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TEMPO DETERMINATION AS A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING AND
PERFORMING MOZART'S OPERAS AND SYMPHONIES, WITH
REFERENCE TO THE IDEAS OF NIKOLAUS HARNONCOURT

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TEMPO DETERMINATION AS A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING AND
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ABSTRACT

How to convey the desired tempo is a problem that every composer had to face before the invention of the metronome. In Mozart's time, the players could only rely on the information provided by the tempo marks, as well as the implications provided by articulation, drama, rhythm and even common sense. According to Nikolaus Harnoncourt's observations as expressed in his book *The Musical Dialogue: Thoughts on Monteverdi, Bach and Mozart*, Mozart has his own tempo system, and uses his tempo marks in a characteristic way. By exploring the usage of tempo marks in Mozart's operas *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, and linking these discoveries to his last three symphonies, this dissertation aims to uncover the meaning of Mozart's tempo marks, and in this way to establish guidance for the performance of his music.

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INTRODUCTION

Our ancestors living a hundred years ago probably never imagined that people would be able to meet and communicate instantly “online” through “computers” today while they had to wait for days or even months for what we now call “snail mail”. They would never have imagined that people would be able to travel thousands of miles in a few hours while they had to spend days or months for their journeys. Technology has revolutionized the speed of transportation and communication. High efficiency and fast speed have altered our perception of time and space. Time and space also exist in the world of music. We find these elements in the rhythms of notes, phrases, movements or whole pieces. Different tempos influence our perception of musical time and space. The faster the tempo, the smaller the space, and vice versa. In a rhythmically complicated piece, one will find many notes crowded together. If an instrumentalist finds such a piece difficult to handle, one of the reasons could well be that the tempo is too fast, and does not allow clarity.

Different tempos enable players to estimate different rhythmic spaces in the music they play, and the different spaces influence both sound quality and the effect that the music conveys. The importance of tempo should not be underestimated. Nikolaus Harnoncourt states in his book *The Musical Dialogue: Thoughts on Monteverdi, Bach and Mozart*, “Not many composers have been as concerned as Mozart with clearly indicating their ideas and wishes with regard to the tempos of their works.”¹ He supports his statement by showing his discovery that “we find at least 17

¹ Nikolaus Harnoncourt. *The Musical Dialogue: Thoughts on Monteverdi, Bach, and Mozart*, trans. Mary O'Neill, ed. Reinhard G. Pauly (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1989), 92

different gradations of adagio, more than 40 gradations each of allegro and andante, etc.” in Mozart’s music. Mozart, Harnoncourt tells us, uses a very large variety of tempo marks, and makes very clear distinctions between them. Harnoncourt lists many of these gradations in the chapter entitled “Mozart’s Use of ‘Allegro’ and ‘Andante’”. He observes that “Mozart attempts to use the same tempo marks for exactly the same tempi --- often for emotional effects as well.”² This tells us two things: first, in Mozart’s work, the same tempo marks imply the metronomically same pulse. Mozart employs a strict system of his own to rank these tempi. Second, he uses specific tempos to express specific emotions. This idea, to some extent, has similarities with the *idée fixe* of Berlioz or *leitmotif* of Wagner. Harnoncourt’s findings tell us that in order to have a better understanding of Mozart’s compositions, we can start by researching his tempo marks. That is why discussion of tempo as it appears in Mozart’s compositions matters.

Harnoncourt mentions several fascinating things about tempo in his book, and his remarks on tempo are the basis of this paper. Mozart never uses metronome marks- the metronome had yet to be invented during his lifetime. Mozart’s tempo marks connect character and speed, and one needs to know and pay attention to the actual meaning of the words Mozart uses in these tempo indications. For example, when Mozart writes “molto”, he means something different than “assai”. Answering the questions of what the tempo marks mean, and how they stand in relation to Mozart’s entire body of work, will help a conductor determine the speed at which he or she will play one of Mozart’s compositions.

² Harnoncourt, 92

It is crucial for a conductor to determine the tempo of a work clearly, because different tempos have a profound effect on articulations, bow strokes, breathing, sound qualities, dynamics, etc. These are important elements to keep in mind when we approach Mozart's compositions, and tempo is the key. Since there was no metronome in Mozart's time, he was not able to mark the exact speed he wanted for his compositions. However, we can still find good solutions by carefully observing the scores to unveil the range of possible tempos and to do this with an understanding of Mozart's tempos in general.

