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BIN EBISAWA

CLEMENTI, PAISIELLO, AND MOZART —  
A NEW COMMENT ON MOZART'S ANTIPATHETIC  
ATTITUDE TOWARD CLEMENTI

ABSTRACT - The competition between Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Muzio Clementi at the Vienna Court in the presence of Emperor Joseph II on Christmas Eve, 1781, is an important music historical event from the viewpoints of the characters of these two musicians, of piano technique, and of different performance styles.

KEY WORDS - Eighteenth-century music; Mozart; Clementi; Vienna; Joseph II; Fortepiano performance.

RIASSUNTO - La competizione musicale di Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart con Muzio Clementi alla corte di Vienna in presenza dell'Imperatore Giuseppe II alla vigilia di Natale del 1781 è un evento molto importante nella storia della musica secondo il punto di vista, dei caratteri di questi due musicisti, della tecnica pianistica e dei differenti stili dell'esecuzione.

PAROLE CHIAVE - Musica del Settecento; Mozart; Clementi; Vienna; Giuseppe II; Esecuzione del fortepiano.

I am honored and most pleased to be here in Rovereto, the Mozart City of Italy, and to talk about «Mozart and his Italian Contemporaries,» and especially about «Clementi, Paisiello, and Mozart.» I would like to add that I remember most vividly my first visit to Rovereto in 1964, when I made my Mozart Italian journey as far as Naples and Pompei-Ercolano.

I believe you all know that famous episode in Mozart's biography and even in music history about the musical competition that was held between Mozart and Muzio Clementi (1752–1832) on Christmas Eve of 1781 in the presence of Emperor Joseph II of Austria at his Court in Vienna.



Portrait of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart by Giambettino Cignaroli.

In many of the Mozart biographies since Georg Nikolaus Nissen's, the description of this competition between these two distinguished pianoforte players of that time never fails to be mentioned. For one thing, Mozart wrote several times to his father about this memorable event, and for another, Clementi himself left his recollections to other people, in particular to a student of his. Moreover, there are additional documents that relate both directly and indirectly to this contest, such as the interesting short essay, *Brevi notizie intorno ad alcuni più celebri compositori di musica*, by Guiseppe Bridi of Rovereto (1827), which describes the contest in a special way. It is significant that this essay appeared prior to the publication of Nissen's biography of Mozart, which contains Mozart's letters concerning the contest. It is interesting to no-



Muzio Clementi.  
Engraving by D. Orme.



Giovanni Paisiello.

tice that Bridi's description tends toward a fictionalization in Mozart's favor; for example, the emperor Joseph II takes Mozart's side, while the grand duchess Maria Feodorovna stands by Clementi, losing in the end her bet of 100 zecchini.

Generally speaking, the favor in these accounts goes most of the time to Mozart's side. I would like to cite what Mozart himself said about Clementi and what he felt and thought of this unforgettable evening.

«Meanwhile let me tell you that at table the other day the Emperor gave me the very highest praise, accompanied by the words: '*C'est un talent, décidé!*' and that the day before yesterday, December 24th, I played at Court. Another clavier-player, an Italian called Clementi, has arrived here. He too had been invited to Court. I was sent fifty ducats yesterday for my playing, and indeed I need them very badly at the moment.» <sup>(1)</sup> (December 22–26, 1781)

Although this passage of his letter was written just two days after the contest, we have no personal reaction about Clementi. More than a fortnight later though, it comes in an unexpected way.

«Clementi plays well, so far as execution with the right hand goes. His greatest strength lies in his passages in thirds. Apart from this, he has not a kreuzer's worth of taste or feeling—in short he is simply a *mechanicus*.» <sup>(2)</sup> (January 12, 1782)

Four days later in another letter to his father, Mozart shows a persistence that is unusual for him.

«Now a word about Clementi. He is an excellent cembalo-player, but that is all. He has great facility with his right hand. His star passages are thirds. Apart from this, he has not a farthing's worth of taste or feeling; he is a mere *mechanicus*.» <sup>(3)</sup>

Conviction, or condemnation at the very beginning, and then the repetition, even refrain, of the same detail of his severe criticism about the peculiarities of Clementi's playing and composing. This clearly reveals

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<sup>(1)</sup> Emily Anderson, ed., *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1966, revisions 1985), 789-790.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Ibid.*, 792.

<sup>(3)</sup> *Ibid.*, 793.

Mozart's unusual antipathy towards Clementi. Mozart then describes the memorable scene of this competition in his own way:

«After we had stood on ceremony long enough, the Emperor declared that Clementi ought to begin. 'La Santa Chiesa Catholica', he said, Clementi being a Roman. He improvised and then played a sonata. The Emperor then turned to me: 'Allons, fire away'. I improvised and played variations. The Grand Duchess produced some sonatas by Paisiello (wretchedly written out in his own hand), of which I had to play the Allegros and Clementi the Andantes and Rondos. We then selected a theme from them and developed it on two pianofortes. The funny thing was that although I had borrowed Countess Thun's pianoforte, I only played on it when I played alone; such was the Emperor's desire—and, by the way, the other instrument was out of tune and three of the keys were stuck. 'Never mind', said the Emperor. Well, I put the best construction on it I could, that is, that the Emperor, already knowing my skill and my knowledge of music, merely wanted to show especial courtesy to a foreigner. Besides, I have it from a very good source that he was extremely pleased with me.» (January 16, 1782)

