

## 22. Mozart

### Piano Sonata Sonata in B flat, K. 333: movement I

(for Unit 6: Further Musical Understanding)

#### Background Information and Performance Circumstances

Mozart composed this piece in 1783 at a time when his compositions were beginning to receive overdue recognition in Vienna. His opera *Die Entführung* had been a great success, though the development of his reputation in the Austrian capital had to be delayed during a three month stay in his home city of Salzburg. This had partly been arranged in order to introduce Mozart's new wife Constanze to his father.

His piano sonatas were often written for pupils to play, and small scale keyboard works such as this one were also much more likely to succeed in printed form than symphonies or concertos. The sonata in B flat was published in Vienna in 1784 in a set of three pieces, two for solo piano and one for violin and piano.

'K.333' refers to the position of the piece in the chronological catalogue of Mozart's works made by the Austrian musicologist, Köchel. At this time of Mozart's career the composer wasn't keeping the careful record of his works that he did after his return to Vienna, so the exact chronological order of the composition of the pieces is often in doubt.

#### Instrumentation

Mozart was renowned as a virtuoso keyboard player from his early years when he toured Europe as a child prodigy. In Vienna he often conducted his operas from the keyboard, and was usually the soloist in the first performances of his piano concertos. At times much needed income was provided by teaching piano to the daughters of rich Viennese.

The instrument Mozart wrote for is known today as the *fortepiano*. It had a much more delicate sound than the modern *pianoforte*, though it shared the feature which gave the instrument its name – the ability to play softly or loudly depending on the weight of the player's touch – a feature lacking in the harpsichord, an instrument which rapidly died out towards the end of the eighteenth century. The frame of the *fortepiano* was wooden, whereas a modern piano has a metal frame to support its high tension strings.

Dynamics would have been subtle. There certainly wasn't the range available to a modern player. Many of the bars have no dynamic marking at all, including the whole of the first page of the anthology score. Nevertheless we can be sure that the players of the time would have performed with frequent slight dynamic changes. *Fp* (*fortepiano*) markings are used to give a sudden accent (bar 39). There are no extremes of dynamics such as *pianissimo* or *fortissimo*.

One of the main advantages of the new instrument was its ability to provide a softer left hand accompaniment to the right hand melody. The steady quaver accompaniment from the beginning of the piece, with its distinctive quaver rest at the beginning of the

bar, would have been played with slightly less weight than the right hand music. *Appoggiaturas*, like the E flat at the beginning of bar 3 could also be emphasised with slight extra pressure on the instrument key. A typical feature of the keyboard style of the period was the *Alberti bass* – strictly speaking a broken chord accompaniment in the order of low–high–middle–high notes, as at bar 71.

The pitch range of the *fortepiano* was relatively confined and the range of this piece is particularly narrow. The few really low notes, such as the C two octaves below middle C in bar 22 are used to reinforce a cadence note with the octave below. Much of the left hand music is in the treble clef, including the first two bars. The music rises to top F at bar 73.

## Texture

- The texture is melody-dominated homophony. Simple two part textures abound, as at the beginning of the piece, where a melodic line in the right hand is accompanied by a broken chord texture in the left hand.
- Various Alberti bass textures are used, as in the F minor section (from bar 71) mentioned in the previous section.
- Alberti bass is combined with a dominant pedal towards the end of the Exposition, at bar 57.
- Infrequently the right hand plays in octaves, bar 43.
- There are occasional passages of monophonic music, often with scalic writing, as at bar 8.
- Occasional fuller chords are used, such as the six note chord at the beginning of the 2nd subject, at bar 23.
- Three part texture is used in bars 45-6.
- There is a passage in 6ths at bar 102.

## Structure

The music is in Sonata Form, the typical form of 1<sup>st</sup> movements of Classical sonatas. Whereas Mozart’s near contemporary Haydn wrote movements which tended to be almost monothematic, Mozart often included several tunes within a subject group. The second subject group, including the codetta, has numerous melodic ideas.

|                         |       |                                |  |
|-------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Exposition</b>       | 1-63  |                                |  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> subject | 1-10  | B flat major                   | The short main theme begins on the upbeat and ends with a perfect cadence in the tonic.  |
| Transition              | 10-22 | B flat major moving to F major | The transition (or bridge section) begins to modulate at bar 12, using material from the 1 <sup>st</sup> subject. There is the first perfect cadence in the new dominant key at bars 13-14. The section ends with an imperfect cadence at bars 21-2. |

