

Harpsichord & fortepiano

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MOZART AND THE CLAVIER

by Neil Coleman

"Time hangs heavy on Wolfgang's hands, as he still has no clavier.

— Maria Anna Mozart to her husband, Paris, 24th March 1778.

It is well known that Mozart owned a fortepiano by the Viennese maker, Anton Walter. This was a significant purchase and an excellent choice, judging by some of the surviving instruments by that maker, as well as several fine copies of them. This has made the selection of an authentic keyboard instrument for Mozart's music deceptively simple. Richard Maunder's article for Early Music¹ in 1992 presented a synthesis of the arguments for and against the various types of keyboard instrument by examining the sources represented by the autograph manuscripts, portraits and eyewitness accounts in newspapers and letters, not least those of Mozart and his family. Amongst the tiny proportion of instruments remaining from the time are three of Mozart's own. From this body of evidence a colourful and fascinating mosaic emerges of what Mozart himself played, including instruments by the finest builders of the day as well as several from earlier times. Mozart was in the midst of a lively performance tradition founded on improvisation at the keyboard. It is now clear that playing the keyboard also formed an important part of his compositional process.

Terminology

In common with other contemporary writers on music, the Mozart family took care to distinguish between the three main types of stringed keyboard instrument. *Clavier* could still mean "keyboard" in a generic sense, but where ambiguity might exist through the terms in the correspondence, the context makes the designation clear. In a letter written in Paris dated 1 April 1764 to his landlord and supporter Lorenz Hagenauer, Leopold Mozart relates how he had Carmontelle paint himself and his children: "Wolfgang is playing the *Clavier*, I am standing behind his chair playing the violin, and Nannerl has one arm resting on the *Clavecin*. In the hand she holds some music, as if she were singing."²

This portrait shows the young Mozart seated at a large 18th-century French harpsichord, which Leopold is careful to call by its French name. In their family correspondence, the Mozarts used the terms "*Flügel*" or "*Fliegl*", one of the German equivalents, referring to its wing like shape, for our "harpsichord"; "*Clavicord*" for

"clavichord"; and "*Pianforte*" (sometimes "*Fortepiano*") as the equivalent of our "fortepiano"; Leopold once used the term "*Fortepiano-Flügel*" referring to Wolfgang's grand fortepiano to distinguish it from a square, which was sometimes referred to at the time as a *Fortepiano in Clavierform*; the term "*Clavier*" is used "relatively infrequently,"³ sometimes, but not always, as a designation for the clavichord. Wolfgang used the Italian *cembalo* or *clavicembalo* in his scores, which may signify the harpsichord, but is essentially another generic term for keyboard equivalent to *Clavier*.⁴ The solo parts in the "piano concertos" are labelled *Cembalo* up to K.503⁵ whereas the two last concertos are labelled *Pianoforte*.

Mozart's Harpsichords – Friederici

At home in Salzburg, the most imposing keyboard instrument in the Mozart household must have been the two manual harpsichord by Christian Ernst Friederici (1709-80) of Gera in Saxony.⁶ Following an apprenticeship to Gottfried Silbermann (1683-1753), the celebrated organ-builder⁷

associated with J.S. Bach, Carl Ernst Friederici set up his own workshop and was described by Marpurg as "the builder who is best able to console us for the loss of Silbermann;"⁸ and Charles Burney's list at the end of the German edition of his second set of travels puts Friederici in first place amongst the living keyboard instrument builders.⁹

Leopold seems to have been embarrassed by the possession of instruments by this maker, as on 9 October 1777 he wrote to his son, enclosing a letter to the keyboard maker Johann Andreas Stein (1728-92), and asked Wolfgang to write back with a full description of Stein's instruments: "When you talk to Herr Stein, you must avoid any chance of telling him about our instruments from Gera, as he is jealous of Friederici."¹⁰ The harpsichord from Gera is mentioned by Leopold in a letter to Wolfgang shortly after the visit to Stein: "... your visit would give him infinite pleasure, and he said that you would find at his house a collection of instruments which would be an embarrassment of choice to you. He mentioned that in addition to his large Friederici harpsichord with two manuals like our own, he had a perfectly new and very large fortepiano in mahogany."¹¹

Pfeil was an important proponent of Friederici. He had been music teacher to no less a figure than the young Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1748-1832), polymath, genius, and leader of the literary *Sturm und Drang*. Goethe relates¹² how Pfeil developed a great interest in the *Clavier* while secretary and factotum in Goethe's father's household. A desire for the best instruments had brought him into contact with Friederici "whose instruments were famed far and wide." Goethe relates how Pfeil took a number of these on commission and "had the pleasure of seeing... several installed in his apartment" for potential buyers to hear and play. The Goethe household subsequently procured a large harpsichord by Friederici from Pfeil at a time when any clavier larger than a clavichord or spinet was very much the exception in the German-speaking lands. The Mozarts' instrument appears one last time in a newspaper advertisement listing the household effects to be auctioned after Leopold's death:

Lot 4. A harpsichord [*eine Flüg*] by the celebrated *Friederizi*¹³ of Gera with two manuals of ebony and ivory throughout five complete octaves, with special lute and buff stops [*Kornet und Lautenzug*]¹⁴

This was presumably what Louis de Visme heard in 1772 and mentioned in a letter to Charles Burney:

Young Mozart [sic] is too of the band, you remember this prodigy in England. He composed an Opera at Milan for the marriage of the Archduke and he is now to do the same this Carnival tho' but sixteen years of age. He is [a] great master of his Instrument; for I went to his Father's house to hear him. He and his Sister can play together on the same Harpsicord [sic].¹⁵

Other 'Prestige Harpsichords'

The Mozarts mention several other harpsichords in Salzburg. In January 1779, on his return from Paris, Wolfgang was expected "to direct [the archbishop's orchestra] from the harpsichord [*Flügl*]."¹⁶ Mozart played for the Archduke Maximilian in April 1775 on a harpsichord [*Flügel*] belonging to Countess Lützow to whom the keyboard concerto K.246 was dedicated in the following year. Similarly, the triple concerto K.242 was written for Countess Lodron and her two daughters to play. Leopold wrote to Wolfgang on 12 April 1778 about a concert at her house: "Nannerl was to play a concerto, only the Countess would not allow her good harpsichord [*Flieg'l*] (*Latin*: which is reserved for the Archbishop) to be used, but only the Egedacher harpsichord [*Flieg'l*] with the gilt stand, so [Nannerl] didn't play. Finally the two Lodron daughters had to perform ..." Nannerl had, however, already accompanied Ceccarelli in an aria, and "all the symphonies". Insistence on good instruments is apparent throughout the correspondence. In a letter to his son of 27 November 1777, Leopold wrote:

You will then know at once whether giving a concert there is an expensive business, whether you can count on having a good

harpsichord, whether an orchestra is available and whether there are many lovers of music.¹⁷

The records of the Mozart children playing together in public always refer to the harpsichord. The instruments they played were of various types, as would be expected on tours covering so wide an area. In London, Wolfgang demonstrated a two manual harpsichord with the newly invented machine pedal that Shudi had just made for Frederick the Great.¹⁸ One of the few authenticated portraits of Mozart, painted in 1770 in Verona by della Rosa, shows him at an Italian harpsichord by Giovanni Celestino of Venice, dated 1583.

In Naples on 19 May of the same year, Leopold wrote: "Yesterday we called on the English ambassador Hamilton (whom we met in London), whose wife plays the *Clavier* with unusual feeling, and has a very agreeable figure. She trembled at having to play in front of Wolfgang. She has an expensive English harpsichord [*Flügl*] by Shudi, with two manuals and a pedal to change the registers." There is a painting by Fabris, dated 1771, in the National Portrait Gallery of Scotland depicting a concert party at the Earl of Seaforth's residence in Naples. There are two, possibly three, string players, of whom Sir William Hamilton, and Pugnani are identified; Leopold Mozart is seated at what seems to be an Italian harpsichord next to Wolfgang, who is playing an *ottavina* spinet. Evidently there was still a taste for accompaniment at four-foot pitch, and perhaps sixteen-foot as well.¹⁹

English harpsichords, such as Lady Hamilton's, seem to have been the status instrument, and were exported widely, with some reaching the Indian subcontinent.²⁰ In Vienna, Mozart wrote to his father on 27 June 1781, mentioning a harpsichord apparently with a sixteen-foot register, while lodging with the Weber family: "Where I live we have two harpsichords [*Flügel*], one for playing *galanterie*, the other a machine tuned throughout with the lower octave, like the one we had in London. Consequently like an organ; so I have

improvised on it and played fugues."

The last report of Mozart playing the harpsichord was in Prague, 1787, where he used an instrument by the elder Gräbner.²¹ All the contemporary accounts of opera performances show that harpsichords maintained their position in opera houses. This remained the case into the nineteenth century, and until the late 1850's in orchestral music.²² Mozart would have directed the first performances of his operas from the harpsichord before leaving the duty to an assistant, as was the custom of the time. The study and copying of Austrian harpsichords is still in its infancy, but these were presumably the types that Mozart would have encountered most often.²³

Mozart and the Clavichord

In addition to the Friederici harpsichord, the Mozart family in Salzburg owned several clavichords. The travelling clavichord or *clavierl* made by Stein for a local customer in 1762, but bought instead by Leopold Mozart in the following year, is still extant in Hungary. It seems to have passed from his son to his youngest sister-in-law, Sophie Haibel, and in the course of the nineteenth century to the family of J.N. Hummel the younger in Hungary.²⁴ The reference to "our instruments from Gera" implies that one or both of the remaining clavichords mentioned in the correspondence may have been by Friederici. Wolfgang requested one of them on 3 October 1778 for his room when he returned from Mannheim and Paris: "It would be very agreeable if I could have the little clavichord [*Clavierl*], which used to belong to Fischetti and Rust by my writing table, as it would suit me better than the little Stein." This may have been the instrument formerly housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, which was the last known authenticated clavier by C.E. Friederici. Its compass was CC-f³, and it is thought to have belonged to Mozart and later to Liszt before being destroyed in World War II. Perhaps Mozart bought it second hand; Friederici's instruments were costly,²⁵ and Wolfgang is first recorded

giving harpsichord lessons in 1771, the proceeds of which may have enabled such a purchase.²⁶

Leopold had a large clavichord [*mein grosses Clavicord*], which may also have been by this maker.²⁷ When Nannerl's fortepiano was in poor condition in 1785, Leopold wrote to offer her his large clavichord.²⁸ This seems to be the instrument mentioned by Constanze in a letter to Spontini²⁹ from April 1828: "My sister-in-law, who still possesses the *Clavicort* from her brother's childhood years ... has asked me to suggest that you might like to buy her dear *clavier*. It is not beautiful, although it has been well preserved, and in the old-fashioned manner has only five octaves." The unsigned five octave clavichord now in the Carolino Augusteum Museum may have come into Nannerl's possession on the death of her stepson; it is not the one her father offered.³⁰