Virtually every time we find the name of Clementi in Mozart's correspondence with his father, it is with this feeling of antipathy, which could be taken also as fear or anxiety because of its insistence. For example, at the time of this competition, Mozart wanted eagerly to give concerts in this metropolis of music. Just after those two letters, he wrote to his father:

«There is nothing more disagreeable than to be obliged to live in uncertainty, not knowing what is happening. Such is my case at the moment with regard to my concert; and it is the same with everyone who wishes to give one. Last year the Emperor intended to continue the plays throughout Lent; perhaps he may do so this year. Basta! At all events I have secured the day (if there is no play), namely, the third Sunday in Lent. If I know a fortnight ahead, I shall be satisfied; otherwise my whole plan will be upset, or I shall be obliged to incur expenses for nothing. Countess Thun, Adamberger and other good friends of mine are advising me to select the best scenes from my Munich opera and have them performed in the theatre, and my-

self to play only one concerto and to improvise at the close. I too had thought of this and I have now quite decided to do so, particularly as Clementi is also giving a concert. So I shall have a slight advantage over him, the more so as I shall probably be able to give mine twice.»<sup>(4)</sup> (January 23, 1782)

Clementi was still staying in Vienna, and Mozart was told that his rival would give a concert. Mozart was well informed and quite aware of the musical activities of Clementi so far as to declare his advantage over his new acquaintance. Mozart was afraid at this moment that his competitor would like to stay in Vienna for awhile, so I think these short lines must have been written with a greatly relieved heart:

«I hear that Clementi is leaving Vienna tomorrow. Have you seen his sonatas?»<sup>(5)</sup> (May 8, 1782)

As specialists of Clementi, like Max Unger<sup>(6)</sup> and Leon Plantinga<sup>(7)</sup>, have pointed out, we do not have any exact details of Clementi's subsequent activities during this concert tour there in Vienna and in other cities. Even what Mozart wrote in the two preceding letters, that is, about the Vienna concert of Clementi and his departure from the Austrian capital on May 9, 1782, cannot be proved (Unger suggested only the longer sojourn in Vienna). But regarding that line of the latter letter—«Have you seen his sonatas?»—Joseph Heinz Eibl, commentator of the new complete edition of the letters of Mozart and his family, presumed that «his sonatas» could mean «3 Sonates op. 7,» which were published in Vienna by Artaria in 1782 and which Leopold Mozart obtained.<sup>(8)</sup> I guess that Leopold must have mentioned this acquisition in one of his letters to his son.

After that, indeed over one year later, we find a paragraph by Mozart devoted to Clementi. This letter of June 7, 1783 clearly demonstrates Mozart's strong persistency in the Clementi affair.

<sup>(4)</sup> *Ibid.*, 794.

<sup>(5)</sup> *Ibid.*, 805.

<sup>(6)</sup> Max Unger, *Muzio Clementis Leben* (Langensalza, 1914).

<sup>(7)</sup> Leon Plantinga, *Clementi, His Life and Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>(8)</sup> *W. A. Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen. Gesamtausgabe (Band VI: Kommentar III/IV • 1780-1857)*, collected by Wilhelm A. Bauer and Otto Erich Deutsch, annotated by Joseph Heinz Eibl, ed. Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1971), 108.

«Well, I have a few words to say to my sister about Clementi's sonatas. Everyone who either hears them or plays them must feel that as compositions they are worthless. They contain no remarkable or striking passages except those in sixths and octaves. And I implore my sister not to practise those passages too much, so that she may not spoil her quiet, even touch and that her hand may not lose its natural lightness, flexibility and smooth rapidity. For after all what is to be gained by it? Supposing that you do play sixths and octaves with the utmost velocity (which no one can accomplish, not even Clementi) you only produce an atrocious chopping effect and nothing else whatever. Clementi is a *ciarlatano*, like all Italians. He writes *Presto* over a sonata or even *Prestissimo* and *Alla breve*, and plays it himself *Allegro* in 4/4 time. I know this is the case, for I have heard him do so. What he really does well are his passages in thirds; but he sweated over them day and night in London. Apart from this, he can do nothing, absolutely nothing, for he has not the slightest expression or taste, still less, feeling.»<sup>(9)</sup> (June 7, 1783)

In this letter, the last one in which Mozart mentioned Clementi, we find the combination of his vivid recollection of this match, on one hand, with his acerbic criticism of the intensely technique-oriented pianoforte works and musicality of Clementi, on the other.

From the information in Mozart's letters along with the first written comment from the side of Clementi, we have some concrete details of what was performed in this Christmas Eve event in the Austrian Court in 1781. The first written comment, by Clementi himself, is found in a revised edition by Mollo of the Sonata in B-flat major, op. 24, no. 2, published in Vienna in 1804 and in more detail in the sixth volume of «*Œuvres Complètes de Muzio Clementi*» by Breitkopf und Härtel in Leipzig in the same year, 1804 (Figure 1). Just above the first movement, *Allegro con brio*, of the Sonata II, is the phrase in French: «*Cette Sonate, avec la Toccata, qui la suit, a été jouée par l'auteur devant S.M.I. Joseph II. en 1781; Mozart étant présent*» (Example 1).

