



W.A. MOZART

(1756-1791)

Mi lagnerò tacendo K.437

From his six *Notturmi*

SAB with 2 Violins and Cello

(originally 3 basset horns)

[or Piano reduction]

Public Domain Edition adjusted from CPDL by RRW

ANALYSIS

Broad Description: A short accompanied piece for soprano, alto, and bass composed for social music-making. Composed in Vienna, 1787(?) or probably later. 2 sopranos, bass. 2 clarinets and basset horn.

Historical/Cultural Context: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolfgang_Amadeus_Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (27 January 1756 – 5 December 1791), baptised as *Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart*, was a prolific and influential composer of the Classical era.

Born in Salzburg, he showed prodigious ability from his earliest childhood. Already competent on keyboard and violin, he composed from the age of five and performed before European royalty. At 17, Mozart was engaged as a musician at the Salzburg court, but grew restless and traveled in search of a better position. While visiting Vienna in 1781, he was dismissed from his Salzburg position. He chose to stay in the capital, where he achieved fame but little financial security. During his final years in Vienna, he composed many of his best-known symphonies, concertos, and operas, and portions of the Requiem, which was largely unfinished at the time of his death. The circumstances of his early death have been much mythologized. He was survived by his wife Constanze and two sons.

He composed more than 600 works, many acknowledged as pinnacles of symphonic, concertante, chamber, operatic, and choral music. He is among the most enduringly popular of classical composers, and his influence is profound on subsequent Western art music. Ludwig van Beethoven composed his own early works in the shadow of Mozart, and Joseph Haydn wrote: "posterity will not see such a talent again in 100 years".

And so much more!

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nocturne>:

*A **nocturne** (from the French which meant nocturnal, from Latin nocturnus) is usually a musical composition that is inspired by, or evocative of, the night. ... The name nocturne was first applied to pieces in the 18th century, when it indicated an ensemble piece in several movements, normally played for an evening party and then laid aside. Sometimes it carried the Italian equivalent, *notturmo*, such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Notturmo in D*, K.286, written for four lightly echoing separated ensembles of paired horns with strings, and his *Serenata Notturna*, K. 239. At this time, the piece was not necessarily evocative of the night, but might merely be intended for performance at night, much like a serenade. The chief difference between the serenade and the *notturmo* was the time of the evening at which they would typically be performed: the former around 9:00pm, the latter closer to 11:00 pm.*

In the last years of his life, Mozart spent much of his time in the home of Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin, a famous botanist and horticulturist. Mozart particularly enjoyed his gardens and the company of his family – Jacquin's children were students of Mozart. It is believed that these nocturnes were sung with this home with Jacquin singing bass, Mozart on alto, and Constanze on soprano.

Program note:

The sixth of the six nocturnes, *Mi lagnerò tacendo* is certainly the most complex. In a ternary (three-part) form typical of the classical era, it expresses the delight and agony of unrequited love. The middle section moves to more dramatic declamation of the text and minor harmonies while the material from the first section returns with ease to conclude the piece. Knowing that Mozart wrote this piece for his own music-making camaraderie, makes it seem most appropriate for a performance by a group of friends together who gather to study and make glorious music.

Text:

Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782): *Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi, better known by his pseudonym of **Metastasio**, (January 3, 1698 – April 12, 1782) was an Italian poet and librettist, considered the most important writer of opera seria libretti.*

Mi lagnerò tacendo
I will-lament in- silence

Della mia sorte avara
About my fate bitter

Ma ch'io non t'ami, o cara,
But that-I not (should)-love-you O dearest,

Non lo sperar da me.
Do-not it hope of me.

Crudele, in che t'offendo
Cruel-one, in what-way did-I-offend-you

Se resta a questo petto
If remains in this breast (heart)

Il misero diletto
The miserable delight

Di sospirar per te?
To sigh for you?

