

# WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

	<b>Sonata in A Minor, K. 310</b>	<b>[16:11]</b>
1	Allegro maestoso	[ 5:55]
2	Andante cantabile con espressione	[ 7:10]
3	Presto	[ 2:58]
	<b>Sonata in F Major, K. 332</b>	<b>[20:14]</b>
4	Allegro	[ 7:21]
5	Adagio	[ 5:50]
6	Allegro assai	[ 6:53]
7	<b>Fantasy in C Minor, K. 475</b>	<b>[12:08]</b>
8	<b>Rondo in D Major, K. 485</b>	<b>[ 5:09]</b>
	<b>Sonata in D Major, K. 576</b>	<b>[15:34]</b>
9	Allegro	[ 5:03]
10	Adagio	[ 6:05]
11	Allegretto	[ 4:21]
12	<b>Eine kleine Gigue, K. 574</b>	<b>[ 1:22]</b>
13	<b>Menuett in D Major, K. 576b</b>	<b>[ 2:42]</b>
14	<b>Adagio for Glass Harmonica, K. 617a</b>	<b>[ 2:45]</b>

Total time: 77:02

**ALECK KARIS, piano**

# WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756-1791)

Notes by Harris Goldsmith

A colorful assortment of Mozartiana, this! Indeed, one would be hard put to find three of his piano sonatas more contrasted than the anguished A Minor, K. 310, the chaste and lyrical F Major, K. 332 and the festive D Major, K. 576. And yet, K. 310 and K. 332 date from virtually the same period: the twenty-one-year-old composer's sojourn to Paris, where he had gone in quest of possible gainful employment.

Until then, Mozart had lived under the protective aegis of the Salzburg Archbishop Colloredo. Colloredo was, from all reports, a pretty nasty fellow and one whose musically reactionary outlook obviously spelled future trouble to a burgeoning genius (and no great financial rewards). Wolfgang and his father, Leopold, both humbly petitioned for a leave of absence so that each could cast about for a better—or at least more lucrative—position. Colloredo initially replied in the negative but when the request was incessantly repeated, each time with increasing urgency, he shrewdly dismissed the son from his employ with a curt "permission to seek fortune elsewhere," meanwhile retaining the more servile father as quasi-hostage. The mother accompanied her son on his sojourn and while away from home, died suddenly in the spring of 1778.

The Sonata in A Minor, K. 310 was composed in the immediate aftermath of that tragedy. Mozart's filial ties were strong and he took the blow with particular severity. In addition, the year-long visit was proving unsatisfactory in other ways, too: in place of the expected wealth and renown, the young master found apathy and cold shoulders. In one of his letters came his immortal observation that "the French are, always were, and always will be, asses." Moreover, he suffered a romantic blow, being spurned by the beautiful but frivolous singer, Aloysia Weber (he eventually married her plainer sister, Constanza). All of this pent-up anger and grief would certainly explain the uncharacteristic vehemence of K. 310's first movement, the churning anguish of the central movement's development section. Texturally, too, the sonata is atypically complex: profusely detailed, almost clotted at times and, indeed, nearly orchestral in its massive richness—a far cry from Mozart's ordinary pellucid, Clavecinist-oriented keyboard manner. Similarly, the emotional thermometer registers fever in the tempo markings where one finds such directives as "Maestoso" and "Presto," which, however commonplace for a Beethoven or a Schumann, were something quite unusual in Mozart's lexicon. But of course one finds (as one does in all great works of Classical proportion) judicious foil for the lunging violence: a conciliatory tone colors much of the *Andante cantabile* slow movement and all of the dancing rondo. This restraint makes the work all the more poignant.

The F major Sonata, K. 332, on the other hand, typifies the rest of the Paris Sonatas. For the most part, that series is not that dissimilar from Mozart's earlier essays in sonata genre. Their textures are spare—indeed, where the E flat Sonata, K. 282 and the G major, K. 283 are generally in three-part harmony, the Paris Sonatas (sans K. 310!) are essentially in two parts—and their mood is sparkling, urbane and civilized, intended for the drawing room rather than the large concert hall. K. 332 could serve as a textbook model for the three movement sonata format: its opening *Allegro* is concise, with its components set in sharp relief. The first theme has a spinning, lyrical quality that nonetheless provides sufficient contrast from the equally lyric but more tersely angular second idea. Both themes are composite in nature: the first has a second part in imitation and a third suggestive of hunting horns. The second subject, likewise, proceeds into an interlude with dramatic syncopes and finally settles into a hymn-like summation. The *Adagio* is a truncated sonata form (missing its development). In the subdominant key of B flat major, its two melodies are stated in full and then recapitulated immediately thereafter. The reprise is heavily ornamented in the first printed edition brought out by Artaria and Schott in 1784. Most performers prefer this later version (and rightly so) to the unadorned manuscript with its skeleton-like simplicity. The concluding *Allegro Assai* is a brilliant *tour de force*. Again the format is binary, and the writing abounds with syncopations, dramatic pauses and canonic imitations. One idea, in vaulting broken sixths, foreshadows the opening movement of the celebrated "Trumpet" Sonata, K. 576, which, by coincidence, can also be heard on this recording.