Even if Mozart wrote that Clementi «writes *Presto* over a sonata or even *Prestissimo* and *Alla Breve*» and did not mention the Toccata by Clementi, there is no doubt that the Italian musician played the Toc-

<sup>(9)</sup> Anderson, *op. cit.*, 850.



Figure 1 - Title page of «Œuvres Complètes de Muzio Clementi, Cahier VI.» (Complete Works of Muzio Clementi, Vol. VI.); Breitkopf & Härtel, 1804.



cata, op. 11, as well as the B-flat major sonata, in front of Mozart (Example 2). This Toccata has the tempo indication *Prestissimo* and the time indication *Alla Breve*, and it contains an immensity of passages in thirds, sixths, and octaves.

We can understand why Clementi put this comment before his B-flat major sonata when he reedited the work in 1804. I would like to cite a phrase of Leon Plantinga:

«The sonata is, of course, the one whose incipit is so strikingly like the Allegro theme of the overture to *Die Zauberflöte*. In 1804 *Die Zauberflöte* was extremely widely known, and Clementi probably included the explanatory notice with his sonata more to clear himself of any suspicion of plagiarism than to accuse Mozart of it.»<sup>(10)</sup>

The possibility to create this theme or, to put it more exactly, the priority to use this figure goes, of course, to Clementi and not to Mozart; because, as Hermann Abert pointed out, this melodic type can be found easily since Johann Adolf Hasse's time. But to me, it is more important to ask, why did Mozart use this cliché to form a central *idée* in the overture to his last German opera ten years after he heard it as a theme for his Italian competitor's sonata for pianoforte? For I believe that Mozart did it very consciously and even more intentionally (Example 3).

Time does not permit a lengthy discussion of this, but I would like to suggest one possible reason for this deliberate intention of Mozart. Mozart had criticized very severely what he heard and saw in Clementi's playing of his sonatas and Toccata in that contest and also what he saw on the scores of Clementi's sonatas published before and after the contest. And picking up that mediocre cliché from his rival's sonata, Mozart wanted to transform that cliché into a theme which could express the progress of the drama and could incorporate the symbolic depth of *Die Zauberflöte*; a theme incarnating the start itself of the marvelous transfiguration from the chaos of the Adagio into the Allegro's enlightened and brightened world of light. Mozart surely believed that this kind of use of any figure or motive could be accomplished only by him, not by any other composer and by no means Clementi himself. The hackneyed cliché of Clementi's B-flat major sonata is now transformed into the bearer of a profound meaning in the world of *Mysterium* with E-flat major, the key of the Masonry.

<sup>(10)</sup> Plantinga, *op. cit.*, 63-64.

Example 3 - Overture to *Die Zauberflöte*, K. 620, by W. A. Mozart: bars 16–32.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (bars 16-21) features Violin I and II parts with dynamics p, f, p, f, p, f, p, f. The second system (bars 22-27) includes the Bassoon (Fag.) part with dynamics p, sf, p, f, p, f, p, sf. The third system (bars 28-32) includes the Violin I part with dynamics fp, tr, fp, tr, fp, tr, fp, tr. The Viola and Violoncello/Double Bass parts continue with dynamics p, sf, p, f, p, f, p, sf.

It is amazing that even ten years afterwards, Mozart had kept the memory of this encounter so vividly in mind and tried to overcome his profound shock by using a device of his rival. This kind of persistency in Mozart is both striking and strange, since almost all the people around them were inclined in Mozart's favor.

The protagonist of this event was the emperor Joseph II. Count Carl von Zinzendorf, famous chronicler of the late eighteenth-century Austrian Court and of the Viennese social and cultural life, was also witness to the emperor's interest in this competition.

«I remained until about 9 o'clock, having been unable to leave because of the arrival of the Emperor, who talked endlessly about music, and the contest between Mozhardt and Clementi.»<sup>(11)</sup>

From his conversation with Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, we have an insight into what the emperor was thinking about the two competitors.<sup>(12)</sup>

«Emperor: Have you heard Mozart?  
 Myself: Three times already.  
 Emperor: How do you like him?  
 Myself: As every connoisseur must like him.  
 Emperor: Have you heard Clementi also?  
 Myself: I have heard him also.  
 Emperor: Some people prefer him to Mozart, which makes Greymbig wild. What is your opinion? Speak out.  
 Myself: In Clementi's playing there is merely art, but in Mozart's both art and taste.  
 Emperor: That is just what I said myself.»

We can infer from these verbal evidences that there were at that time, especially in Vienna, two schools or rather two factions within pianoforte playing and that, in front of an audience, a school of which Mozart was the representative figure had an advantage over the other. Many people, including the emperor Joseph II and the distinguished musician Dittersdorf, belonged to the Mozart side, for which «taste» was a symbolic catchword; or, to put it more appropriately, the «combination of art and taste» was the essential hallmark of the Mozartian school. And on this point, Clementi was, they thought, far behind and antipodal to Mozart.

Astonishingly, this must have been also what Clementi himself felt and thought about Mozart's way of performing. Clementi left no firsthand account; but his German pupil, Ludwig Berger (1777–1839), said that his master told him about this scene in 1806.

<sup>(11)</sup> Written by Count Carl von Zinzendorf in his diary. Quoted from Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart, A Documentary Biography*, trans. Eric Blom, Peter Branscombe, and Jeremy Noble (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), 207.

