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The ***Fantasy in D minor, K. 397*** by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart has an intriguing and enigmatic past. Composed in 1782, a "complete" rendering of the fantasy remained in publication, unquestioned by scholars until 1944 – nearly a century and a half after the composer's death. After considerable musicological and forensic sleuthing, we now know that the fantasy remained unfinished at the time of Mozart's death in 1791. It seems that the last ten measures of the "complete" work, a version that it is still frequently heard in concert halls today, are in a hand other than Mozart's – likely that of August Eberhard Müller, an early nineteenth century cantor of the famous St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. The work originally appeared as a "Fantaisie d'Introduction" – a piece intended to precede another work such as a fugue or sonata (like Mozart's *Fantasy and Fugue in C major, K. 394* or the *Fantasy and Sonata in C minor, K. 457/475)*. As its name suggests, the fantasy possesses an imaginative and free-spirited nature – like an improvisation comprised of several sections of varying characters and moods. Of high importance is the work's key signature of D minor, the key to many of Mozart's darkest and most dramatic works: *Don Giovanni,* the *Piano Concerto No. 20, K. 466*, and the also unfinished *Requiem.* The fantasy begins with churning arpeggios at the lowest depths of the keyboard. Soon, a despairing melody emerges, full of aching dissonances and unresolved harmonies. Beneath this lamenting aria melody lies the shadow of a faint and sparse accompaniment. Only at the very last moments of the piece do the clouds part, making way for a sunny and cheerful conclusion.

In March of 1778, Mozart arrived in Paris, seeking recognition within the city's aristocratic circles and a position of high stature and financial stability. His reception into these circles was nothing short of a disappointment. Within letters, the twenty-two-year-old composer frequently bemoans having to play on dilapidated harpsichords and spend many hours within stuffy waiting rooms. In May, it seemed as though Mozart's big break in Paris had finally come. He was offered the position of organist at the royal palace at Versailles. In the words of Richard Rodda, "Mozart's longing was not for the royal chapel, however, but for the opera house (and for a sweetheart, Aloysia Weber, whom he had met on the stop in Mannheim while journeying to Paris), and he refused the post. 'After all, 2,000 *livres* is not such a big sum,' he rationalized in a letter to his furious father". Just as Mozart received his first taste of success, his mother suddenly became ill in June, passing away the following month. Suddenly, Mozart found himself alone and without a regular post in a foreign city. It was during this time that he composed the ***Sonata in A minor, K. 310.***

The reason for the composition of the sonata remains unclear. Mozart had no commission or prospects of publication. In fact, in one heated letter, Mozart's father scolds the young composer for "wasting" his time on the sonata instead of working on a piece that could earn money. Of the eighteen piano sonatas, only one other is in a minor key. It is probable that Mozart composed the work, full of intensely pained and grieving sonorities, for himself as a cathartic outpouring proceeding the death of his dear mother. One particularly fascinating influence on the sonata is the music of Johann Schobert, whose sonatas Mozart admired since childhood. Several of Mozart's early concertos were imitations or arrangements of sonata movements by Schobert, and it is well documented that Mozart taught Schobert sonatas to students during his time in Paris. According to the Mozart biographer, Dyneley Hussey, "we may regard Schobert, to whom Wolfgang owes so much of the 'romantic' element which appears in his work alongside of its 'classic' grace and vigor, as being the first of his real masters". Indeed, we hear these "romantic" tendencies within the *Sonata in A minor* (and even a verbatim quotation of a passage from Schobert's *Sonata, Op. 17, No. 2* within the second movement). A sense of drama permeates the stormy and relentless first movement through the intense, pulsing rhythms, sudden contrasts of dynamics, and aching harmonies. In a moment of fleeting repose, the second movement sounds like a tender aria – perhaps a reflection on happy memories. Within the final movement of the sonata, we hear a dramatic intermingling of both worlds – a return of the brooding and grievous music of the first movement and melancholy-tinged attempt to find peace.

As in the case of many of Ludwig van Beethoven's well-known works (such as the "Moonlight" and "Appassionata" sonatas), the ***Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31 No. 2*** did not acquire its "Tempest" subtitle from the composer. Rather, the work received the programmatic title from Beethoven's assistant and lifelong friend, Anton Schindler – also the source of a great deal of suspicious biographical information about Beethoven and widely discredited by modern musicologists. Nevertheless, Schindler claims that when he asked Beethoven what he intended to communicate with the Sonata No. 17, the composer replied: "read Shakespeare's *Tempest".* The reference does indeed correspond to the stormy and turbulent music of the sonata. The first movement displays a compelling juxtaposition between two characters: one contemplative and suspenseful, as heard in the opening slow introduction, and a second theme more impetuous and prone to fiery outbursts. Near the end of the movement, this slow introduction returns in the most eerie and ghostly of guises. Suddenly, a single voice emerges in the distance, sounding as a haunting recitative that the musicologist Charles Rosen compares to a "voice from the tomb". The second movement provides a moment of serenity amidst the tumultuous drama of the outer movements of the sonata. A peaceful, often noble, aria melody emerges, accompanied by frequent drum rolls from a march heard in the distance. This placid atmosphere is quickly shattered by the onset of the perpetual motion third movement. After the unrelenting rhythmic drive and frequent oceanic surges of harmonies, the music quietly fades away into the depths of the piano.

