring the technical difficulties and tonal requirements of the Flute Concerto in G Major

4.1. Alternate use of spit and legato

The G major flute concerto uses a great deal of spitting and legato, which fully demonstrates the fluidity and stability of the works of the Classical period. In contrast to the baroque flute's embouchure, the classical period emphasizes a lighter style of playing, and the strength of the embouchure should be consistent throughout. The legato, on the other hand, requires the player to have enough breath support, and the note-fingering transitions should be crisp and clean, with no gaps in the articulation to form a smooth melodic line. Example 5 is the 31st measure, the solo flute voice debut, which is a good example of alternating legato and spatula, the player needs to give a stable and soft breath, to ensure that the transition between notes is smooth, in addition, some clusters of tones are neither legato nor spatula, can not be completely continuous or broken, which requires the player to play a moderate spatula, which is very important in the expression of the works of the Classical period. This is very important in the expression of classical works. The core of this movement lies in the large number of spit notes in the coloratura, which can effectively reflect the basic skills and expressive power of the performer, and the use of a large number of clean and dynamic spit notes can make the audience feel the fluidity of the music, and the combination of legato and spit notes in the coloratura gives the performer more free space to play, fast and dynamic spit and fluid legato lines, and a variety of techniques to form a unique flexible use of The flexible use of various techniques creates a unique musicality. (seen in figure 5)



Figure 5. The use of tonguing

4.2. The precise use of ornaments

The use of ornaments in the Flute Concerto in G major has a great deal of embodiment of the use of ornaments, ornaments is not just a player to show off but has a rich musical function so that the melody is full of interest and increases the rhythmic sense of the work of the richness of the weave, the use of ornaments is a great expression of the skills of the player. Mozart usually preferred to write very short learning notes and non-accented ornaments, and the correct understanding and use

of ornaments allows us to better understand Mozart's intentions [8]. It is important to note that although ornaments in the Classical period is more flexible than in the Baroque period, it is still important to follow the rules of performance. Most of the ornaments, such as trills and leans, do not take up the overall time. Classical vibrato is usually played by rapidly alternating the dominant with the upper diatonic from top to bottom [9]. In bar 33 of Example 6, for example, the upper do is marked with a vibrato marking, and the vibrato starts from the re and goes to the do, which is a repetitive vibrato that gives the music more fluidity. (seen in figure 6)



Figure 6. The use of ornaments

This shows how widespread and important vibrato is in the piece. In addition, leaning notes are used extensively, taking up a portion of the time within the cadence. In example 7, the style of the phrase begins to become more lively and grainy with the use of leaning notes. (seen in figure 7)

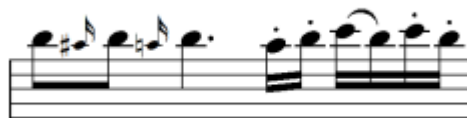


Figure 7. The use of acciaccatura

4.3. The contrast between the size and strength of the force

Power markings in a work are very important, not only representing the player's control of the work but also a reflection of the overall flow of the work, which is an important factor affecting the timbre. In the Flute Concerto in G Major, there are naturally a large number of markings, and to accurately grasp such power markings, more often than not, the ups and downs of the strength can give the work a strong emotional color [10]. The use of the fingers is crucial, the second beat after bar 83 is *f*, followed by two sixteenth-note clusters with legato lines, and because the cluster is a whole, the overall strength should not be maintained at *f* but should be slightly weaker so that it does not sound jarring to the ear. The sixteenth note cluster starts at measure 84 from top to bottom and then goes from top to bottom again at measure 85, with a change in strength to *mf*, which is a contrast to measure 83. When playing this part of the legato line, the player should make the melody as smooth and complete as possible through the control of the fingers, and the spitting part should have a sense of grain.

4.4. Requirements on tone color

Tone plays a very important role in the performance of a piece, and the classical period requires that the flute follow its inherent tone so that the sound will be more delicate [11, 12]. Timbre and melodic fluency, strength, and weakness are intertwined and are greatly reflected in this work. Mozart's compositions do not pursue pure sensory pleasure but also convey emotion and core content, and the performer should play each note clearly, especially in the timbre and melodic lines

between the different voices must be kept as independent as possible, and as the core of the flute section should play the flute's bright and penetrating timbre, which is a great test of the breath and the basic skills of the performer. This is a great test of the player's breath and basic skills.

5. Conclusion

The main research object of this paper is Mozart's Flute Concerto in G major, through the review of the literature and the analysis of the score, a detailed description of the creative background of Mozart's creation of this piece and the compositional structure of the work as well as the analysis of the technical aspects of the performance, which has a very high performance and artistic value, and it is a representative work of the flute concerto genre in the Classical period. The first movement of the work is in sonata form. Through the layout of thematic presentation, unfolding, and reproduction, it shows rich musical layers; the melodic line is fluent and full of singing, and this section serves as a model for the creation of the classical period waltzes, which has a far-reaching influence on the Romantic period waltzes. This study systematically analyzes the compositional background of Mozart's Flute Concerto in G Major and reveals its close connection with the aesthetics of Classical music. In the field of flute education, the results of this study provide concrete and practical guidance for teaching practice. The interpretation of the compositional structure and musical style in the study will help students understand the connotation of the work and avoid stylistic deviations in performance. Based on existing research on Mozart, the study focuses on the influence of the choice of flute playing technique on the musical emotion of the Flute Concerto in G Major, which fills in some of the gaps in the thematic research on the flute concerto in the Classical period and provides a paradigm for subsequent related research.

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