<sup>(12)</sup> Otto Jahn, *Life of Mozart*, trans. Pauline D. Townsend (London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1891), 200.

«Having been in Vienna but a few days I received an invitation from the Emperor to perform on the fortepiano in his presence.

On entering his music-room I found there someone whom, because of his elegant appearance, I took for one of the Emperor's chamberlains; but scarcely had we began a conversation than it turned at once towards musical matters; and we soon recognised each other as Mozart and Clementi, brother artists, and greeted each other in the most friendly manner.»<sup>(13)</sup>

Then follows Berger's comment on Clementi's recollection.

«From the continuation of Clementi's narrative (entirely in agreement with Mozart's account), it became clear how deeply the artistic achievements of the latter impressed and delighted him.»

And an impressive phrase of Clementi himself:

«Until then I had never heard anyone play with so much spirit and grace. Especially did an Adagio and several of his extemporized variations surprise me, for which the Emperor chose the theme on which we, accompanying each other by turns, had to play variations.»

Then this eulogy of Mozart by Clementi, as annotated by Berger:

«To my question, whether at that time he played the instrument in his present style (it was the year 1806), he answered no, adding that at that early date he took particular delight in great and brilliant dexterity, and especially in those double-chorded passages and extemporized ornaments that were not in common use before his time; and that only subsequently did he come to favor the more melodious, nobler style of performance which he acquired through careful attention to then famous singers, and also through the gradual perfecting of the English concert grand fortepiano in particular, the earlier faulty construction of which had practically excluded the possibility of a more singing, more legato style of playing.»

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<sup>(13)</sup> Ludwig Berger, «Erläuterung eines Mozart'schen Urtheils über Muzio Clementi.» Quoted from Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart. A Documentary Biography*, trans. Eric Blom, Peter Branscombe, and Jeremy Noble (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), 542-543.

Clementi's self-consciousness, self-awareness, self-criticism, and self-understanding are striking and moving. Retrospectively, he criticized his own playing style and manner of a quarter century before, a criticism which corresponded exactly with what Mozart had written in the year of their encounter. Berger, who became acquainted with Clementi in the early years of the decade 1800, was surely informed by his master of the manner of pianoforte playing in the 1780s.

«Also worthy of notice here is Clementi's original practice of extemporising quite long, very interesting and thematically developed interludes and cadenzas following the fermatas in his sonatas; this is what led him at that contest to choose a sonata which, though certainly suited to his purpose, yet in other respects was inferior to several of his earlier compositions in this genre. It was the following: (Œuvres de Clementi, Cahier VI, Son. II, Allegro con brio) Ex. I., and it is to this theme that we perhaps owe the genial and in its way unsurpassed Allegro of the overture to *Die Zauberflöte*.»

In 1991, the bicentennial of Mozart's death, the *Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* published a remarkable document that embodies the profound reverence and intense interest Clementi had for Mozart and his music. Entitled «Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sinfonia in Sol minore K550. Addattamento per 4 stromenti di Muzio Clementi,» it is a beautifully reproduced facsimile edition of Clementi's arrangement for four instruments of Mozart's Symphony No. 40. The original autograph manuscript was donated by one of Clementi's relatives and was preserved in the *Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia* (in the Fondo Accademico, Ms. 560). According to the Introduction of the facsimile edition by Remo Giazotto, Clementi published «Mozart's Six Grand Symphonies Newly Adapted for the Piano-Forte with Accompaniments for a Flute, Violin and Violoncello by Muzio Clementi» (Robert Cooks & Co., London, c. 1835). Moreover, Giazotto writes, «Further evidence of Clementi's regard [for Mozart] can be found in the fact that in the same years (around 1835), he undertook the humbler—though perhaps more revealing—task of personally copying out the whole of the Jupiter Symphony.»

I am deeply impressed and moved by the fact that after the publication of Nissen's biography of Mozart in 1828, which contains many of Mozart's letters, Clementi could have read these passages written by Mozart which had so harshly castigated Clementi and his playing as well as his compositions, and that, nevertheless, he was able to keep such a respectful attitude toward Mozart.

Mozart's excessive persistence to negate the existence itself of the musicianship of a Clementian kind, on one side, and, on the other side, Clementi's devoted love, respect, and high esteem for Mozart, whom he met in Vienna for a short term and who suffered a premature death: these two attitudes are opposed in a surprising way and make an impressive contrast with each other.

In this context, I would like to add one more example for Mozart's case, which is, curiously enough, not pointed out and not thoroughly discussed even today. When we read the passages already cited of Mozart's letters dealing with Clementi's manner of playing, we notice that Mozart is always insisting on the words «feeling» (*Gefühl*, *Empfindung*), «taste» (*Geschmack*), and sometimes on «skill» or «art» (*Kunst*) and «knowledge» or «science» (*Wissenschaft*). Some of these words can be found in the dialogue between the emperor Joseph II and Dittersdorf, namely «art» (*Kunst*) and «taste» (*Geschmack*), the combination of which in one and the same artist would be the incarnation of a master's music-making, and in their dialogue this incarnation was nothing else but Mozart himself.

On March 23, 1783, Mozart had the chance to give a concert of his own works in the Burgtheater. He sent a letter to his father full of joy and excitement.