Based on these ideas of Harnoncourt, this dissertation will discuss the relations between tempo and other musical elements, such as rhythm, time signature, texts and drama, and focus mainly on uncovering the deep meanings of Mozart's music by examining Mozart's use of different tempo marks. We will start with the two operas *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, not only because these two operas are mature works of Mozart, but also because the texts of the operas indicate the drama directly, and they will be the reference for us when we check the emotional meaning of the tempo marks. Our findings in Mozart's operas will then be applied to his symphonic works, where we will make sure that the consistency of the tempo arrangements still work in his compositions without texts.

TEMPO DETERMINATION

What determines tempo? Or let us ask specifically, how does a player or a conductor make decisions on how fast or slow they should go when they look at the music in front of them and begin to study? It immediately becomes a practical question for the players and the acoustics. Can the players master all of the techniques in this music, and what role will tempo play in this? Does the hall rebound the sound quickly or slowly? Can the audience in the last row hear the sound clearly? If the tempo is too fast, the player may not express the thoughts of the music completely, or the music may sound indistinct because of the long echoes in the hall. If the tempo is taken too slowly, the musical sentences could be cut off because of the dry acoustic in the performance hall. Of course, there may be tempo marks or even metronome marks in the music, but these aspects of sound and technique must be considered as well. When it comes to conducting, the questions become more complicated. The considerations have to be extended from one instrument to many kinds of instruments, all of which have technical concerns. For example, although he lived in the same age as Beethoven, Carl Maria von Weber did not use the metronome to measure and show the tempo of his compositions. We can find two tempo marks in his Overture to *Der Freischutz*: Adagio 4/4 and Molto vivace 2/2. One of the aspects that conductors have to think about, practically, is the capability of the four horns in the Adagio section. The tempo should be slow enough so that the horn players are able to play with sustained and warm sound, but also not be so slow that the horn players do not have enough breath to complete each phrase. In order to determine the speed of the Molto vivace, one spot in

this section may draw conductors' attention: the clarity of the sixteenth notes at measure 62.



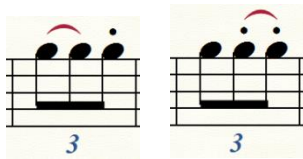
The tempo should be very fast, but not so fast that one cannot hear these sixteenth notes at the same time. Additionally, the speed of the sixteenth notes should be as fast as the pick-up to measure 93, where the horns play sixteenth notes.



These sixteenth notes can thus be regarded as the basic components of each measure when determining the tempo, even though they occur far less often than eighth notes.

Rhythm and articulation are two other considerations of tempo. I would like to link these two elements, because they are practical problems that the players have to solve together. For example, given a triplet with a slur between the first two notes and a staccato mark on the third note, a violin player would mostly tend to play down-bow for the slur and up-bow for the staccato. It is natural to play this way, because down-bow helps the down beat to be heard clearly and makes the slur more connected by taking advantage of gravity, and up-bow helps to make the accent short and also simultaneously helps the player to be prepared for the upcoming notes.

This bowing method also applies to the situation in which the second and third notes are connected by a slur in a triplet. However, if the second and third notes are connected with dots underneath the slur, indicating a separation of the notes, the tempo has to be controlled, and one cannot play as fast as in the previous situation. Because the second and third notes are articulated separately, they have to be played with two up bows, which require more time in order to avoid a potential unsteadiness between the two notes.



If the three notes are slurred in each triplet of a long phrase, small accents have to be given to the first notes of these triplets. If three notes are slurred every other triplet, the small accents go to the first notes of each slurred triplet. Harnoncourt has a similar discussion about treating the slurs as “emphasis signs” rather than “bow strokes”³. Thus, the real rhythmical structure is acquired by understanding the emphasis made by the composer. From measure 482 to 494 of the second act finale of *The Marriage of Figaro*, we observe that the violins have both slurred and separated triplets, and the notes in the violins from measure 481 to 483 experience two transitions in pulse.

