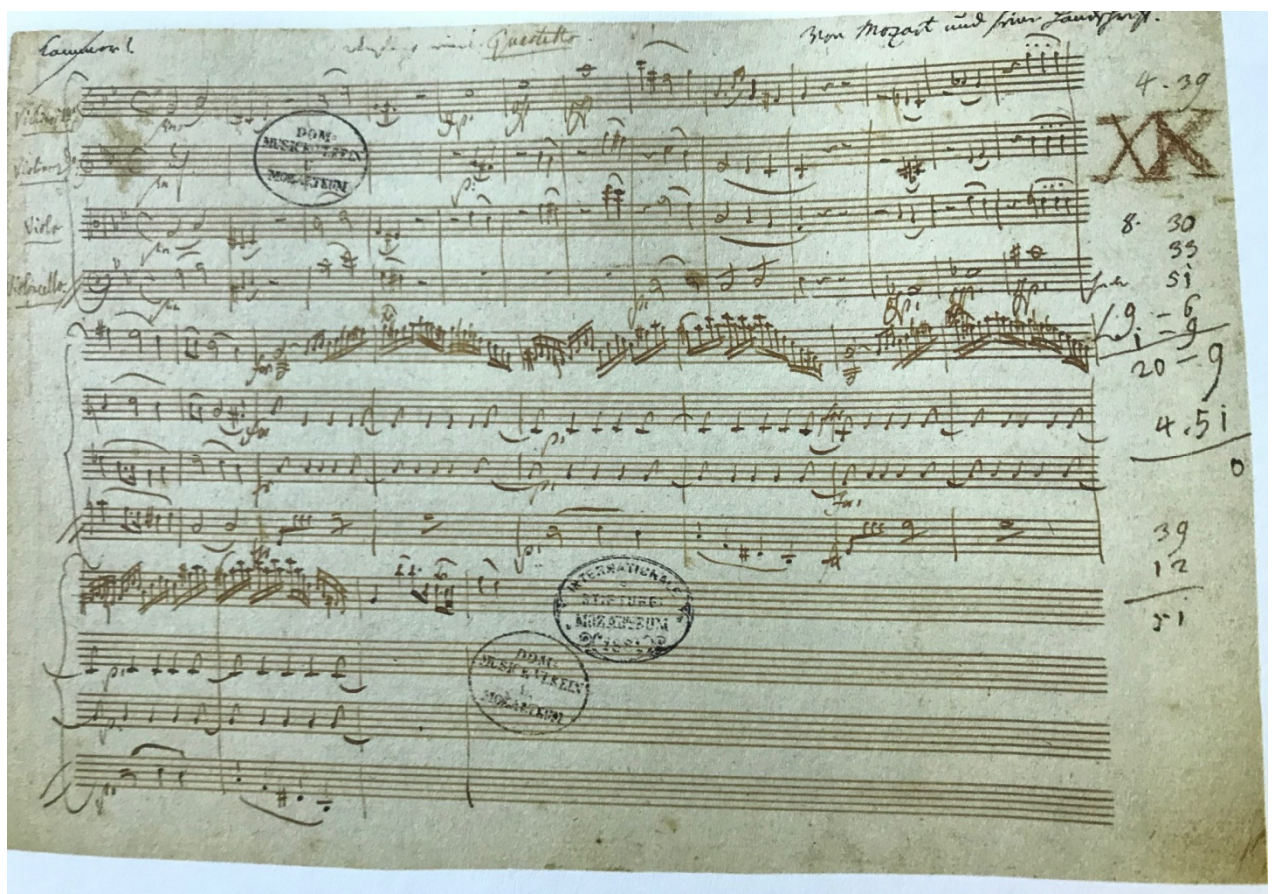


Mozart: Fragment of an Allegro for String Quartet in G minor Fr 1789i

Two Completions

Editorial Introduction

The unique source of this 23-bar fragment is an autograph manuscript found on the recto side of a single leaf in the collection of the Bibliotheca Mozartiana at the International Institute of the Mozarteum in Salzburg (shelfmark KV⁶ 587a). Tyson and Konrad both date it to late 1789. The paper type is congruent with Mozart's work on Act II of *Così fan tutte*, and the presence on the verso side of the leaf of a sketch for the famous canon in the Act II Finale of the opera indicates that (1) the fragment must predate January 1790, and (2) that Mozart had definitively abandoned work on the quartet before he finished the opera in that month.