«I need not tell you very much about the success of my concert, for no doubt you have already heard of it. Suffice it to say that the theatre could not have been more crowded and that every box was full. But what pleased me most of all was that His Majesty the Emperor was present and, goodness!—how delighted he was and how he applauded me! It is his custom to send the money to the box-office before going to the theatre; otherwise I should have been fully justified in counting on a larger sum, for really his delight was beyond all bounds. He sent twenty-five ducats.» (March 29, 1783) <sup>(14)</sup>

Mozart then described all the works performed on the concert—the one and only time that he ever made such an enumeration of all the repertoire in any of his letters. It was a wonderful program indeed, with the Haffner Symphony to start and to conclude with; arias for sopranos Madame Lange and Mlle Teyber and for tenor Adamberger; two piano concertos played by himself; a «short concertante symphonie» from

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<sup>(14)</sup> Anderson, *op. cit.*, 843.

his *Finalmusik*; and Mozart's extemporization with the piano in between—the finest feast of sound, indeed the *symposion* of music itself. The emperor must have been highly delighted with this whole repertoire, of course. But I think that the emperor must have surely enjoyed even more the improvisation by Mozart, his favorite. Mozart tells us about his extemporization:

«I played alone a short fugue (because the Emperor was present), and then variations on an air from an opera called 'Die Philosophen' which were encored. So I played variations on the air 'Unser dummer Pöbel meint' from Gluck's 'Pilgrimme von Mekka'.»

This first set of variations on a theme from *Die Philosophen* was transcribed by Mozart as Six Variations in F, K. 398, and was published in 1786 by Artaria in Vienna.

Why did I say that the emperor enjoyed this so much? Because Mozart himself wrote that he played the «variations on an air from an opera called 'Die Philosophen' which were encored.» And why was this extemporized piece encored?

*Die Philosophen* is nothing else but the German version of Giovanni Paisiello's *opera buffa I filosofi immaginari*. The exact title of this German version was *Die eingebildeten Philosophen*, which was performed in Vienna for the first time on May 22, 1781 at the Burgtheater and was much applauded (Figure 2). So Mozart and the Viennese operagoers must have seen and enjoyed this short, highly amusing opera. And this is probably why the audience cheered his extemporization of variations on a theme picked out from this opera. I can well imagine too that the audience saw the emperor clapping his hands in enthusiastic applause and followed suit.

I must point out also that this *opera buffa* of Paisiello was a very special one for Emperor Joseph II himself. Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816) was at that time *Maestro di Cappella* at the Russian Court of Catherine II in St. Petersburg and was her favorite musician. He wrote this *opera buffa*, which has several other titles, such as «Gli astrologi immaginari» or «I filosofi immaginari», while staying in St. Petersburg. It is said that this *dramma giocoso* in two acts on a libretto by Giovanni Bertati was first performed in the theater of the Winter Palace on February 3, 1779 (other dates have been given by various authors), and that it became the favorite opera of Empress Catherine II. She liked to give it on the stage and so presented a performance to welcome Joseph II and his wife on their visit to Russia to meet her.