³ Harnoncourt, 109



In the score, we can see a quarter-note length chord and six more eighth notes in measure 481. It is a march-like rhythm, and is immediately followed by four slurred triplets in the next measure. Three eighth-notes in a triplet make the beat more crowded than two eighth-notes in a duplet in the space created by the same tempo. Therefore, the notes in measure 482 would sound faster than these in measure 481. Also, the small accents of every beat in measure 482 change the pulse from two to four, which gives a sense of acceleration. Starting from measure 483, the alternations of slurred and separated triplets immediately switch the pulse from four back to two. Because of this, we can say that the slurred triplets in measure 482 constitute a short transition connecting the two different sections before and after itself. The text confirms this assertion. Several measures before this transition, Antonio enters abruptly and asks for everyone’s attention. After measure 482, he begins his story to the music of measure 483 and following. In this section, attention should be given to the triplets so that the tempo suits them as well as the duplets.

In addition to the clarity of the notes, we have to pay attention as well to the clarity of the words in vocal works, especially when the music goes fast. There are many spots that need this kind of consideration. For example, in the scene 12 of the second act finale in *Figaro*, the tempo mark is *allegro assai* in 4/4. At measure 733 and 734, Marcellina sings “e pretendo che il

contratto deva meco effettuar”, which means “and I contend that the contract he must with me carry out.”⁴ Since most of the notes are eighth-notes, the speed of each note is swift and there is not much space between the notes. The tempo choice becomes crucial, because if the tempo is too much on the slow side, it does not fit what the drama requires, and if it is too much on the fast side, what Marcellina sings would be difficult to enunciate and to understand. A similar rhythm is sung by Bartolo at measure 749 and 750, and by Basilio at measure 765 and 766. At measure 767 and 768, the little duet between Susanna and the Countess makes clarity even more difficult to achieve, because of the blending of the two voices.

If one reads the texts carefully, it is not difficult to find that Mozart has fitted the rhythms of the texts to the time signatures perfectly. For example, in Barbarina’s cavatina, which opens the fourth act of *Figaro*, the text reads “L’ho perduta, me meschina! Ah chi sa dove sarà? Non la trovo. L’ho perduta! Meschinella! E mia cugina? E il padron, cosa dirà?” We can see several main words like “per**duta**”, “mes**ch**ina”, “**t**rovo”, “mes**ch**inella”, “cu**g**ina”. The accented syllables are marked in bold type. Mozart places these accents on the down beats of each bar. So, the “L’ho per-” is placed as a two eighth-note pickup, and “du” occupies two eighth-note’s length. There is an eighth-rest for the comma and the “me mes-” is a two eighth-note pickup with “chi” on the down beat of the next bar.

In Cherubino’s aria “*Voi che sapete*” (No. 11 in *Figaro*), the text reads “**V**oi, che **s**apete che cosa è **a**mor, donne **v**edete, **s**’io l’ho nel **c**or. **Q**uello ch’io **p**rovo, vi **r**idirò, è per me **n**uovo, capir

⁴ Nico Castel. *The Libretti of Mozart's Completed Operas*, (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 1997), 2:376

nol so.....”. The bolded syllables are accents, and they are exactly placed on the down beats of the measures in which they appear. Mozart sets the first two phrases in two four-bar phrases, the second four-bar phrase repeating the previous four-bar rhythm. The basic rhythm is comprised of a quarter-note plus two eighth-notes in the first measure, two quarter-notes in the second measure, a quarter-note plus two eighth-notes in the third measure, and a half-note in the fourth measure. The passage is shown below:



As we can see in the two examples from *The Marriage of Figaro*, Mozart puts the Italian accents on the down beats, and arranges the time signatures according to these syllables. Based on the syllables, rhythms are assigned naturally. Admittedly, there are thousands of ways to set these texts, and Mozart’s rendering is only one of them, but we are sure that in Mozart’s works, two things will be ensured as much as possible: first, the Italian accents will be placed on the down beats, and second, the rhythm will follow the way the texts are spoken. Thus, the tempo marks are assigned according to the rhythms, texts, emotions and so on.

