

# Preface

Except for the Concerto in D minor, K. 466, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's (1756–1791) Piano Concerto K. 491 in C minor is his only one in a minor key. Out of all of Mozart's 25 piano concertos it was these two, probably due to their more sombre character, that principally appeared on the concert programmes of the great pianists in the 19th century, a time entirely dominated by the model of Beethoven. They were – and actually still are – regarded as perfect examples of Mozart's highly emotional expressiveness, regardless of the fact that the Concerto in C minor was obviously composed in great haste. In his own autograph catalogue of works, Mozart noted the composition's completion date as 24 March 1786. The première probably occurred just two weeks later on 7 April, as part of an *Akademie* at the Burgtheater. Mozart played the solo part himself<sup>1</sup>. It cannot, however, be completely ruled out that a different concerto was performed at this *Akademie*, perhaps the Concerto K. 488 in A major that he had completed three weeks prior to K. 491.

The very short interval between the composition's completion and its first performance is not at all unusual for Mozart. In the case of the Piano Concerto K. 482 in E flat major, for instance, only one week elapsed between its completion (16 December 1785) and première (23 December 1785). So perhaps it was rather due to the particular character of the Concerto K. 491 that the autograph contains a large number of corrections, both in the orchestral parts and the solo piano part, which is quite uncharacteristic of Mozart. In addition, it displays several far-reaching changes, and in places seems almost like a sketch.

Such conjectures are, however, rather dangerous because Mozart was extremely pressed for time when he wrote this work. At no other time in his life did he compose as much as in the winter season 1785/86: aside from the aforementioned three piano concertos he also composed the *Maurerische Trauermusik* K. 477 (and at least two other masonic pieces of music), the Violin Sonata K. 481, two ensemble pieces for Francesco Bianchi's opera *La villanella rapita* (K. 479 and 480), two subsequently composed pieces for *Idomeneo* (the Duet K. 489 and Aria K. 490), the music for the comedy *Der Schauspieldirektor* K. 486, and, above all, *Figaro* K. 492, which was first performed on 1 May 1786. In addition he was involved in preparations for several concerts and a private performance of *Idomeneo* in the Palais Auersperg, as well as having tuition commitments towards several pupils and at least seven public concert appearances. This workload alone would suffice to explain the unusually high number of corrections to the autograph of the Concerto in C minor; yet the question remains as to why they occur with this piece in particular and not others. The fact that another opening (K. 491a – a three-measure fragment) exists for movement II serves to further underline how unsure Mozart must have been over the work's conception (even though there are discarded openings of movements for other works too).

The autograph of the Piano Concerto K. 491 is today held at the Royal College of Music in London. As already indicated it shows all signs of having been written down in great haste. In several places the piano part was apparently only sketched out – Mozart would have presumably played it from memory at the première. In at least two subsequent phases of work he made clarifications, but also changes and

corrections. During the last revision phase he used a more pointed, thinner quill, so this phase can be easily distinguished from the others. It represents the definitive version but is at times only sketchily notated; this version appears in our edition as the main musical text, with the earlier version that is widely present in other editions notated above it as an *ossia* version. Occasionally two different versions are present without one of them having been crossed out or rendered invalid using other means. In our edition we reproduce both versions of such passages. Despite having been revised several times, it must be assumed that Mozart notated several passages only in abbreviated form, and that these are to be embellished with scales or arpeggiated chords; footnotes at the relevant passages in the musical text indicate where such embellishments are possible.

In many places the autograph contains entries that clearly indicate its use as the model for one or several copies. A copy of the parts is today in the music archive of the Museum of Art History in Kroměříž. In 1799 Constanze Mozart sold the rest of the autographs still in her possession – around 300 manuscripts – to the Offenbach publisher Johann Anton André, the Piano Concerto K. 491 among them. André quickly published numerous editions based on the autographs he had obtained, which he described as "Edition faite d'après la partition en manuscrit" or such like. The Piano Concerto K. 491 was already published in 1800 as no. 3 of the *six grands concertos pour le Piano-Forté* [...] *Oeuvre 82*, which also comprised the Concertos K. 482, 467, 488, 503 and 595 and which the publisher dedicated to Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia. André's first edition probably also served as the model for the edition published by Breitkopf & Härtel presumably in 1802. As both editions were not published until after Mozart's death, they do not possess any real source-value. However, some of their divergent readings have entered the reception history of the work and are still partly played today. The most important of them are thus listed in the "Einzelnmerkungen" (Individual Notes) at the end of this edition.

A particular performance practice issue that arises in connection with piano concertos from Mozart's time is that at places in the autographs where the solo instrument is silent, *col basso* is written in the left hand. Some editions contain figured bass numbers at these points, implying that the soloist should play a basso continuo. Problems occasionally arise at the crossover points between passages with and without piano, since different manners of performance apply to the left hand in the piano depending on whether the instrument is to continue to play a continuo role or not (see the "Kritischer Bericht" [Critical Report]). This notational custom continued up to Beethoven's time and even later. The practice of the solo instrument playing throughout then discontinued, however; it was revived in the second half of the 20th century but has not, up to now, re-established itself.

We would like to thank the libraries mentioned in the "Kritischer Bericht" for kindly making copies of the sources available.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. note in the *Wiener Zeitung* of 8 April 1786 under "Theaternachrichten."