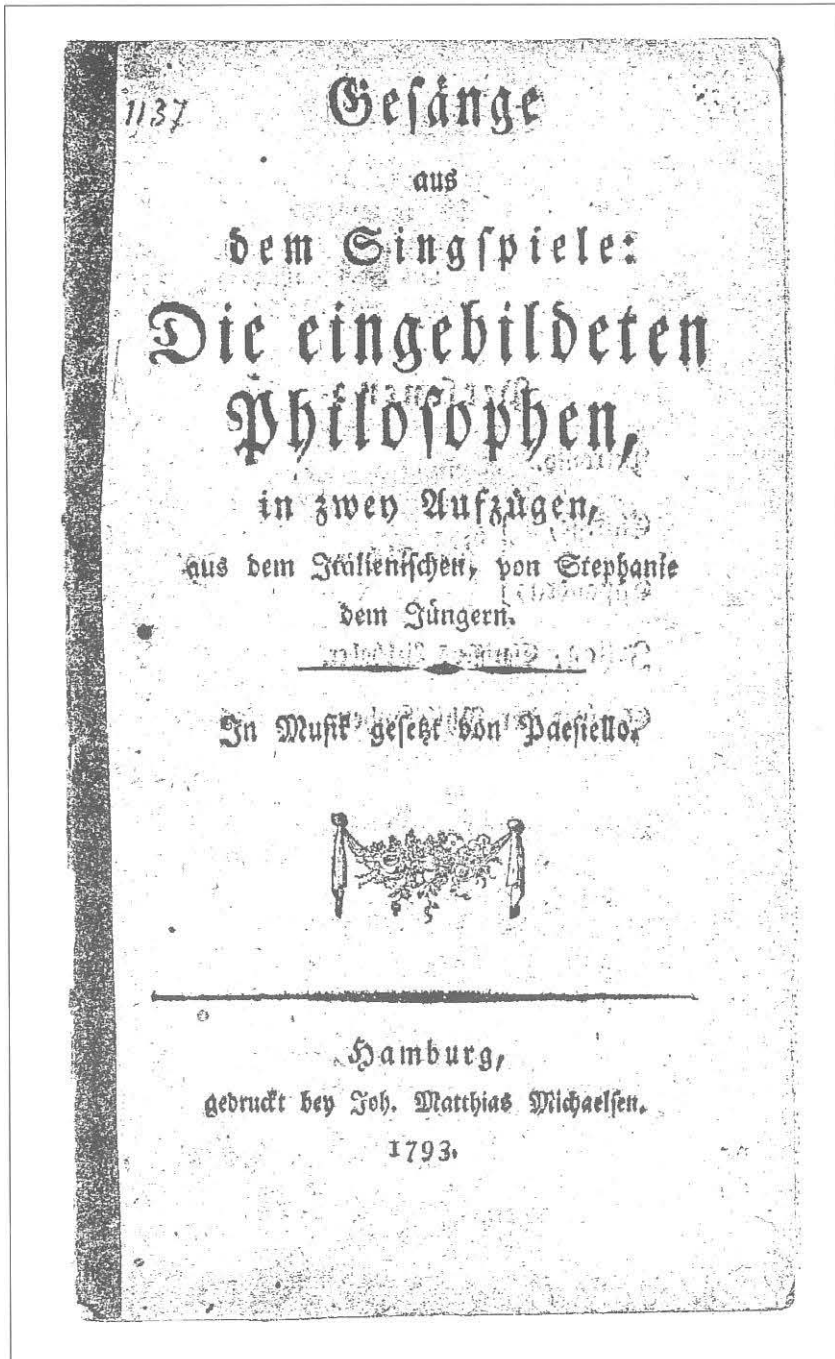


Figure 2 - Title page of the libretto of *Die eingebildeten Philosophen*; Hamburg, 1793.

The emperor and his wife were delighted with *I filosofi immaginari*. Paisiello received a snuff box from the emperor, and the imperial couple requested a copy of the score. After his return to Vienna, Joseph II received the copy, asked Gottlieb Stephanie to make a German version of the libretto, and gave the performance, as I mentioned, on May 22, 1781 with the title of *Die eingebildeten Philosophen*.

We do not know at all if Mozart was informed of these circumstances by Joseph II himself or by someone else. It is certain, though, that Mozart did not want to miss the opportunity to demonstrate his ability as a fortepiano player, and he spared no effort to gain the emperor's favor and patronage. Surely many scenes—musical and nonmusical as well—must have crossed his mind; for example, the musical contest on Christmas Eve more than one year ago with Clementi, where he as well as his competitor played various movements of Paisiello's sonatas. He must have remembered too that Paisiello, the Russian *Maestro di Cappella* at that time at the Court of Catherine II, also enjoyed the warm patronage of Grand Duke Paul Petrovitch (future Czar Paul I) and his wife, Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna, and that the grand duchess attended that very contest and «produced some sonatas by Paisiello.» Mozart recalled undoubtedly what Clementi had played and how he had played it. So, he decided to take a melody by Paisiello, which the emperor knew and loved so well, and to extemporize in the style of Clementi.

We can understand, thus, the choice of the opera *Die eingebildeten Philosophen* by Paisiello to entertain the imperial couple. But why the aria «Salve tu Domine!», sung by Julian (Giuliano) in the first act of this opera? The story of this opera is about a family of would-be philosophers. Petronio is the patriarch and pretends to be a great philosopher. His elder daughter, Cassandra, is his follower and a genuine *femme savante*. His younger daughter, Clarisse (Clarice), on the contrary, is a simple, sincere maiden who aspires not to be a philosopher, but to be loved by a handsome young man. And that is Julian (Giuliano) who, dressed as a Greek philosopher, comes as a disciple of a great philosopher, Argatiphontidas, in the first act and who then in the second act appears in the disguise of Argatiphontidas himself to be transformed finally into «a man of good looks, well-dressed, and young (*ein junges Herrchen, wohl gekleid't; un signor di bon aspetto, ben vestito, giovinetto*).» And finally he marries Clarisse.

The air that Mozart used for his extemporaneous variations is sung by Julian in the first act as No. 5 in the German version and has the following text (Figure 3):

Salve tu Domine!	(Hail to you Lord!
Argatiphontidas	Argatiphontidas
Tibi salutem	Sends greetings
Mittit per me.	to you through me.
Ich glaub sein Wissen	I believe that his knowledge
Ist nicht zu scheuen,	Is not to be afraid,
Sonst dürft' ich freylich	Otherwise I must indeed
Den Schritt bereuen.	Regret to go ahead.
Pro illo accedo	Instead of that I come
Nunc ego ad te.	Now myself to you.)

This text is written half-and-half in Latin and German. Latin signifies something erudite and gibberish, but it gives an impression of something learned and meaningful. And what about the music? The melody that is attached to this enigmatic text characterizes here «the mocking valet and the compliments-paying pupil.»<sup>(15)</sup> This melody in Andante and in 3/4 time with «the gagliarda rhythm» and with «the sharp rhythms of the cadence accompanied by the lengthening of the syllables» is melodic and fluent, but also quite varied as a theme for variations. Is it just a caricature of Mozart himself, with a cheerful alternation of moods in disguise?

Now we must look at the score of the variations or, better, listen to the play of sound which Mozart himself unfolded in front of the crowded audience of the Burgtheater and especially before the emperor. The theme (Example 4) is introduced in thirds and sixths with trills; it is twenty-two bars long with a kind of «réponse»<sup>(16)</sup>; and it has a fermata just before the end but without any repeat mark.<sup>(17)</sup> This form of a theme is unique among Mozart's variations and is adapted to the following variations also.