*I will lament in silence
About my bitter fate,
But, that I do not love you, O dear one,
Do not hope that of me.*

*Cruel one, in what way have I offended you
If there remains in this heart
The miserable delight
Of sighing for you?*

ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

Form

- A is m. 1-24, with the first idea beginning m. 1 and second m. 9.
B is m. 24 (last note) – 39.
The return of the A' is m. 40-70.
One might consider m. 66-70 a bit of a **coda**.
- This is a nice example of a classical era ternary form (ABA'), but it also follows the key and phrase constructs typical of sonata form (without themes being "developed" in the B section).
- Why might have Mozart selected this form? He would have to repeat the first stanza of the poem to create the 3-part form, so why not binary? Certainly, the B section allows for more expressive harmonic settings of the more dramatic (melodramatic?) text. Ex: *Crudele* (cruel one) and *sospirar* (sigh). Perhaps the return to the A signifies that unrequited lover is resigned to silently lament their fate and returns to that sentiment after the overly emotional outburst of questioning and sighing.

Rhythm

- $\frac{3}{4}$ time. Tempo is marked *poco Adagio*. Rhythm is not the most prominent element in this piece – Mozart uses traditional music gestures with nothing unusual.
- mm. 13-24 (& 53-65) have numerous entrances on the "and" of 2 (beginning with three 8ths) that are begun by one voice and echoed or imitated by the other two. Additionally, the instruments play running 16th notes (m. 18-23 & 59-64) providing a rhythmic propelling of energy with this tossing of the rhythms between the bass and upper voices – and a frantic, insistent energy is added by the instruments as if to emphasize – *do not, do not hope that of me!*
- The dramatic rhythm of "Crudele" (16th pick-up, quarter, quarter) at m. 25 and 28, is the same as "o cara" of m. 11 and nearly the same as "ch'io non ta'mi" (that I don't love you) of m. 9-10 – indeed it is the beloved who is causing this cruel pain!

- Note: m. 11 upper instruments play on beat three, the way the upper voices with the instruments did in m.5 – singers will want to come in on beat three in m.11 rather than waiting for 1 on m. 12 (50-51 in recapitulation). This delay gives unexpected attention to the first occurrence of the text "Non lo sperar da me" (do not hope that of me).

Melody

- The melody is found primarily in the soprano line (with the alto often supporting in sweet thirds).
- The bass takes over the melody m. 18-21; m. 52-53; m. 59-62, with the upper voices supporting or imitating.
- In the A and A' sections
 - The melody is mostly in diatonic 2nds, 3rds, and a few 4ths, with some interesting added decorative half-steps. It is interesting that the first theme sounds sweet and not very much like lamenting. Why?
 - There are some dramatic leaps at m. 11/50 "o cara" (o dearest) that seem to be pleading.
 - There are some tritone skips in the upper voices near the cadencing: m. 19-24/60-65.
 - There is regular use of the appoggiatura -- mm. 14, 15, 24 (53, 54, 65, 70) give a sense of sighing desperation.
 - ✓ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appoggiatura> ... is a musical ornament that consists of an added note in a melody that is resolved, delaying the appearance of the principal note. The added unessential note is typically one degree higher or lower than the principal note; and if lower, it may be chromatically raised. The term comes from the Italian verb *appoggiare*, "to lean upon".
 - The A' section does not modulate to the dominant at m. 52 hence the pitches are different for the same melodic material
- In the B section
 - The heightened chromaticism in the melody signals tonal center shifts and the anxious "miserable delight".
 - m. 31-34 the melody (S) wrenches up and down in swooping cries of misery.
 - m. 35-38 – there is melodic *sighing* on "sospirar". Text painting is especially clear in the word broken by a rest m. 37 in the soprano (and bass) and the rising/falling 16ths of the alto (m. 38) and the lonely Ab when the other voices rest.