Wolfgang used the clavichord throughout his life. Improvisation was an important and necessary constituent of professional performance then, as were sight reading skills. In a letter from Augsburg, 14 October 1777, Mozart writes: "Upstairs, I had the honour of playing for about three quarters of an hour on a good clavichord [*Clavicord*] by Stein ... I improvised [*ich spielte phantasien*] and finally played off at sight all the music he had, including some very pretty pieces by a certain Edelmann." In common with other writers, Mozart found it necessary to use the epithet "good" when referring to the clavichords he encountered: although good clavichords were not then the rarity they have since become, they were certainly the exception.³¹ Later the same day, Mozart played on another of Stein's clavichords: "At last a clavichord [*Clavicord*] (one of Stein's) was brought out of the inner room, an excellent instrument, but full of dust and dirt. Herr Graf, who is Director here, stood there transfixed ..." In a letter of 23 October 1777, after giving a performance of his third violin concerto at the Holy Cross Monastery, Mozart continued: "Afterwards they brought in a small clavichord, and I

improvised [*ich präludierte*] and then played a sonata and the Fischer variations [K.179]."

Leopold mentions in his letter of 13 November 1777, that among the Friederici instruments offered by Pfeil in Frankfurt, there was "a clavichord also in mahogany, which he would not sell for 200 *Gulden*, as he says that his instrument simply has not got its equal; the treble sounds like a violin played softly, and the bass notes are like *trombones*", giving us an insight into what was considered a good instrument. On the same day in Mannheim, Wolfgang wrote to Leopold about a visit he had made to the house of the composer Beecke (Sr), who requested him to try his clavichord "which is a very good one. He frequently exclaimed 'Bravo!' I improvised and played my sonatas in B flat and D [presumably K.281 and K.284]." The last mention of Mozart performing on the clavichord comes from the Dresden *Musikalische Real-Zeitung* for 17 June 1789, which reports that Mozart "played at many grand and private residences to the most boundless applause; his skill on the clavichord [*Klavier*] and the *Fortepeiano* is quite inexpressible."³²

An argument has been made³³ for the harpsichord as the first choice of instrument for the early "piano sonatas" K.279-283, assuming that most of them were written mainly in Salzburg, where fortepianos seem not to have been available until c.1780. The use of dynamic markings including *crescendo* and *decrescendo* surely suggests the clavichord, unless there were harpsichords fitted with machine mechanisms available. There is further evidence from Mozart himself that the clavichord was favoured for its unrivalled sensitivity in imitating the human voice. In a letter of 12 June 1778, he wrote complaining about a singer whose manner "was truly abominable and singing of this sort runs counter to nature. The human voice vibrates by itself, but in a way and to an extent that is beautiful – that is the nature of the voice, and it is imitated not only on wind instruments, but also on stringed instruments, and even on the clavichord (*Clavier*), but as soon as it is

carried too far, it ceases to be beautiful, because it is unnatural.”³⁴

Johann Nepomuk Hummel, who studied and lived like a son with the Mozarts from 1786-7, was later able to recall the position of Mozart’s pianoforte during a visit to the house and where Hummel’s own *Clavier* stood in a little room.³⁵ This seems to have been a practice instrument, as Mozart had given lessons at the pianoforte. Mozart himself would have begun keyboard studies with his father at the clavichord; a Magyar newspaper noted in a death notice for Wolfgang that one of his sons was already astonishing his listeners at the clavichord.³⁶

Mozart’s Use of the Clavichord: The Legend Surrounding his Compositional Process

A five octave clavichord that “belonged to Mozart”³⁷ is preserved in the composer’s birthplace. It was built around 1760 by an anonymous maker and came with Constanze from the Weber household. A label found inside the instrument reads: “At this Clavier, my late husband composed *Die Zauberflöte*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *The Requiem* and a new Masonic Cantata [K.623], in the space of five months. This I can certify, as his widow Constanza, Etatsräthin von Nissen, formerly Widow Mozart.”³⁸

Another clavichord is mentioned in the travel diaries of the Novellos who visited Austria in 1829. During a visit to Wolfgang’s sister, by this time Madame Sonnenburg, Novello reported,

...in the middle of the room stood the instrument on which she had often played duetts [sic] with her brother. It was a kind of clavichord, with black keys for the naturals and white ones for the sharps like an old English cathedral organ. The compass was from AA to f³, and had evidently been constructed before the additional keys were invented. The tone was soft and some of the bass notes, especially those of the lowest octave C’s, were of good quality; at that time it was no doubt considered an excellent instrument. You may be sure that I touched the keys which had been pressed by Mozart’s fingers with great interest.³⁹

Just how important the clavichord was to Mozart’s compositional process is shown in the family letters during the trip to Paris, 1778.