It is reasonable, then, to assume that Fr 1789i was the false start to a minor-mode quartet intended to be one of the set of three works (or, in the medium term, six works) dedicated to the King of Prussia. While there is no evidence of a definitive reason why Mozart abandoned the work, it is possible that it was superseded by the Allegro in E minor (Fr 1789b) which, with a similar *unisono* opening theme, was a work still in progress at Mozart's death in December 1791. If there is anything about the G minor fragment that triggered Mozart's self censorship, then it is likely to have been the stylistic contrast between bars 1–15 and bars 16–23. The first of those sections is one of the most remarkable opening passages in any of Mozart's string quartets. Its prose-like qualities are especially striking: after the broken symmetry of the two *unisono* gestures in bars 1–45, the following six-bar phrase grows from an unusual expansion of bars 3–4 in bars 5–7. The melodic shape of bars 3–4

reappears in diminution in the first violin at the end of the phrase in bar 9, pushing towards a close that is thwarted by the interrupted cadence at the start of bar 10. The silences in the texture of this second phrase throw each individual note into an almost pointillist relief, an effect underscored by the *sfp* jabs in the first violin, the ungainly intervallic content of the first violin's ascent to c³, and the uprooted *sospirando* figures in the second violin and viola. More radical still is the cello's A flat in bar 11, and the five-bar phrase to which it gives rise. This is quite the starkest and most abrupt appearance of the flat supertonic in any of Mozart's minor-mode sonata form expositions. The enharmonic shift through which it pivots back to the tonic in bar 13 is no less unorthodox: the spelling of d flat¹ as c sharp¹ in the cello at bar 13, and its function as the root of a diminished seventh chord, means that it should resolve up to d¹ at bar 14; instead it behaves as though it were functionally d flat¹, resolving down to c¹ (beneath another diminished seventh) at bar 14. It is hard to think of a further example of this kind of enharmonic double bluff in Mozart.

In contrast, the *forte* passage from bar 16 is a vigorous but rather characterless study in *Sturm und Drang*, a good decade and a half beyond its freshest currency. It is understandable that Mozart may have wanted to invoke the bravura of the French *quatuor brillant* as a foil to the opening 15 bars, and the same principle of contrast may have guided his decision to structure the passage as a four-bar phrase coupled with its exact repetition. But the high originality of the first section sits uneasily beside this formulaic continuation. In Mozart's fragment the first violin continues for a further bar and a half (bars 24–25²) with a melodic shape whose etiolated elegance is also reminiscent of the galant style of the 1760s and 70s rather than the end of the 1780s. So that by the time the fragment petered out on the page (in the middle of the third system in the autograph manuscript) the concatenation of the overly bold and stylistically timid might well have put paid to further work on the movement in Mozart's head.

If this is the case, then why attempt to complete the fragment? Three factors have determined my decision to work on it: (1) bars 1–15 are too good for the reject pile; (2) the challenge to see if the two styles of the fragment could be reconciled (or at least kept in a fruitful rhetorical, formal and stylistic balance) over the course of an entire sonata form movement is irresistible; (3) if bars 16–25 are problematic, what would be the consequences of deleting them and following the radical direction of bars 1–15?

The two completions are designed to explore points (2) and (3) from different perspectives.