Harmony

- The harmony of this short work is typical the Classical era (diatonic, mostly I, IV, V chords/major/minor), yet is quite expressive of the text.
- A
 - Begins in G major and the first theme cadences in G (V I).
 - The second theme begins D7 and begins to move to D major – strongly there by cadence at m. 18 and concludes with a strong V-I cadence in the key of D at m. 23-24 (with an appoggiatura). The extended melodic and harmonic cadencing produces the sense of a desperate insistence.
- B
 - "Crudele" – starts and ends in D major, but moves dramatically away, flirting with g minor and then c minor – ("how have I offended?") giving a questioning sense – cadencing in Bb major
 - mm. 31-34 move to F, gm, dm, cm – the speeding up of the harmonic rhythm adds tension.
 - mm. 35-37 feel like we are cadencing in c minor, through the melodic "sighing" – but the conclusion takes us to a D major chord that becomes clearly the V of the G major for the return of A. It is almost as if the sighing has been exhausted and one must return to the lonely, silent lamenting.
- A'
 - mm. 40- 52 are identical to the first A section – still "silently lamenting."
 - At m. 52 the harmony stays in the tonic and extends the V of the cadence (m. 54-57) delaying the strong cadence to I -- emphasizing the "do not hope that of me."

- m. 64-65 strongly cadences – but we expect G and get E minor (vi) with an appoggiatura... hence a deceptive cadence. This extends the conclusion (a little coda) as it concludes the phrase with the expected cadence (66-67), but an imperfect cadence! Still extending to...
- A surprise E major chord (VI) m. 68 – emphasizes the final "No!" takes us to a conclusive IV-V-I (perfect) with an appoggiatura.

Timbre

- The timbre of this piece is dominated by the sound of 2 high voices and 1 low in both the singers and instruments.
- Few performances use clarinets and basset horn anymore – though that creates quite a different color than using strings or piano. I prefer the sound of 2 violins and cello. Piano also works and is appropriate for the style.
- The soprano uses a fairly high tessitura, often soaring to G above the staff – this upper register color is supported by the soprano 2 voice, often singing in soaring thirds. The bass voice uses a full range (low G to high D). The timbre is affected by these ranges and a free, full sound allows for the passionate expression of the insistence and angst of this piece.

Texture

- Most of the texture is homophonic – melody in the soprano with the other voices providing a rich support (and sometimes the melody and support is doubled in the instruments). See *Melody* above for when the bass takes over the melody and the other voices support or imitate.
- There are several moments when the texture is thinned or varied for effect:
 - mm.13-24 there is some echo and imitation effects as instruments are independent -- no longer supporting the voices directly -- further the driving desperation.
 - It is interesting that the cadence to D major is sung *a cappella* (mm.16-17). Perhaps the loneliness of love unrequited?
 - "Crudele" (mm. 25 & 28) is presented *a cappella* – creating a more dramatic cry.
 - mm. 55-58 the voices also sing *a cappella* for a more extended cadence (solidifying the maintained key in the A' section and it the same place as m.16-17 in exposition) and the voices pyramid in imitation to the extended D7 – even more insistence "do not hope that of me."
 - m. 66 (the imperfect cadence after the deceptive cadence) is also sung *a cappella*.

Dynamics

- There are only a couple dynamic markings in the earliest edition that I can readily access (1881) – those are m. 24-30: *f* "Crudele" and *p* "in che t'offendo". These dynamics support the dramatic cry of the text.
- The performing edition (cpdl) we are using has some additional markings that support the performance practice phrasing or provide contrast. These can be adjusted as needed. For example: I might not pull all the way back to *piano* at m. 18-19 and m. 40. Choices can be made within performance practice conventions.
- The rise and fall of each phrase lends itself to a crescendo and decrescendo at the resolution of the cadence. This is also a function of the tension/release of the cadences.
- There is no *rit.* marking in the earlier edition, though there traditionally is a relaxation prior to the return of the A section and at the of the piece end.

HEART

The heart of the piece is the elegant, clear architecture that still manages to contain a dramatic expression of the angst and obsession of unrequited love.

INTRODUCING THE PIECE

1. Ask students to read the translation of the text silently.
 - a. Have students underline a phrase that strikes them
 - b. Have students circle a phrase that confuses them
2. Ask for two different readers to read the poem.