Maria Anna related to her husband in Salzburg on 5 April how cramped her apartment had become: “The hall and the stairs are so narrow that it would be impossible to bring up a clavier. So Wolfgang can’t compose at home, but has to go to the house of Monsieur Le Gros who has one.” On 12 April

Leopold advised Wolfgang “if you could find in Paris a good clavichord, such as we have, you would no doubt prefer it and it would suit you better than a harpsichord ...” That such instruments were to be found in France now seems quite possible; French amateurs and several professionals alike⁴⁰ owned clavichords. The composer J.G. Eckard, counted first among the Parisian harpsichordists by Leopold, had published his sonatas op.1 in 1763 in Paris “for harpsichord, clavichord, and fortepiano.” In the *avvertissement* the composer explains that he felt obliged to mark the dynamics, “which would have been useless if I only had only the harpsichord in mind.”⁴¹

In Vienna, while lodging with the Webers, Mozart wrote to his father on 1 August: “Now I’m off to hire a *Clavier*, for until there is one in my room I can’t live there. Since I have a lot to write at the moment, I don’t want to waste a minute.” One of the most persistent myths surrounding Mozart arose after his lifetime concerning his compositional process. While being interviewed by Niemetschek for his biography of her deceased husband, Constanze had this to say:

Mozart ... never touched the *Clavier* while writing. When he received the libretto for a vocal composition, he went about for some time, concentrating on it until his imagination was fired. Then he proceeded to work out his ideas at the *Clavier*; and only then did he sit down and write.⁴²

Some thirty years later, Vincent Novello transcribed the following from Constanze:

He seldom went to the instrument when he composed ... In composing, he would get up and walk about the room quite abstracted from everything that was going on about him. He would then come and sit down by

her, tell her to give him inkstand and paper; then went on writing by her side while she talked to him, without the conversation at all impeding his occupation."

This then is the genesis of the myth of Mozart as the genius who worked out his music entirely in his head; we have come a long way from the note placed inside Mozart's clavichord.

Mozart and the Fortepiano

In Paris, the composer Eckard would have given the Mozart family the best opportunity to try out the new instruments by Stein and Andreas Silbermann,⁴³ whose instruments were advertised there by 1761; two years later, pianofortes were advertised for sale in London;⁴⁴ and although the Mozarts just missed the concerts given in Vienna in which Johann Baptist Schmid played the piano that same year, "harpsichords with hammers" may have been known in the city since the 1720's.⁴⁵ The pianoforte Handel played in London may have arrived here c.1732, by which time J.S. Bach may already have given Gottfried Silbermann his "warmest praise" for his improved fortepianos.⁴⁶ But it was not until the visit to Munich in 1774-5 that we first hear of Mozart playing the fortepiano: "Last winter in Munich I heard two of the greatest *Klavierspieler*, Herr Mozart and Capt.von Beecke; my host, Herr Albert [a Munich innkeeper], ... has an excellent *Fortepiano* in his house. There I heard these two giants wrestle at the *Klavier*. Mozart is a very strong player, and plays everything put in front of him at sight."⁴⁷

It is interesting to note the change in style of Mozart's writing; the Sonata in D Major, K.284, the last of the six early sonatas, was written in Munich for Dürnitz, a noble amateur, on a grander scale than the rest. It is not unreasonable to propose that it was inspired by Albert's fortepiano, possibly by Späth of Regensburg; Mozart was eager to play the instrument again on his return in September 1777.

Späth and Stein

Mozart's encounters with the fortepianos of J.A. Stein reported in the letter of 17 October 1777 to his father are well known. In Salzburg, Countess Lodron was also eager to hear Mozart's report.⁴⁸ If Albert's fortepiano had inspired K.284, then Stein's helped it still further: "Here and at Munich I have played all my six sonatas by heart several times. I played the fifth, in G, at the grand concert in the Stube. The last one in D sounds exquisite on Stein's pianoforte. The device too which you work with your knee is better on his than on other instruments. I have only to touch it and it works; and when you shift your knee the slightest bit, you do not hear the reverberation."

In mentioning his former preference for the tangent pianos of J.J. Späth, which he simply refers to as "*spättischen claviere*", Mozart draws attention to another piano building tradition that lasted from about 1770, if not earlier, until at least 1810. These instruments made a brighter sound than we are used to, more akin in their default setting (they were equipped with several stops) to the harpsichord, and praised by Forkel and Schubart. Their actions were very fast and explosively dynamic; the "tangents" were made of wood. As the hammers of the Stein harpsichord-forte piano of (?)1777 were also unleathered, we should perhaps not be surprised that Mozart does not mention a difference in sound. According to Jurgenson,⁴⁹ extant tangent pianos do not confirm Mozart's reservations about the damping of Späth's instruments; but Mozart may have only encountered squares in which the damping was not efficient. The outrageous claims Stein made for his preparation of soundboards does suggest that he thought little of the young Mozart's technical knowledge. On 23 October 1777 Leopold replied dryly: "I am glad that Herr Stein's *Pianfortes* are so good; but they are certainly also expensive."

During the end of his stay in Augsburg, Mozart gave a concert that included the triple concerto K.242 played on three Stein

fortepianos by the organist Demmler, Mozart and Stein himself, the known instance of Mozart playing the instrument in a concerto. In Mannheim he went straight to Christian Cannabich's house and played his "very good *piano forte*."⁵⁰ This was not the only such instrument in the town, as Frau Mozart wrote to her husband on 28 December: "Everyone thinks very highly of Wolfgang, though he plays very differently from the way he does in Salzburg, for there are *piano fortés* everywhere here, which he can play so incomparably, that no-one has heard the like before."