Completion 1

The basic premise of this completion is to take the entirety of Mozart's fragment at face value and expand it so that each of the formal paragraphs traces the same trajectory as the opening section, moving from a language of unvarnished (and sometimes anguished) sensibility to a punctuating passage dominated by concerto-like bravura. In the exposition the transition section (bars 24–36) begins by alluding to bars 1–4 (the thirds in the cello and the *sospirando* figures in the violins in bars 24–8), continues by developing the material from bars 5–10 in bars 29–33, and consolidates the prolongation of V/III with bravura figures in the cello and first violin in bars 33–6. The second subject begins in bar 37 with a dechromatised variant of bars 1–2 in the new context of B flat major. (The melodic function of the cello is a nod to the 'Prussian' context of the fragment.) When the first violin begin a varied repetition of this eight-bar theme it expands the second phrase (bars 41–4 enlarged to bars 49–66), culminating in the bravura-style climax at bars 64–6¹ and the continuation in the

same style from bar 66 onwards. Over the course of the second subject the pitch F sharp is subject to a similar enharmonic play to Mozart's treatment of D flat/C sharp near the start of the movement. In bar 40 f sharp¹ appears as an accented chromatic passing note between f natural and g in the cello. The first violin carries the same pattern an octave higher in bar 48¹; when the same pitch is approached by the expanded sequential ascent in the first violin in bars 50–56, it appears at bar 56 not as f sharp² but as g flat², the chromatic upper neighbour note of f². This enharmonic play carries on in the final six bars of the exposition where the g flat¹ in violin 2 at bar 70 (part of a 6-4-2 chord) is reinterpreted as F sharp in the cello at bars 73–4 (as the bass of the 6-5-3 chord pivoting back towards G minor for the repeat of the exposition).

The development reverses the underlying topical pattern: it starts with *Sturm und Drang* and concludes with a return to the style of the movement's opening in preparation for the start of the recapitulation. In bars 79–96 the *Sturm und Drang* music is made more mobile than its model in Mozart's bars 16–23 by sequential modifications of its harmonic pattern in bars 79–86 and by a foreshortening of its underlying harmonic rhythm in bars 87–96. The sudden return to the movement's opening motive is effected through the cello's seemingly accidental discovery of its contour in bars 97–8 as it traces the roots of an imperfect cadence. The imitation by inversion in bars 100–106 deliberately gives rise to pointed dissonances which prepare the unadorned style of the recapitulation's first paragraph and provide some momentary tension to be dissipated at the start of the recapitulation in bar 108.

In the recapitulation the first section is reconfigured. The ambiguity of the D flat/C sharp of bar 13 is exploited in bar 120 so that the upper three instruments form a 6-4-2 chord above the cello and the subsequent resolution is to A flat major in bar 121. A double cadential progression in bars 121–5¹ leads the *Sturm und Drang* music to break out in E flat major rather than G minor at bar 125. The next eight bars trace the same ascending trajectory as bars 79–86 from the development section. (See also the parallel passage in the first movement of the G minor Symphony K. 550.) Chromatic adjustments to the viola and cello in bar 137 ensure that the music settles on V/i rather than V/III in bars 138–45. The events in the recapitulation's second subject broadly follow the running order of the parallel passage in the exposition, but there are numerous adjustments, not just to translate the original major mode of the music into the minor mode here, but also the keep in play significant pitches from the exposition (for example, the recurrence of A flat).

The coda (bar 187ff) attempts to return to the emptiness of the opening. Closure is effected in the last four bars by the simple mechanism of switching the direction of the *sospirando* figures from bars 1–4.

Completion 2

Completion 2 takes a different stance towards the stylistic incongruities of the fragment. Instead of developing the juxtaposition of Mozart's two types of material in bars 1-23, as in Completion 1, it separates the *Sturm und Drang* material into its constituent components of bravura style and 'ancient' style. In doing so, it attempts to find a 'contemporary' (late 1780s/early 1790s) reconfiguration of *Sturm und Drang* that is congruent with Mozart's successful rethinking of the trope in other pieces he composed in the last two years of his life (for example, 'Die Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen' from Act II of *Die Zauberflöte*, the Allegro and Andante K. 608, and the fragmentary Allegro in A minor for String Quintet Fr 1791c).