Then follow the variations. Mozart decided to give each variation the length of twenty-two bars with only two exceptions. The first variation is dedicated almost entirely to the right hand with broken chords of thirds. Then comes the second variation (Example 5) which lets us hear sharp, high-pitched hocket (hiccup) with thirds, sixths, and oc-

<sup>(15)</sup> Márta Farkas, «Paisiello: I filosofi immaginari», in *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 9 (Budapest, 1967), 334.

<sup>(16)</sup> Georges de Saint-Foix, *Wolfgang Amédée Mozart. Sa vie musicale et son œuvre*, vol. III : *Le Grand Voyage 1777-1784* (Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1936), 352.

<sup>(17)</sup> We can find another example of a theme without repeat in the Eighth Variation in G on the Dutch song, «Laat ons Juichen, Batavieren!» by Christian Ernst Graaf, K. 24.

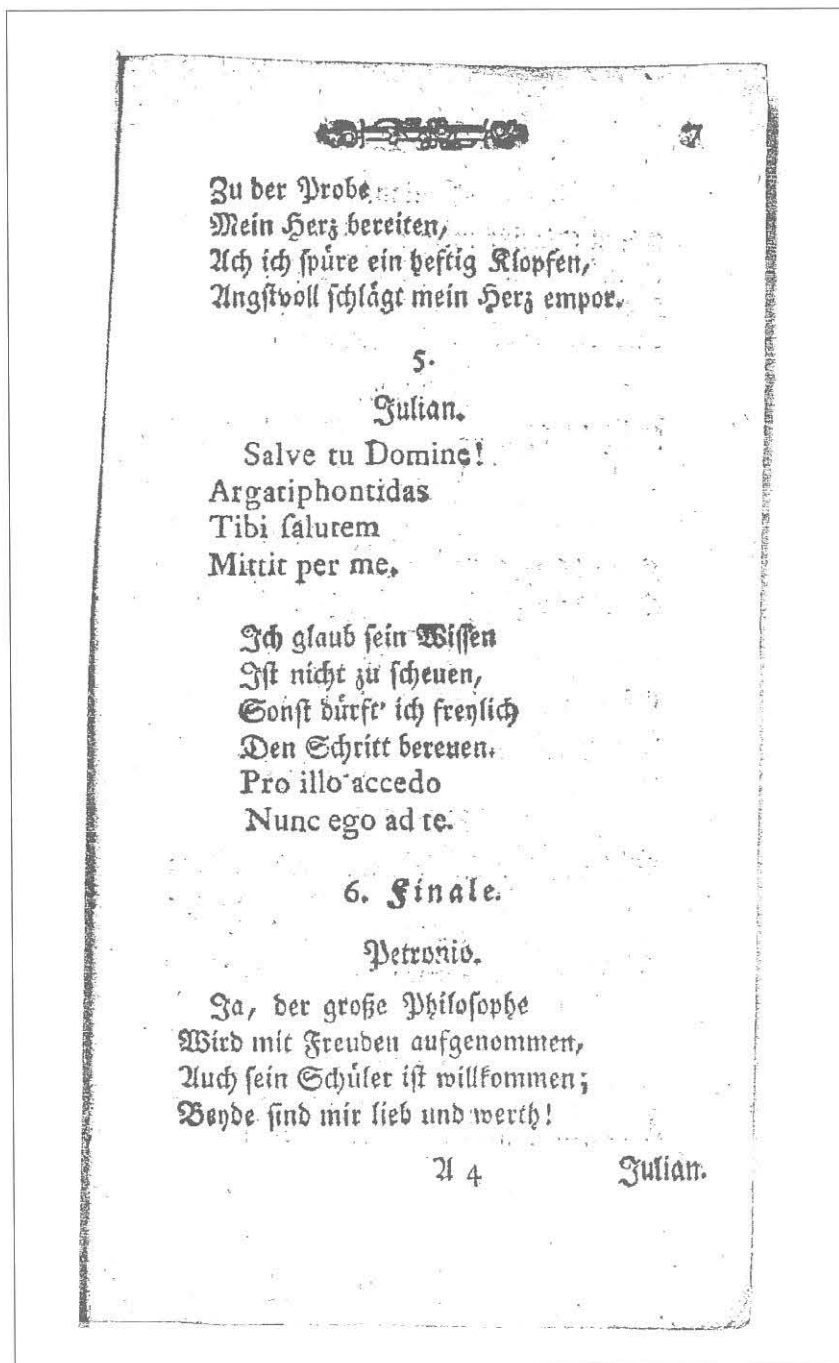


Figure 3 - Text of Julian's aria, Act I, no. 5, in *Die eingebildeten Philosophen*.



taves all the time before we get the «*réponse*.» And this hoquet variation is just like «*jonglerie*» (acrobatics) (Georges de Saint-Foix). The third variation manifests again insistent thirds and sixths with broken chords of thirds in the bass. The fourth variation takes a minor key (F minor) to let us listen to the expressive world of syncopation, and then this syncopation is applied also to thirds and sixths a little while, but in doing so, this variation exceeds the limit of twenty-two measures to reach twenty-six measures. Mozart inserts here a cadenza in Adagio to be able to come back to F major and to start the fifth variation (Example 6). But this time in an unusual way. Mozart's right hand starts to play very long trills for ten measures, but meanwhile in his left hand, the theme with thirds and sixths is clearly heard. And then they change hands. We can find other variations with long trills (e.g. variation IV of K. 264, as well as variation IV of K. 352 [374c]), but this time the combination of the long trills with cadenzas is unique. Cadenza again, then comes the last variation (Example 7).