Fortepianos in Salzburg and Vienna

There is no mention by the Mozarts of fortepianos in Salzburg for most of Wolfgang's time there. However, there was a small square belonging to Archbishop Colloredo by Baumann of Zweibrücken, dated 1775⁵¹; and Stein had built a fortепiano for Colloredo, which appears in the list of instruments made after the builder's arrival in Augsburg 1750.⁵² The only reference to the fortепiano by Mozart in Paris is the "miserable wretched *Pianforte*" he had to play in the Duchesse de Chabot's cold music room.⁵³ Fortepianos were increasingly common in Paris at the time, with many imported from England, and Mozart is said to have delivered an English square piano to St. Germain-en-Laye with J.C. Bach.⁵⁴

The first reference to a fortепiano in Salzburg comes from Leopold Mozart who wrote to his son on the 4 December 1780, "Just this instant Herr von Edlbach came into the room with three strangers ... your sister had to play a short piece on the *Pianforte* to them." This was probably the instrument depicted in the Mozart family portrait by J.N. della Croce with its sloping cheeks, typical of Austrian harpsichords and fortепianos, revealing a single keyboard on which Wolfgang and Nannerl play. In 1783 Nannerl received a fortепiano by J.E. Schmid as a wedding present from her father. It was probably never played by her

brother. The Mozarts were in Augsburg in March 1781 where Wolfgang and Nannerl played "almost more than heavenly music on two *forte pianos*."

Wolfgang arrived in Vienna later that month and set about establishing himself as a concert artist. He performed at the Tonkünstler-Gesellschaft charity concert on 3 April, for which Countess Thun lent her "beautiful Stein *Pianforte*".⁵⁵ On 24 December, Mozart again borrowed Countess Thun's instrument for the contest with Clementi at court. Two instruments were again required, though in a more congenial context, which is related by the Abbé Stadler. One or other of the publishers called Artaria had taken him to a rehearsal of Mozart's six violin sonatas with the first printed copy: "Fräulein Auernhammer played the fortепiano – and Mozart accompanied on a second fortепiano that stood at hand, instead of on the violin, and I was utterly enchanted by the playing of master and pupil ..."⁵⁶ The maker of the fortепiano on which Mozart improvised in Prague, finishing off with variations on his '*Non più andrai*', is not known.⁵⁷ The last reference to Mozart playing on his tours is an audience member's diary at a concert in Frankfurt on 15 October 1790: "He had a *forte Piano* by Stein of Augsburg, which must be one of the best of its kind...."⁵⁸

Mozart's Pedal Fortепiano

According to Rampe, it was during the earlier part of 1782 that Mozart bought his Walther fortепiano, which is still playing, and is to be found in the Geburtshaus in Salzburg;⁵⁹ it has been commented on and copied extensively. The hammers may have been unleathered originally, and the registers were changed by the use of hand stops rather than knee levers.⁶⁰ What has not been mentioned quite so often was that it was attached to a second instrument, which Leopold mentions in a letter to his daughter of 12 March 1785: "[Wolfgang] has had a large pedal-piano (*Forte piano pedale*) made, which stands under the *Flügel*, is about two feet longer, and incredibly heavy. It is taken

to the Mehlgrube every Friday, and also to Count Zichy's and Prince Kaunitz's." Wolfgang had improvised on a "large *Forte piano Pedal*,"⁶¹ at the Burgtheater two days previously. It is presumably the instrument mentioned again three years later by Mozart's Danish visitors Preisler and Rosing, who were delighted by Constanze's singing while accompanying herself "like a Kapellmeister", and by her husband's improvising free fantasias.⁶² Mozart's English pupil Thomas Attwood gives us a good reason for this no doubt expensive addition:

[Mozart] was so fond of Sebastian Bach's fugues that he had a separate Pianoforte with Pedals, fixed under the Other – Was very kind to all of Talent who came to Vienna & generally played at their Benefit Concerts with the Pianofortes as directed above – The last time I heard him, He play'd his concerto in D Minor & "Non temere" at Storace's Benefit for whom he composed that Cantata with the Pianoforte solo.⁶³

Joseph Frank wrote in his memoirs about a lesson from Mozart on the fortepiano:

"Now," said [Mozart], "play me something." I played him a fantasia of his own composition. "Not bad," he said to my great surprise, "I will play it to You now." How wonderful! Under his fingers the *Clavier* became quite a different instrument. He had it reinforced by a second *Clavier*, which served as a *Pedal*.⁶⁴

It was on stage for the performances of at least two of the piano concertos, and a passage⁶⁵ in the D minor concerto, K.466, requires pedals for notes outside the reach of the left hand. The instrument may have been something of a novelty and must have contributed to Mozart's early success in Vienna: Rosing found the pedal made "the most charming effect" in the improvised free fantasias he heard; and when in Dresden, Mozart felt that, as he came from Vienna, little was expected of his organ and clavichord playing prior to his contest with Häßler there in 1789.⁶⁶

A fortepiano by Gottfried Silbermann? Actually a Clavichord.

While Bach's former pupil, Johann Friedrich Doles (1715-1797) was Cantor at Freiberg Cathedral (1744-1755), the local organ builder, Gottfried Silbermann, had given him a particularly fine clavichord of his own making as a token of his esteem. When Mozart came to Leipzig in April 1789, he heard this instrument at Doles' house and was so enchanted by its sound that he offered Doles a good price for it. The old man however refused, as he did not want to be parted from the gift of an old friend.⁶⁷ To Mozart, the fact that the instrument was some fifty years old made little or no difference as he was so taken by the sound of the instrument. While Flade's report of 1952 mistakenly refers to this as a fortepiano, this may be because Silbermann was so well known for his fortepianos; the only type of fortepiano to have been accorded enthusiastic endorsement by J.S. Bach and W.A.Mozart. [See the illustration of the Silbermann copy made by Michael Walker on the front cover of this magazine.]