The mazurka originated in Frederic Chopin's native country of Poland during the seventeenth century. In early nineteenth-century parlance, the mazurka was a dance in three, often integrating melodies constructed from folk scales and quirky off-beat accents or rhythmic syncopations. The Polish dancer, Ada Dziewanowska, reveals that "the mazurka is full of contrasts…it combines the fiery spirit with pride and elegance, vivacity with lyricism, dignity with joy, boldness with gallantry". Chopin composed the ***Three Mazurkas, Op. 63*** in 1846, at the height of his compositional powers and already quite experienced in the genre. Robert

Schumann noted that “each [of the mazurkas] has an individual poetic feature, something distinctive in form or expression”. The first mazurka features the frolicking and playful rhythms of a folk *mazur*. The second dance constitutes a melancholy and nostalgic *kujawiak*, one of the five national dances of Poland. The wistful, somber melody of the dance conjures the words of Józef Chomiński, who described the mazurkas as Chopin’s “personal confessions”. The final dance of the set also sounds as a lyrical *kujawiak*, although more extraverted and animated.

Like the mazurkas, the polonaise represents a genre extremely close to Chopin’s heart, serving as an outlet for the expression of his most intimate and patriotic sentiments. Chopin’s treatment of the genre became increasingly imbued with emotional depth and compositional complexity throughout his life. The ***Polonaise in F sharp minor, Op. 44*** is certainly more than a simple folk dance. Perhaps the Polish musicologist, Andzej Zielinski, described the composer’s mature polonaises best when he called them “epic-dramatic poems”. Chopin began work on the polonaise in August of 1841 while at the estate of George Sand’s family in Nohant. It was likely the boiling sonorities of the F sharp minor polonaise that prompted Sand to write to Chopin’s doctor: “Chopin’s up to his usual tricks, fuming at his piano. When his mount fails to respond to his intentions, he deals it great blows with his fist, such that the poor piano simply groans”. Amidst the passionate, fiery passages of polonaise lies a creamy center in the form of a nostalgic mazurka. It was the juxtaposition of these two elements that caused Franz Liszt to experience a “dismal shudder” upon hearing the work for the first time.

Sergei Prokofiev’s ***Vision fugitives, Op. 22*** constitutes a shamefully neglected work in the programs of today’s concert halls. A suite of twenty miniatures, the work was composed and compiled between 1915 and 1917. Once the suite was complete, Prokofiev performed the miniatures for the Russian poet Konstantin Balmont, inspiring Balmont to compose a sonnet on the spot. A poignant line in the sonnet reads: "in every fleeting vision I see worlds, filled with the fickle play of rainbows". It was this line that prompted Prokofiev to name the suite “Mimolyotnosti” or “Fleeting Visions” (“Visions fugitives”). Prokofiev would often play selections from the suite as encores after his performances. The pieces range immensely in mood and character – some are magical, mystical, grotesque, even humorous. Many of the pieces feature a poetic and pensive, even delicate character, far from the stereotyped, percussive sounds of much of Prokofiev’s music. The Russian music critic, Vyacheslav Karatygin, found this quality of the *Vision fugitives* most shocking, writing in 1917: “Prokofiev and tenderness – you don’t believe it? You will see for yourself when this charming suite is published”.

The ***March from “The Love for Three Oranges”*** represents some of Prokofiev’s most ironic and humorous music. The march originates from the composer’s 1921 opera of the same name, based on a satiric tale by the eighteenth-century Italian writer, Carlo Gozzi. Within the opera, a prince, is miraculously cured of melancholia by the rather careless and incompetent spells of the witch, Fata Morgana. The prince is then cursed by the witch and must travel the Earth searching for the three oranges that she has caused him to fall in love. After a series of ludicrous predicaments, the prince finally finds the three oranges, and discovers, once unpeeled, that a beautiful princess resides within each orange. Emerging from the third orange is the beautiful Princess Ninetta, with whom the prince saves and lives happily ever after. Although the bizarre and comical opera was not well received by its first audiences, the march quickly became wildly popular, prompting Prokofiev to craft the piano transcription on tonight’s program. The piece remains one of Prokofiev’s most beloved and instantly recognizable works.

Isaac Foreman, June 2023