



W.A. Mozart: Trio KV 564 in G major

Mozart's last Piano Trio with Violin and Cello was written in 1788 in Vienna, in an especially productive period. Despite increasing financial difficulties, Mozart used the summer months of 1788 to create a mass of important works, including the last three Symphonies, the Piano Sonata KV 545, the last Violin Sonata, and the Piano Trios in E- and C-Major. Directly next in order after the six-movement, extremely challenging 'Divertimento' KV 563 for string trio, this Trio KV 564 is a distinctly more compact and – both for the players and for the listeners – more lightly accessible work.

At times one hears the complaint that, in this Trio, one can hear that it was conceived as a piano sonata, the strings being given an unequal part in comparison to the piano's. In reality, however, one finds the three instruments constantly passing on the leading voice to one another, or the violin and cello facing off together directly against the piano. While it is the piano that introduces the first theme in the first movement, the strings take over this theme shortly thereafter; and the second theme in the exposition is given entirely by the violin, in the recapitulation by the cello. The piece begins in a cheerful, winsome tone, and indeed in none of the three movements does the basic tenor seem to have anything in common with either Mozart's unfortunate personal state or the general difficult political and economic situation of this time. The second theme of the first movement offers little contrast to the main theme; instead it shows an astonishing rhythmic and melodic resemblance to this first theme (as is often the case with Haydn's works). Darker tones make their appearance first in the development, where the highest drama is created by modulations between different major and minor keys and stormy sixteenth-note passages, until we find ourselves again in the safe G-Major world of the main theme.

The theme of the variation movement (the Andante second movement) is a simple, gentle, song-filled, and swaying melody in C-Major in 3/8 time, again introduced by the piano. In the first three variations, the strings repeat this theme in a barely-altered form, while the figurations of the piano thicken. Only with the fourth variation does the theme take on noticeably different form, here with little accompaniment. Before the last variation and short coda close off the movement with lively canonic string entrances and playful thirty-second notes, the theme in the fifth variation makes its one appearance in a minor key. This variation is also simply formed, but all the more gripping therefore in its solemn darkness.

In the last movement, with its daring, cheerful and cheeky Rondo theme resembling a fast Siciliano, the Trio KV 564 has at the very latest a truly ear-catching tune! The sections between the various rondo entrances display extremely contrasting characters. First a touching g-minor theme is sounded, also in Siciliano rhythm. The next time, the rondo is followed by an also dance-like, but rhythmically completely different C-Major section in relaxed country style. Playfully inserted entrances of the theme by all instruments, highlighted by virtuosic piano passages, lead the piece to an ending bubbling over with joie de vivre.

Certainly this composition is lighter than Mozart's Divertimento for String Trio or his last Symphonies, yet it is exactly in its cheerful uncomplicatedness, combined with the Apollonian beauty and clarity, that its particular charm lays, and in which its claim to the pantheon of Mozart's late works in its own way is justified.

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