The Janissary

The constituents of the so-called "janissary" stop of some early 19th-century fortepianos are now known to have appeared rather earlier than was previously thought.⁶⁸ A newspaper published in St.Petersburg, in German as well as Russian, mentions a *Piano-Forte, Claviere* (perhaps square-pianos), *ordinäre Clavieren*, i.e. clavichords, for sale, which were fitted with harp, lute, drum and *Cimbel* stops; this may refer to bells or the undamped "pantalon" effect. The dates of the advertisements are 26 November 1773 and 29 August 1774, so they were in good time for Mozart's *alla Turca* movement in the sonata K.331, now thought to have been written in 1783.

Compass and temperament

On the subject of keyboard compass, Mozart did not, as far as we know, go as far as Domenico Scarlatti (FF-g³)⁶⁹; but he did exceed the standard five octaves once, in the

sonata for two claviers K.448 of 1781, which requires a top f[#]³. Equal temperament was in use in Vienna at least since the time of Fux.⁷⁰ Although second only to C.P.E. Bach amongst 18th-century composers for the amount of information he has given us about how to perform his music, Mozart was silent about how he liked his claviers to be tuned.⁷¹

Equal temperament had been used by composers for keyboard instruments by Frescobaldi's time; it was favoured by several composers including Rameau and C.P.E.Bach.⁷² We have no scores by Mozart with a key signature of more than four sharps, so it may be that he did not insist on equal temperament.

The quality of the instruments he played clearly mattered to Mozart; but this was put into context in a reflective letter he wrote in Paris to his father on 1 May 1778: "Give me the best clavier in Europe with an audience who understands nothing, or don't want to understand and who do not feel with me in what I am playing, and I shall cease to feel any pleasure."

For Mozart the keyboard was an essential tool throughout his life for every aspect of music making, not least for composition. As a well travelled virtuoso, there was a wide range of good instruments available to him, but these were not merely vehicles for showmanship. Although frustrated at having to teach to make money in Vienna when he knew he was capable of being a Capellmeister, he still felt "indescribable pleasure" when Rosa Cannabich eventually played the *Andante* (K.309) "with the utmost expression."⁷³ Here was a soundboard for his innermost feelings which he was more than happy to share with others.

*The portrait of Mozart was painted by Edlinger probably in 1790 when they both stayed at the same Munich inn [owned by Herr Albert, mentioned above]. It was unveiled on Mozart's birthday in 2005 in Berlin and caused something of a stir, partly because it was not what people expected. However, after extensive scientific tests, it was thought to have a chance of about 13 million in one of being anybody else, and is thought to be the most lifelike picture we have. The Edlinger can be viewed at <http://web.telia.com/~u57013916/Edlinger%20Mozart.htm> and it is installed at the Berliner Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany. Also see website www.mozartforum.com/photo%20page.htm.