- a. Share phrases that strike them in some way
 - b. Share confusing phrases
 - c. Let discussion ensue
3. Unrequited love/Love not returned – consider both sides
- a. Rejection and repulsion – leave me alone!
 - b. Longing and desire – give me a chance!
 - c. What do you think about the feelings expressed in this poem? Over-the-top/Melodramatic Obsessive? A true reflection of one's uninhibited feeling?
 - i. Traditionally, this kind of formal poetry was an expression of an internal dialogue, not a real dialogue or discussion. Internal feelings not something that one would dare to say aloud.
 - ii. Are there things here that we can relate to or understand or find empathy with?
4. Consider how a composer may choose to set these words? How might you? We are going to study such a setting by the renowned Mozart! In fact, he wrote his setting for a group of friends to enjoy together -- much like us! But before we are in a good position to really explore the choices that Mozart made when he composed music for this poem, we need to take some preliminary preparations.

SKILL OUTCOME

Students will shape phrases based on word stress and strong-weak/tenuto-lift phrase endings in the Classical era style.

Strategies

1. Work through pronunciation, word stress, meaning in poem – reviewing general Italian pronunciation rules – particularly the "fat" t, rolled r, c/ch.
2. Use Italian phrases in warm-up exercises – always emphasizing word stress (strong/weak) and difficult pronunciations [Do Re Do] – Use gesture!
3. Work opening phrases (m. 1-8) on a neutral syllable with attention strong-weak/tenuto-lift phrase endings. [shorter and softer]
 - a. Try all on the alto part first, and use gesture. Encourage phrase shaping. Add other parts.
 - b. Add text and see relationships between words stress and strong-weak/tenuto-lift
 - c. Repeat process with second theme – m. 9-24 with as much transference as possible.
 - d. Challenge students to continue to apply through out.

Assessment

1. At every point in the process, the teacher is assessing the word stress that the choir is producing while speaking and singing the Italian as well as rehearsing the strong/weak phrasing, etc.
2. Students mark accented/unaccented syllables in score as well as phrase endings for collection.

KNOWLEDGE OUTCOME

Students will examine phrase structure and the larger architecture of form.

Strategies

1. Determine phrase beginnings and endings m. 1-24 (in the A section).
 - a. There may be good discussions about phrase lengths (3+5 or 8 etc). micro/macro
 - i. What are some usual or expected phrase lengths? Why is this difficult to determine?
 - ii. Discuss/remind of antecedent/consequent (perhaps thinking phrase pairs could help)
 - iii. Notice the more substantial cadences at m. 8 and 17-18 for example
 - b. Have students label phrases and discuss as they make decisions
 - i. When consideration of text has been added, it might help with phrase decisions as the phrases often change with textual ideas.

- c. Another day, have students make individual decisions regarding phrase beginnings and endings in m. 24(end)-39 (the B section) and mark in the score.
 - i. When all have completed individually, form small groups to compare and discuss reasoning.
2. After learning m. 1-24, direct students to m. 40. Sing m. 40-end (if possible)
 - a. Ask students:
 - i. why were you able to sight-read that so well? ;)
 - ii. Was it all the same?
 - iii. Break into small groups – What was the same? Where was it different and how? Compare m. 40-end with m. 1-24. Share findings. [important to include key relationships and two themes]
 - b. Teach labels of A and A' and have student write in score
 - c. And what about m. 24-39? Jot down how this section *looks* in relation to the other two. Share your findings with two neighbors. Discuss.
 - d. Teach label of B.
 - e. Emphasize the pervasive use of this ABA' form in music – also nature, intentionally created objects, our lives. Challenge to notice.
 - f. [Also, in Affective Strategies notice the questions regarding the use of form by the composer in relation to the text and decisions made for meaning and expression.]
3. Compare and contrast the form of this Mozart with other familiar pieces and forms. What is the same or similar in the structure, what is different?
 - a. Dowland: Come again, sweet love doth now invite (binary – AB or ABB)
 - b. Blue Skies (more of a phrase structure – aaba)
 - c. Handel: Where'er you walk (da capo aria - ABA)

Additionally: Remember to emphasize the *elegance of structure*...the value of structure... Perhaps incorporated these thoughts and questions throughout the processes above...