|                         |                       |                |  |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Subject | 23-50                 | F major (dom.) | Two main melodic ideas:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(bars 23-38) with repeat at bar 31. Leads to a perfect cadence (37-8)</li> <li>The second idea begins at bar 39. This leads via a brief circle of 5ths (bars 47-8) to:</li> </ol>  |
| Codetta                 | 50-63                 | F major (dom.) | Two more ideas in the dominant key:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>beginning at bar 50. This is repeated up an octave in bar 54 before leading via a 2 bar dominant pedal (57-8) to a perfect cadence in F (58-9).</li> <li>Final idea in the dominant (59-63) leading to another perfect cadence to end the exposition.</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Development</b>      | 63 <sub>4</sub> -93   | F-Gm-Fm-Cm-Gm  | The development section begins with the 1 <sup>st</sup> subject in the dominant (F). There is a passing modulation to Gm (67-8), then we seem to be heading for a perfect cadence in F at 70-71. Instead there is a dramatic shift to F minor in bar 71. This is not exactly a remote key, but it's not one of the five closely related ones. The music reaches C minor at bar 75 and G minor at bar 80. From bar 87 there is a 7 bar passage of dominant preparation (see harmony notes). |
| <b>Recapitulation</b>   | 93 <sub>3</sub> -end  | B flat major   |  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> subject | 93 <sub>3</sub> -103  | B flat major   | As in the exposition   |
| Transition              | 103 <sub>3</sub> -118 | B flat major   | Altered to return to the tonic   |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Subject | 119-152               | B flat major   | 2 melodic ideas as before, but now in the tonic key:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bars 119-134 with repeat up an 8<sup>ve</sup> at bar 127</li> <li>Bars 135-152 with longer Circle of 5ths (bars 143-146)</li> </ol>   |
| Coda                    | 152-end               | B flat major   | Two further ideas as before, now in the tonic key.<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bars 152-161 with repeat up 8ve at bar 156. Ends with long dominant pedal (159-160)</li> <li>Bar 161 to end.</li> </ol>   |

## Tonality

- The piece uses functional tonality, modulating to closely related keys.
- The music begins in the tonic B flat major and starts modulating during the transition (10-22).
- The second subject is in the dominant key: F major (bar 23-63)
- The Development section (bars 63-93) moves quickly through a number of keys, including G minor – the relative minor (67-8) and the unexpected, dominant minor key of F minor (not one of the 5 closely related keys). It reaches C minor briefly at bar 75, before moving to G minor again at bar 80.
- Dominant preparation, bars 87-92 leads back to the tonic for the Recapitulation (93 to the end).
- Perfect cadences reinforce the tonality at various points, e.g. in the tonic bars 9-10.
- Dominant pedal points add further strength to perfect cadences, e.g. bars 57-8.

## Harmony

- Functional harmony based on standard tonal progressions with frequent perfect cadences, e.g. bars 9-10
- The transition ends on an imperfect cadence, bars 21-2
- There is an interrupted cadence, bars 83-4
- Dominant 7th harmonies are used frequently, e.g. the Alberti bass of bar 3.
- Though Mozart uses mainly root and first inversion chords as outlined in bar 1, there are some 2nd inversion chords, as at bar 75, 2nd beat, when the music moves to C minor.
- There is use of the second inversion cadence, the cadential 6/4 with a Ic-V-I chord progression, for example at bars 57-59. We can see another occurring at the end of the exposition section in bar 63 with the addition of a double appoggiatura to embellish the cadence.
- Chromatic chords such as augmented 6ths are quite common. There is an Italian 6th outlined in the left hand at the end of bar 80.
- A diminished 7th is outlined at the beginning of bar 69.
- There is a short circle of 5ths in the exposition and a longer one in the recapitulation, bars 143-6.
- Appoggiaturas are at the heart of Mozart's harmonic style, e.g. the F in bar 2, and the double appoggiatura at the beginning of bar 4.
- There is a chromatic appoggiatura at the beginning of bar 35, and a double chromatic appoggiatura on the 3rd beat of bar 40.
- Dominant preparation is used to lead back to the recapitulation. This is essentially a frequently repeated chord of the dominant or dominant 7th, which strengthens the effect of the return of the tonic chord, e.g. bars 87-92.

## Melody

- The profusion of Mozart's melodies has already been mentioned, e.g. no fewer than four main melodic ideas in the second subject group.
- Periodic or balanced phrasing occurs (e.g. the pair of 2 bar phrases at the beginning), though they are not a particular feature of this movement.
- Appoggiaturas and accented passing notes are essentially a harmonic feature but they do form an essential characteristic of the melody line. Even the first note is really an appoggiatura to a presumed dominant chord of F. In the second complete bar, every second note is dissonant.

- Whilst the melody is diatonic, chromatic notes are another essential feature of Mozart's style. There is a chromatic appoggiatura E natural on the 3<sup>rd</sup> beat of bar 6.
- Much of the music is conjunct, like the opening scalic group of 6 notes. The first tune of the 2<sup>nd</sup> subject (bar 23) also has a descending scale.
- There are sometimes extended scalic passages, as at bar 8.
- Broken chords appear occasionally, as at bar 22.
- Large leaps are rare, e.g. descending minor 7<sup>th</sup>, bar 43.
- The music is often ornamental in character, even when there is no specific ornamental sign, as at bar 18, which has the character of a succession of mordents.
- There are occasional trills, notably the long trills over dominant pedals, e.g. bar 58.
- There is a turn at the end of the exposition (bar 62).

## **Rhythm and Metre**

- The metre is Common time, simple quadruple.
- The movement starts with an anacrusis/upbeat.
- Syncopation occurs occasionally, eg. bar 5.
- The predominant rhythmic values are quavers and semiquavers.
- There is one bar of dotted rhythms as intensity grows in the development section, bar 76.