

Composers from the Viennese School are probably the most prolific contributors to keyboard literature: ranging from dance suites, sonatas, fantasias, and concertos. Not only do these repertoires provide high-art entertainment, but they also serve today as pedagogical drills and exercises for improving and enhancing pianistic techniques. The famous musical prodigy, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is the master that influenced other masters after his death such as Ludwig Van Beethoven and Franz Schubert. Mozart spent an ample period of his lifetime teaching piano and composition to affluent students and the promising Beethoven sought his instruction; unfortunately, this did not last very long. Even so, Mozart's strong influence on Beethoven's early piano works is very evident: this phenomenon is to influence the world of music for generations and continue the legacy of musicality, artistry and technique in piano playing. To corroborate this assertion, this essay will compare the first movements of Mozart's *Sonata no. 14 in c minor* and Beethoven's *Sonata no. 5 in c minor*.

Historical Background of Mozart the Genius

The prodigious young musician, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born on 1756 in Salzburg, a city within the frontiers of the Bavarian region (present-day Austria). He was fortunate to grow up in a family of musicians: his father Leopold Mozart was a renowned violinist, music professor and composer within the Germanic states during the 18th century. His mother Anna Maria Pertl was also well versed in the harpsichord and have accompanied his son when Leopold is bound to his obligations as Salzburg's *maestro di capella*. Also, his older sister Maria Anna, or "Nannerl" as a nickname, was equally talented as her little brother in instrumental virtuosity and also showed a hand in composition. As

early as the age of three, young Mozart started to manifest extraordinary musical gifts: absolute pitch and perfect recall; two years later Leopold noticed his son's virtuoso skills in harpsichord, violin and even the organ. Not only so, Mozart also showed penchant for composition at age six, starting with minuets and airs for violin; opera at age eleven. Since music reproduction was not a popular trend during the Enlightenment era, young Mozart starting at age fourteen was able to perfectly transcribe unpublished works from Bach and Allegri. With this monumental discovery, Wolfgang and his family went on many tours to perform for the European nobilities across Europe in cultural centres such as Paris, Mannheim, and Vienna.

At age twenty-five, Mozart moved to Vienna claiming his independence and void of all patriarchal authorities and started working for noble patrons like Joseph II and receiving commissions to write operas, symphonies, etc. Despite his booming career as a freelance musician, income was still very meagre for Wolfgang and obviously this could not suffice his luxurious taste for clothes and other things, increasing debts and progressing illness. Nevertheless, these years in Vienna produced one of the most phenomenal works of art in music history such as the operas *Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Don Giovanni*, his grandest *Symphonies no. 40 and 41*, piano and violin sonatas and string quartets that perpetually ring within the prestigious concert halls of today.

Towards the end of his life, he spent most of it teaching piano and composition though not most of his students became prolific, one great admirer of his music, Beethoven modelled his musicianship after the great Mozart and this promising young performer and composer will continue the Mozart legacy until the present day (Lockwood, 52).

Mozartean Style: *Le Style Galant*

As a reaction to the extravagant and hyperbolic Baroque culture and tradition, *le style galant* emerged as a cultural movement promoting elegance in simplicity, natural state and proportion in art, music, literature, architecture and philosophy. In music, Mozart's compositional stints best describe *le style galant en musique*: simple melodies that can be sung, proportionate phrases and sections, no rhythmic complexity, minimal ornamentations, no intricate contrapuntal lines, thinner texture, rigid harmonic structures (I-V-I), structured musical forms (sonata-allegro or sonata-rondo) and the character of the melodic themes is usually carefree and cheerful.

A classical music savant would easily identify a Mozart work by its elegant tone and scent: one can identify the light touch and hear the sparkling melodic phrases that expresses profound artistry and one could say "That definitely smells like Mozart!" The Mozartean style focuses more on the expressive melodic theme rather than virtuosic display of fast fingers and supple wrists, which sets it apart from the other composers from the Viennese School. Indeed, the mature Wolfgang established an artistic standard that composers aplenty have imitated, or as some scholars would say "interpret differently." To better see and understand the Mozart musical influence on his successors, it is necessary to first determine the Mozartean style and find this particular scent in Mozart's own work and then compare it with another composer's work. Looking at the first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata no. 14 in c minor, the writer will cite significant musical phrases, sectional and harmonic structures to identify the "Mozart perfume" worn by Beethoven's Piano Sonata no. 5 in c minor (de St. Foix & King, 282).

Framework of Sonata 14: The Mozart Perfume

The piece begins with the dark and serious main theme from m.1-8, which is quite unique from the other piano sonatas. Mozart plays with sudden dynamic contrast between forte and piano to make it more dramatic. The main theme is noticeably proportionate: each phrase has four measures and rhythmic values are quite simplistic and are equally the same for both phrases (as seen from Figure 1.3 below).



Figure 1.3 Measures 1-4 of Mozart's Piano Sonata no. 14 in c minor, Molto Allegro

This very phrase is similar to the opening of Beethoven's Piano Sonata no. 5: the dynamic contrast is evidently identical and the proportions of phrases are similar. Beethoven varies the rhythm and adds some note fillers but the main melodic material is still the same: each note still falls on the strong beat and the harmonic structure is irrevocably parallel to that of the previous example (as shown below in Figure 1.4).



Figure 1.4 Measures 1-8 of Beethoven's Sonata no. 5 in c minor, Allegro molto e con brio

Referring to the comparative formal analysis of these two sonatas in Figure 1.1 and 1.2, the Beethoven harmonic structure imitates its predecessor: having the c minor as the tonic and modulates to its relative key, E \flat Major and ends the exposition in the same key.



Figure 1.5 (a) Measures 69-71 of Mozart Sonata no. 14 and (b) Measures 100-105 of Beethoven's Sonata no. 5

The development sections of these two sonatas both begin in the parallel C major, using the same main theme heard in the beginning of the exposition, both having a relatively short development section. Though the general structure is the same, Beethoven uses a little zest of chromaticism in his development section to add his own flavour. According to some musicologists, Beethoven referenced passages from Mozart's symphonies note for note (Kerman, cited in Lockwood, 40) but some scholars like Lockwood writes his interpretation of Mozart references in Beethoven as unintentional and merely a moment where Beethoven tries to recall the passages he heard from Mozart's symphonic works and render a new version with some Beethovenesque style to it (Lockwood, 40). Whether Beethoven directly plagiarised or just merely admiring the preceding master by quoting him, one can definitely smell the "Mozart perfume" sprayed decently in the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata no. 5 in c minor.



Figure 1.6 (a) Measures 75-76 of Mozart's Sonata no. 14 and (b) Measures 106-107 of Beethoven's Sonata no. 5

From these three examples of comparison, the Mozart legacy continues on and is clearly seen and heard in Beethoven's earlier works, particularly his piano sonatas in c

minor such as Piano Sonata no. 5 and also Sonata no. 8 “Pathétique.” As Köchel articulated his opinion on Mozart’s 14th sonata, “Without question this is the most important of all pianoforte sonatas. Surpassing all others by reason of the fire and passion which, to its last note breathe through it, it foreshadows the pianoforte sonata, as it was destined to become in the hands of Beethoven.” (Köchel, cited in Marks, 1921) From this endowment came more prolific masterpieces that have made great impact in the keyboard music and literature and any student learns a great deal of music theory, technique, culture and artistry.

Bibliography

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