For instance, the second period of the second subject (bars 40–57) begins lyrically but leads to an outburst of concerto-like figuration in the first violin at bars 49–52. This passage culminates in the rhetorical trope of *abruptio* in bar 52, and the period is harmonically closed in bars 52–58¹ with the reprise of material from bars 5–10. The next period (bars 58–71) revisits *abruptio* by recasting the movement's opening gesture with the forceful of articulation of renunciation gestures from eighteenth-century accompanied recitative. The topical pattern of [forceful gesture provokes submissive response] shapes bars 58–69. Rather than reaching an articulated end point with a perfect cadence, this period melts back into a truncated reprise of the second subject. The transition between the two periods (bars 70–72) is underpinned by a series of semibreves rising through fifths in the cello, a normalisation of the arresting gesture from bars 11–13.

The tripartite development section (bars 87–124) tests three different modes of contrapuntal treatment of principal material from the exposition in three distinct phases. In the first two, the logic of the contrapuntal treatment thwarts progress towards closure in the tonic; in contrast, the third phase is goal directed and leads, via a V pedal, to the arrival of G minor at the start of the recapitulation. At bar 87 the ensemble splits into two-part counterpoint and launches a sequence that puts the movement's first two gestures in stretto. Beginning in B flat minor, it creates a harmonic labyrinth whose cycle is broken on V/v in bar 93. Such labyrinths are by their nature not goal directed by circular systems that can be interrupted arbitrarily. Therefore the music steps off the cycle at V/v rather than the sequence leading there.

At bar 100 a second contrapuntal phase begins. Here there is imitation using the movement's headmotive in augmentation, while the subsidiary voices draw their figuration from diminution of the opening theme's *sospirando* figure. Like the first phase of the development section, this contrapuntal treatment is also more circular than goal directed. This is caused by the enharmonic and functional ambiguity of the third note in the headmotive. For instance, in bar 102 the first violin appears to be imitating the cello at the interval of a compound fifth, but its third note – d sharp² in strict imitative terms – is reinterpreted as e flat² and resolves accordingly. This means that the subject begins a fifth higher than its model (D minor → A minor) but ends a fifth lower (D minor → G minor). This introduces a tonal circularity in the process which is at odds with the progressive aspects of the texture, with all four instruments taking their share in the imitative dialogue. The music may seem to be progressing, but at bar 106 the second violin has the same starting point as the cello in bar 100. (This slightly off-kilter relationship between goal directed and circular processes is present in some of Mozart's more striking development sections from the second half of the 1780s, including the first movement of the C major Piano Concerto K. 503 and the last movement of the Symphony in E flat, K. 543.)

If the step away from the harmonic labyrinth was arbitrary in the first phase of the development, then the abrupt switch from the second to the third phase in bar 108 is tonally arbitrary but placed logically after each instrument has sounded the augmented subject in the previous phase. The final phase of the development section returns to the Baroque style of bars 58–60 and subjects the material to the type of contrapuntal development that invokes Mozart's reception of Bach in his late works. For the first time in this development section, the material is tractable to goal-directed processes, both in terms of the progression from iv to V/i in bars 108–116 and in the melodic descent and its sequential contrapuntal underpinning above the virtual V pedal in bars 120–124. The

focus on process in this phase is complemented by the mechanistic character of the counterpoint: with this writing I had the fugati of Mozart's music for mechanical clock especially in mind.

The cyclical components of the development section exert influence on the shape of the rest of the movement via the development-exposition repeat and by the correspondence between the opening of the coda (bars 214–222) and the opening of the development section. The final three bars take as their model the type of radical liquidation that leads to a bare unsupported octave (f^2 – f^3) in the first violin at the end of the first movement of K. 590.