- 1 Richard Maunder, "Mozart's Keyboard Instruments," *Early Music* 20/2 (May 1992.); also Nathan Broder, "Mozart and the 'Clavier'" in *The Creative Mind of Mozart*, ed. Paul Henry Lang (New York, 1963): 76ff.
- 2 Letters of Mozart and his family are quoted from *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. and transl. Wilhelm A. Bauer and Otto E. Deutsch (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962-75). Also Emily Anderson, *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, rev. 2d ed. Stanley Sadie and F. Smart, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), some of which have been tacitly altered by the author. Further references will simply be to the date of the letter.
- 3 Maunder, 209.
- 4 Maunder, 209. See also Christopher Hogwood, "A Repertoire for the Clavichord (Including a Brief History of *Bebung*)," in *De Clavicordio II: Proceedings of the International Clavichord Symposium, Magnano, 21-23 September 1995*. ed. Bernard Brauchli, Susan Brauchli, and Alberto Galazzo. (Magnano: Musica Antica a Magnano, 1996).
- 5 Maunder, 209.
- 6 Letter of 11 January 1770; perhaps also the letter of 8 December 1763: "... a good one and like ours has two manuals."
- 7 At this time, the term implied a master craftsman making stringed keyboard instruments as well as organs.
- 8 Wilhelm Friedrich Marpurg, *Historische-kritische Beyträge...* (Berlin, 1754-1758), 500, quoted in Ernst Flade, *Der Orgelbauer Gottfried Silbermann. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Orgelbaus im Zeitalter Bachs*, *Veröffentlichungen des Fürstlichen Institutes für musikwissenschaftliche Forschung zu Bückeburg*. Series 5, vol. 3, 2d. ed. (Leipzig, 1952): 273. This was actually a clavichord.
- 9 Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, United Provinces, etc.* (London, 1773), appendix transl. Bode and Ebeling, Hamburg, 1776 (?). See *Dr. Burney's Musical Tours in Europe* vol. 2, ed. Percy A. Scholes (London, 1959), 16-27.
- 10 Letter of 9 October 1777.
- 11 Letter of 13 November 1777. Leopold Mozart mentions "Fort biens - All by Friederici as he [Pfeil] deals in these." C.P.E. Bach owned one of these as well as a clavichord by the same maker.
- 12 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben - Dichtung und Wahrheit IV, Gesamtausgabe*, (Munich, 1926), First edition, Cotta (1815-19).
- 13 The spelling variant reflects German pronunciation.
- 14 *Salzburger Intelligenzblatt*, 15 September 1787, quoted in *Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, ed. O.E.Deutsch (Basel: Kassel, 1961), 262. Stops such as the "lute" had been a feature of German harpsichords since the Müller instrument of 1537. See *The New Grove® Early Keyboard Instruments*. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989): 25-27.
- 15 *New Mozart Documents* ed. Cliff Eisen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 23.
- 16 Letter of 10 September 1778.
- 17 Letter of 27 November 1777.
- 18 *Europaeische Zeitung*, Salzburg, 6 August 1765, quoted in Deutsch, 47.
- 19 Lecture given by Jesper Christensen, Schola Cantorum, Basel, 1993.
- 20 Raymond Head, "Corelli in Calcutta ...," *Early Music* 23/4 (November 1985).
- 21 See Donald H. Boalch, *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord, 1440-1840*, 3d. ed. Charles Mould, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) , listing 3:338. Mozart is reputed to have used the instrument in concert during his second stay in Prague. See Siegbert, Mozarts *Claviermusik: Klangwelt und Aufführungspraxis. Ein Handbuch*. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995), 2d. ed.:52. The author thanks Michael Zapf for this reference.
- 22 Richard Maunder, *Keyboard Instruments in Eighteenth-Century Vienna*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 116-9.
- 23 Alfons Huber, *Das österreichische Cembalo, 600 Jahre Cembalobau in Österreich*, (Tutzing: Schneider, 2001).
- 24 Maunder, "Mozart's Keyboard Instruments," 211; also Alfons Huber, "Reiseclavichorde- Von Mozart bis Beethoven," in *Fundament aller Clavirten Instrumenten, Das Clavichord*, ed. C. Ahrens and G. Klinke, (München-Salzburg 2001). With this instrument Stein achieved a clavichord at 8' pitch using similar dimensions to quint pitch of other instruments.
- 25 Maunder, *Keyboard Instruments in Eighteenth-Century Vienna*, 127-8.
- 26 Mario R. Mercado, "Mozart through his piano pupils," in *Eighteenth-century Music in Theory and Practice: Essays in Honor of Alfred Mann*. ed. Mary Ann Parker (Pendragon Press, Stuyvesant, NY 1994), 206.
- 27 Ownership of instruments by this maker by Wolfgang and Leopold Mozart puts Friederici at the top of Vermeij's list in Koen Vermeij, "Eighteenth Century Makers of the Clavichord: Which Makers did They Prefer?", in *De Clavicordio II* .
That his brother, Christian Gottfried, built the surviving clavichords should not detract from their value given that they came from the same workshop.
- 28 Letter of 25 February 1785.
- 29 Maunder, "Mozart's Keyboard Instruments," 212.
- 30 Kurt Bisak, *Klaviere im Salzburger Museum Carolino Augusteum* (Salzburg, 1988).
- 31 Georg Benda commented in the preface to his sonatas of 1780, "It's just a pity that, even in the cities where music thrives, scarcely one good clavichord may be heard for every six good harpsichords." The clavichord was by far the most common keyboard instrument in German speaking parts of Europe until the nineteenth century.
- 32 Deutsch, 304.
- 33 Laura Rhoades Smith, "Five Mozart Sonatas Revisited," *The Early Keyboard Journal* 11 (1993): 329..
- 34 Frederick Neumann, "Authenticity and the Vocal Vibrato," in *New Essays in Performance Practice*, (Ann Arbor & London: UMI Research Press, 1989): 39-65.
- 35 Mercado, "Mozart through his piano pupils," 218-220.
- 36 Hadi És Más Tortenetek, 9 December 1791. See Deutsch, 371.
- 37 It was made c.1760 and came with Constanze from the Weber household. Constanze's son Franz Xaver returned it to Constanze in Salzburg after some twenty years. It was subsequently bequeathed to the Salzburg Mozarteum. This instrument, now in the Geburtshaus in Salzburg, is among those recorded on *The Secret Mozart*, Christopher Hogwood, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 83288.

30 Mozart and the Clavier

38 Maunder, "Mozart's Keyboard Instruments," 212.

39 Vincent and Mary Novello, *A Mozart Pilgrimage: Being The Travel Diaries of Vincent & Mary Novello in the Year 1829*, trans. Nerina Medici, ed. Rosemary Hughes (London: Novello & Co., 1955), 90, quoted in Michael Cole, *The Pianoforte in the Classical Era*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998): 352.

40 Francis Knights, "Some Observations on the Clavichord in France," *The Galpin Society Journal* 44 (March 1991): 71-76.

41 Johann Gottfried Eckard, Six Sonates opus 1, ... (Courrlay: Editions Fuzeau, 1992) facsimile edition; also; Eckard, "Complete Works for Keyboard", Miklós Spányi, clavichord and tangent piano, Hungaraton HCD 32313-14.

42 Franz Xaver Niemetschek, *Leben des K.K. Kapellmeisters Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart nach Originalquellen beschrieben* (Prague, 1798), 209, quoted in "Mozart and the Keyboard Culture of his Time" [Online] www.rmc.library.cornell.edu/mozart/intro.htm Available 20 February 2007.