Here Mozart shows his true virtuosity with contrary movement in both hands of broken chords of triplet thirds in astounding rapidity. De Saint-Foix described it most appropriately as «*un véritable feu d'artifice*» (real fireworks). It symbolizes indeed the virtuosity, the bravura, that is the essence itself of Clementian art. Mozart brings to an end this extraordinary extemporization with a cadenza *à la capricciosa* and the concluding rhythm that is transformed finally to the contrary Lombardic rhythm at the very end. Hermann Abert pointed out that «in these variations, virtuosity especially plays an important role, and it is remarkable that the cadenzas which follow the last three variations have a 'Manier' (manner, style) to which Mozart was guided through Clementi.»<sup>(18)</sup>

It is my firm belief that Mozart, in this concert at the Burgtheater, did extemporize this theme and variations with the clear intention of sending a stealthy message to Joseph II by disguising himself as Clementi and by playing tenaciously and obstinately Clementian thirds, sixths, octaves as well as trills, «*jonglerie*,» «*feu d'artifice*,» and cadenzas *à la fantaisiste*. Or did Mozart intend to say clearly to the emperor by so playing that he himself was definitely the far better virtuoso than his rival?

<sup>(18)</sup> Hermann Abert, *W. A. Mozart*. Edited as 5th, completely newly revised and augmented edition of Otto Jahn's *Mozart* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1919), vol. I, 909.

Example 5 - Six Variations in F major, K. 398, by W. A. Mozart: Variation II.

*VAR. II*

4

8

11

15

19

Example 6 - Six Variations in F major, K. 398, by W. A. Mozart: Variation V.

*VAR. V*  
*Tempo primo*

10

14

22

24b

*f*

Example 7 - Six Variations in F major, K. 398, by W. A. Mozart: Variation VI.

*VAR. VI*

3

4

7

10

13

16<sup>a</sup> Cadenz  
Capriccio

16<sup>b</sup>

## Example 7 (continued)

The musical score for Example 7 (continued) is presented in a grand staff format (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into several systems, each starting with a measure number and a dynamic or tempo marking:

- System 1:** Measure 16<sup>c</sup>. Features a triplet of eighth notes in the treble clef and a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the bass clef.
- System 2:** Measure 16<sup>a</sup>. Shows a more complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth notes and eighth notes in both staves.
- System 3:** Measure 16<sup>c</sup>. Includes a dense sixteenth-note passage in the treble clef and a sustained bass line.
- System 4:** Measure 16<sup>f</sup>. Features a rapid sixteenth-note run in the treble clef, a trill (tr) in the treble, and a bass line with a trill (tr) and a final chord.
- System 5:** Measure 17, marked *a tempo*. The tempo changes to 3/4. The treble clef has a series of chords and eighth notes, while the bass clef has a steady eighth-note accompaniment.
- System 6:** Measure 23. Shows a melodic line in the treble clef with slurs and accents, and a bass line with chords and eighth notes.
- System 7:** Measure 30. Features a melodic line in the treble clef with slurs and accents, and a bass line with chords and eighth notes.

In any case, I believe that the emperor received this secret message from Mozart and understood it completely and unmistakably. The audience of this evening enjoyed Mozart's playing these variations, but it was Joseph II alone who could get the real meaning of what the musician conceived and did. I think that the phrase that Mozart himself wrote for another occasion and in another sense could be valid here also.

«These concertos are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult; they are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural, without being vapid. There are passages here and there from which the connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction; but these passages are written in such a way that the less learned cannot fail to be pleased, though without knowing why.»<sup>(19)</sup> (December 28, 1782)

I think that this improvising of Paisiello variations is very important and meaningful because from it have resulted not only those famous passages of the letter dated June 7, 1783, but also it shows a strong consciousness on Mozart's side toward Clementi's art, a consciousness which lasted to Mozart's final days and which was crystallized into that unsurpassed masterpiece: the overture to *Die Zauberflöte*.

We can ask still again and again why Mozart was so persistent to criticize as severely as he did Clementi and his art. Was it because of his jealousy of Clementi, who could play strongly, vigorously, and highly mechanically any keyboard instrument in a way that Mozart could not do or did not want to do? Or, as the first Mozart biographer in English, Edward Holmes, wrote in his book, *The Life of Mozart* (1845), would Mozart, in criticizing Clementi, have liked to dismiss him «to get his father's permission to marry [Constanze]»?<sup>(20)</sup>

Or, does this persistency disclose the instinctive or intuitive fear of Mozart of being surmounted by a strong school of Clementian nature and also the unconscious grief for the decline and loss of his advantage as well as his merit, that is, the impeccable and perfect musical expression full of «taste» (*Geschmack*)?

<sup>(19)</sup> Anderson, *op. cit.*, 833.

<sup>(20)</sup> Edward Holmes, *The Life of Mozart* (London: Champan & Hall, 1845), 199.

The Mozart musical examples have been taken from *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke* (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag).

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