

We're very close to Mozart:

*Wendling, no doubt, is in a rage,
That I haven't composed a single page;
But when I cross the Rhine once more,
I'll sure dash home through the door
And, lest he call me mean and petty,
I'll finish off his four quartetti.*¹

wrote the young Wolfgang Amadé to his mother in 1778. Johann Baptist Wendling, a family friend and distinguished flutist and teacher, included Johann Georg Mezger among his pupils, and it is likely that Mozart would not have written his flute works unless acquainted with the Mannheim circle around Wendling. We can assume that Mezger and Mozart met, and knew each other's latest compositions.

Johann Georg Mezger, born in 1746 in Philippsburg (Karlsruhe), was a pupil at the Jesuit "Seminarium musicum" in Mannheim, and from 1765 a member of the court orchestra there, in whose employment he remained after the orchestra moved to Munich in 1778. He composed concertos and chamber music works, which were published by the renowned publisher Hummel (Berlin/Amsterdam). Mezger died in Munich in 1793.

The present Sonatas appeared as an undated print of c. 1785 from Hummel, titled:

SIX SOLOS | Pour la | FLUTE TRAVERSIERE, | et BASSE.
| Composés | Par | **M^r. MEZGER** | [...] | Oeuvre Sixsieme. |
N° 598 [...] | Chés J: J: HUMMEL, à Berlin avec Privilège du
Roi: | à Amsterdam au Grand Magazin de Musique [...]

The work:

The Sonatas are formally quite personal, particularly their first movements: in the development sections we hear unexpectedly improvisatory and intensely chromatic passages, and the imaginative recapitulations often make original changes to the expositions' material. Harmonies are expressive, rich in diminished seventh chords, frequently in the second inversion (six-four-three figures), with dissonant suspensions and augmented second steps. Mezger's particular idiom also includes trills with final turns which coquettishly end in a pause instead of continuing.

The types of movement range from distinctive first movements in sonata form, elegiac middle movements and witty rondos to dances and variations; the unexpected sections in minor are also captivating. Daring modulations take us to almost every major and minor key – an unusual palette in flute literature of the period.

The Flute part:

The traverse flute's ambitus here reaches up to high g (including the unloved high f on one-keyed instruments!),

which corresponds exactly to the ambitus of Mozart's flute concerto in G major. Virtuoso passages, wide intervals, all manner of ornaments and lyrical motifs enable the performer to display all his skill, and should now turn these Sonatas, particularly as chamber music duos with a keyboard instrument, into standard works of flute literature.

The Basso and keyboard parts:

The thoroughly figured bass also shows the characteristics of the figured bass as its time came to an end: this is no longer a basso continuo, the line is often broken and interspersed with rests, and there are legato signs, which give the lowest voice a new melodicism.

How did practised keyboard players handle such a rudimentary score after the mid-18th century? We can take it for granted that the period's very developed art of improvisation stimulated a spontaneous obligato right hand, competing in motifs and dynamics with the duo partner (usually violin or flute) and often taking the interpretative lead. All this led finally to written-out sonatas for clavier with a partner instrument. Mezger's sonatas vividly illustrate the floating state between almost outmoded "figured bass" practice and the meteoric development of an independent clavier part. Tradition and a striving for new paths competed for a while in various ways, D.G. Türk publishing his successful "Instructions for thorough-bass playing" almost ten years after Mozart's death!

Our edition:

This is why this edition presents both the "Urtext" (flute part and figured bass unchanged) as also the "realization" of the bass in the form of an obligato right hand, producing a genuine Duo for Clavier and Flute while taking into account the "progressive" style of the period. Today's keyboard player can choose to side with the traditionalists or the progressives, as did Mezger's contemporaries. In this context it is worth noting that the composer already uses many new dynamics signs, including "cresc." and "rf" (rinforzando).

A few added signs appear in brackets. Concerning the footnote in the third sonata's Rondò (bar 12): the tie in the flute part should according to Quantz be marked by an extra pressure of the breath, thus:

di--hi ti di

rf (rinforzando) means a moderate rather than a strong accent.

Dashes above the notes should not be played staccato as in the modern way, but require the distinct articulation syllable "ti".

Winfried Michel

¹ Translation by Emily Anderson (*The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, London: Macmillan, 1938, vol. 2, p. 674).

COVER

Remondini: *Hearing* (from a series with the five senses, c. 1740–1770, etching