- i. *Why do you think this structure works so well?*
- ii. *What do you think it is about this structure that has made it last so long?*
- iii. *A piece of music usually has a large, overall structure that reveals itself if we take the time to find it. And that overall structure is part of the piece, just as much as the beautiful melody or cool harmony.*

Assessment

1. Throughout, assess process of thinking about larger structure in discussing and labeling activities above.
2. Formally, students will mark phrases and form structure in an unfamiliar score. Then they will write about their reasoning for those choices. Here, we could use the Haydn Sonatina, as there are a couple different ways of looking at it. The defense and reasoning is as if not more important than the "correct" answer here.

AFFECTIVE OUTCOME

Students will explore compositional choices that convey the meaning of a text and reflect on ways that seemingly small details can impact the overall mood or affect.

Strategies

1. While rehearsing the B section, draw attention to the "Crudele" phrase
 - a. Why these dynamics? Try switching. (meaning)
 - b. Why this rhythm? Why not 3 quarters? (do it) Have we had this rhythm elsewhere?
 - c. Another day, review above and ask: Can you find other places that the composer's choices help convey the meaning of the text?
 - i. Individual students search and mark in score.

- ii. Small groups share findings and continue search.
 - iii. Share findings with group. Encourage to continue the search.
 - ✓ "Ma" – first presentation each time
 - ✓ sospirar – alto m. 35 and 38 and soprano m. 37 (also bass) (text painting)
 - ✓ Soprano m. 31-36
 - ✓ m. 14-24: cadence *a cappella*; driving instrument sixteenths, repetition
 - ✓ deceptive, imperfect cadences, m. 68.
 - ✓ More? (soprano m. 39?)
2. Later in the process, draw student's attention to Mozart's choice of this structure ABA' and how it is at odds with the two stanza poem.
- i. Read the poem in translation again.
 - ii. What would it sound like if Mozart stopped at the end of the B?
 - iii. Why do you suppose he chose to use the first stanza of the poem again for the A'? Write first, share second.

Assessment

1. Assessment is done throughout classroom discussions and writings.
2. Students write a brief reflection on the ways the seemingly small compositional choices made by Mozart in this piece impact their understanding of the expression of the text. Please give at least two specific examples that impact you as a performer.

MUSIC SELECTION

Mozart is an undisputed major composer of the Classical era whose significance is both historical and contemporary, as evidenced by his music regularly gracing concert stages everywhere. Students know of Mozart and are genuinely excited to sing works by him – the fact that he was composing at their age is also helpful in getting students to connect to his work. Often a director is faced with a choir that is not well balanced, for whom 3-part singing is more appropriate (but notice, the bass voice is most definitely changed!). The six nocturnes are originally written by Mozart for 3-parts (SAB). *Mi lagnero tacendo* is the most difficult of the six nocturnes, so one may take a look at some of the easier ones (*Luci care* or *Ecco quel fiero*) if this seems too great a challenge. Some may work better for changing voices than others. Regardless of these basic voicing considerations, *Mi lagnero tacendo* is an expressive example of classical era style, phrasing, and form. Mozart also renders an elegant, short setting of this famous poem that is, at times, quite dramatic and reflective of the agony of unrequited love.

Rebecca Renee Winnie taught high school choral music for 33 years, 28 at Homestead High School in Mequon, WI. She presently works as Vocal Arts Department Chair at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music in Milwaukee and has the joy of leading groups of singers at many age levels. Rebecca has served on the CMP committee since 1997 and especially enjoys the adventure of searching for diverse and powerful music to study with her students.

rwinnie@sbcglobal.net
Wisconsin Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance (CMP)