43 Stein and Eckard had visited Andreas Silbermann en route to Paris in 1758. Eva Hertz, *Johann Andreas Stein*, (Wolfenbüttel: Kallmeyer, 1937), 26-7, quoted in Maunder, "Mozart's Keyboard Instruments."

44 Other instruments for sale included "claffichords", for which there was evidently demand. See Cole, *The Pianoforte*, 49.

45 Eva Badura-Skoda, "Zur Frühgeschichte des Hammerklaviers," in *Florilegium Musicologicum* Hellmut Federhofer zum 75. Geburtstag, Mainzer Studien zur Musikwissenschaft; Bd.21, (Tutzing: Schneider, 1988), mentioned in *Eighteenth Century Keyboard Music*. 2nd ed. Robert J. Marshall, (New York & London, 2003): 59, 66.

46 Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993): 158.

47 ed. Schubart, *Deutsche Chronik* 2 (1775) quoted in: Maunder, "Mozart's Keyboard Instruments," 214.

48 Letter of 1 November 1777.

49 William Jurgensen, "The Importance of the *Tangentenflügel* to the development of the German piano", in *Keyboard Instruments* (ed. Steiner, 55ff.

50 Letter of 31 October 1777.

51 Maunder, *Keyboard Instruments in Eighteenth-Century Vienna*, 107.

52 Broder considered this to have been of earlier date than Rampe, who considers it could not have been made before Mozart's visit to Stein in 1777.

53 Letter of 1 May 1778.

54 The instrument, by Zumpe and Buntebart, is now in the Cobbe Collection at Hatchlands Park, Surrey.

55 Egedacher's successor as instrument builder to the Salzburg court. See Rampe, 42.

56 Concert notice, 3 April 1781. Deutsch, 476, and Deutsch, 543.

57 Reported as 19 January 1787, possibly between two performances of *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Deutsch, 251.

58 L. Van Bentheim-Steinfurt Travel Diary, 15 October 1790, quoted in Maunder, "Mozart's Keyboard Instruments," 216.

59 Rampe, 44. The instrument is unsigned, but seems to be the earliest surviving instrument by Walter.

60 For an updated report see Cole, *The Pianoforte*, 117ff.

61 quoted in Richard Maunder & David Rowland, "Mozart's Pedal Piano," *Early Music* 23/2 (May 1995): 287.

The pedal instrument does not survive. There is, however, a pedal piano of c.1815 by Brodmann in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; a fortepiano attributed to Johann Schmidt of Salzburg of c.1785 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is fitted with pedal pull-downs.

62 Journals of Preisler and Rosing, in Deutsch, 284-6.

63 Eisen, *New Mozart Documents*, no.64, quoted in Richard Maunder & David Rowland, "Mozart's Pedal Piano," *Early Music* 23/2 (May 1995): 287.

64 Joseph Frank's memoirs, 1852, in Deutsch, 476.

65 First movement, mm.88-90. Facsimile in "*Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*", V/15, Bd.6 (1961), xiv.

66 Letter of 16 April 1789. Here, Mozart clarifies the instrument: "das Clavier /: Clavikord ". It was the practice, at least in Northern and Central Germany, for clavichords to be fitted with pedal pull-downs or a pedal instrument under the manuals. See Joel Speerstra: "*Bach and the Pedal Clavichord – An Organist's Guide*." (University of Rochester Press, 2004).

67 Mistakenly referred to as a fortepiano in Ernst Flade, "Der Orgelbauer Gottfried Silbermann...", 263-4. Original text is from [J.F. Rochlitz, editor] *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, Einige Bemerkungen über den aesthetischen Charakter, Werth und Gebrauch verschiedener musikalischer Instrumente*. No.16, 14. Jan.1807 & No.17, 21.Jan.1807, page 259: "Wusste doch Mozart, dieser grosse Meister auf dem Fortepiano, ein Silbermannisches Klavier, das er bey dem sel.[igen] Kantor Doles in Leipzig fand, so hoch zu schaetzen, dass er einen ansehnlichen Preis dafuer bot, wie wolvergebllich, weil der wuerdige Greis das Geschenk seines verehrten Freunde (des Verfertigers selbst) nicht weggeben wollte."

68 Christian Ahrens, "New Sources on the Invention of the Janissary or Turkish Music Stop," *Galpin Society Journal* 59 (2006).

69 Barthold Fritz had been making clavichords with a range of FF-a' since at least 1743 according to the list of instruments and clients appended to his treatise on equal temperament. The author thanks Lothar Bemann for this information.

70 Hellmut Federhofer "Johann Joseph Fux and Equal Temperament," in *Eighteenth Century Music in Theory and Practice: Essays in Honor of Alfred Mann*. ed. Mary Ann Parker (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1994), 206.

71 Rampe, 88, 132-134.

72 See Barthold Fritz's treatise on equal temperament, *Anweisung, wie man Claviere, Clavecins und Orgeln... in allen zwölf Tönen gleich rein stimmen könne...* 2d ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1757). The treatise was printed in Vienna in 1799, and approved by G.F. Wolf in his *Allgemeines Musikalisches Lexikon* (Vienna, 1800). However, Gall's "Clavier-Stimmbuch" (Vienna, 1805) observes that the temperament was new and that some did not care for it as much as the old method as it was "too severe" and "not as harmonious", much as Neidhardt had observed (1732).