K. 576 derives its nickname from the clarion incisiveness of its opening theme, which is indeed reminiscent of a trumpet at a hunt. The work dates from July 1789, which is to say, eleven years after K. 310 and K. 332. Some months before, on a visit to northern Germany, Mozart had heard Bach's *Signet dem Herrn* and was so profoundly moved that he asked to see other motets which he at once absorbed by copying them in his own hand. The upshot of all this is that you can hear the Bach influence in the sonata: note the imitations and *strettos* (e.g. one voice entering on the tail of another) in the first movement. There is, in fact, so much development of the opening "trumpet" motif that an inattentive listener might mistake the movement for a monothematic sonata. The second theme, when it *does* arrive, is passed over rather quickly. Mozart dwells at greater length on it when the recapitulation comes—reversing the normal pattern of abridging the reprise. In all of its proportions, K. 576 is a big sonata—so big, in fact, that a premature coda threatens to become a second development section. The central *Adagio* is, by contrast, introspective; more flowing than the sectional, hymnlike middle movement of K. 570, and less regal and tragic than the *Adagio* of K. 457, two other big Mozart

sonatas. Basically, the movement is in three-part song form, with a codetta. The main theme here is in A major with the contrasting central section in F sharp minor (its relative). Such a simplified synopsis, though, makes no consideration of Mozart's unusual harmonic innovations such as the modulation back to the first theme's return. The movement, it ought be noted, shares many stylistic traits with the corresponding section of its immediate sibling, the String Quartet, K. 575. The sonata's third movement, too, is much akin to the quartet's analogous section: both are *alla breve Allegrettos* which move through their rondo/sonata courses with exhilarating momentum. In both works, running triplets supply much of the forward drive.

The Fantasia in C Minor, K. 475 was written in May 1785 as an afterthought prologue to the Sonata, K. 457 in the same key, completed seven months earlier. The two compositions are of course interrelated (the opening upward phrase of the Fantasia is a chromaticized permutation of the C minor arpeggio which launches the sonata), but each is self-contained and entirely self-sufficient. One fascination in comparing the two is the discovery that whereas the sonata was terse in the extreme, its companion goes in the opposite way, on a course of ruminative breadth. K. 475 is said to suggest what Mozart's sublime improvisations may have sounded like, but it has its own logic and symmetry. Whereas the K. 457 Sonata evolves on an axis of conventional tonic-relative major harmony (moving from the "home" C minor key to the requisite E flat Major), the K. 475 Fantasia's subordinate material is mostly assigned to D Major (a whole tone higher than the "home" key) or B Flat Major (a whole tone lower). Technical matters aside, the C Minor Fantasia, K. 475 is undoubtedly Mozart's greatest, and it illuminates the path leading to the nineteenth century Tone Poem with radiant clairvoyance. Beethoven was soon to follow (e.g. the "Pathétique" and Op. 111 Sonatas).

The Rondo in D Major, K. 485 is a monothematic essay on a theme Mozart didn't compose! As Alfred Einstein has pointed out, the tripping motif which Mozart so rigorously worked here was actually the brainchild of Johann Christian Bach (in a Quintet). Mozart was obviously fascinated with his friend's motto, for he had quoted it once before in the course of his G minor Piano Quartet, K. 478. There, however, the fragment appears only once and is neither developed nor recapitulated—an odd phenomenon for a composer who was ordinarily loath to overlook even the minutest detail. The "oversight" in that 1785 creation may well have prodded Mozart into offering the Rondo as restitution a few months later. In spite of its monothematic nature, this Rondo can legitimately be classified as a fully developed Sonata-Allegro movement: Mozart has used his borrowed motif so adeptly that it readily serves as first and second subjects, bridge sections, development and coda. It might be pointed out here that, while the monothematic Sonata was unusual for Mozart (who was lavish with his materials), the form was fairly

commonplace with Haydn.

Mozart's absorption with Baroque procedures, noted above in the discussion of the Sonata, K. 576, may be found again in the pair of gems also from anno 1789: The *kleine Gigue*, K. 574, abounds with chromaticism and its accented upbeats are designed to create teasing rhythmic ambiguity (the listener sometimes perceives the unfolding phrases as duple, sometimes as triple metre). The equally chromatic *Menuett in D Major* (whose rightful chronology is reflected in its revised Koechel number 576b, rather than the more widely known but misleading K. 355) conveys a deliciously mellow expansiveness peppered with various spine-tingling dissonances. Curiously, it has no central Trio section.

The even later C major *Adagio*, similarly the victim of misleading I.D. number (it should be K. 617a from the year 1791, not K. 356!), has a crystalline purity and succinctness that puts one in mind of *Die Zauberflöte*. The analogy with that opera would be even more acute were we to hear the music played, as Mozart intended, on delicate glasses filled with varying degrees of liquid. Even on the comparatively prosaic piano, the enchantment level here is potent.

— Harris Goldsmith

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# ALECK KARIS

Aleck Karis has been featured at leading international festivals including those in Bath, Geneva, São Paulo, Santos (Brazil), Los Angeles, Miami, the New York Philharmonic 'Horizons' Festival, and the Warsaw Autumn Festival. He was awarded the Special Prize in the first Kennedy Center-Rockefeller Foundation International American Music Competition, and is the recipient of a Solo Recitalist's Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has also been honored with two grants from the Fromm Foundation of Harvard University "in recognition of his commitment to the music of our time." Aleck Karis is a member of the new music ensemble Speculum Musicae and an Associate in Music Performance at Columbia University.

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Aleck Karis's major teachers include Artur Balsam, Beveridge Webster, and William Daghlian.