Physical movements can help to determine tempo in dance forms. For example, Harnoncourt notes that the minuet originated in folk music. When it was adopted as a court dance, it “was accompanied by a noticeable slowing of the tempo.”⁵ The minuet was originally fast, with a

⁵ Harnoncourt, 100

complex sequence of steps, and was consequently difficult for the nobility to master when it began to appear in the royal courts in the 17th century. The steps were simplified and slowed down as more of the nobility began to incorporate the minuet into their entertainments.

Harnoncourt lists the tempo changes of the minuet from 1688 to 1789 in his essay “From minuet to scherzo”. During Mozart’s lifetime (1756-1791), the tempo of the minuet, according to Harnoncourt, changed from “liltingly”⁶ in 1752, to “brisk beats”⁷ in 1766, to “elegant and refined simplicity”⁸ in 1777, and finally to “moderately fast in 3/4 time”⁹ in 1789. In Mozart’s works, the tempo of the minuet is also on the slower side. For example, Mozart’s Symphony No.39 was composed along with his last two symphonies in 1788. The third movement is a “Menuetto” and is marked “Allegretto”. According to the description “moderately fast in 3/4 time” in 1789, there is almost no reason to regard the minuet movement as fast as it might have been heard a century ago. Additionally, according to Harnoncourt, allegretto means something close to “somewhat fast”¹⁰, and this description of the minuet’s tempo accords with the historical tendency of the late eighteenth-century minuet to be on the slower side. Therefore, one must be careful regarding the speed of a minuet and restrain the tendency to take it too fast.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, *opera buffa* and *opera seria* in Italy had become more driven by the need of the singers for singable music than by the needs of the drama. In this

⁶ Harnoncourt, 101

⁷ Ibid, 101

⁸ Ibid, 101

⁹ Ibid, 101

¹⁰ Ibid, 93

circumstance, singers dominated the stage and often added arbitrary improvisations to the music. As a consequence, the importance and function of the drama was weakened. Even after the operatic reformation of Gluck, in which the drama became more important, composers still had to deal with the domination of singers in opera. In Mozart's operas, every part is balanced with every other parts, tempos and rhythm are responsive to the needs of the text and the drama, and Mozart's tempo markings reflect his control of the entire opera. The improvisations of the singers may sound attractive, but they will break the sense of continuity and balance in the opera. Harnoncourt describes this phenomenon in the following way: "while the composer wanted more emphasis on a spoken text, the singer wanted a great melodic line with which to show off his voice".¹¹ It is not difficult to understand what Mozart wants in his operas with regard to the drama-melody question. He wants both. He asks the performers to follow his writing exactly, and at the same time, the drama and words must be heard clearly by the audience. We can imagine if the singers' improvisational ideas occupied the stage and the tempos were changed because of these improvisations in *Figaro*, the audience would hear and remember only several beautiful melodies and they would know little about what was going on in the opera. Mozart's operas are delicate mechanisms, and if the audience misses important plot points, they will not be able to understand why the following incidents happen. In order to make the drama work, appropriate tempos and clear pronunciations are necessary.

The only direct information about tempos in Mozart's period is found in tempo marks. The

¹¹ Harnoncourt, 202

meanings of the words are the keys to uncover the thoughts of the composer. We know that allegro is faster than andante, but how about the difference between andante and andantino? Andante means the tempo of a walking pace. But this information alone is not enough. We still do not have a precise idea of the tempo, because we can walk as fast as 120 paces per minute or as slow as 50 paces per minute. The most important thing is to make clear whether the andante means fast or slow. Harnoncourt points out that in the eighteenth century, especially for Mozart, andante was included in the family of fast tempos.¹² Andantino, according to Harnoncourt, was slightly slower than andante in Mozart's period. However, as Harnoncourt mentions, andante slowed down during this period of time, and by the nineteenth century, it was considered as a completely slow tempo. The *Andante Cantabile* by Tchaikovsky is a good example of this slow andante. However, the function of indicating actual speed by tempo marks was increasingly replaced by the use of metronome marks. In *Turandot*, for example, we find that Puccini marks andante with a metronome mark of 60 to 72 for a quarter-note, and andantino with a metronome mark of 69 to 72 for a quarter-note. That means that andante could be slower, equal to, or faster than andantino in Puccini's time. However, the difference of andante and andantino in Mozart is essentially a difference of speed, whereas with Puccini, it refers more to color and character.

Another interesting comparison is between "molto" and "assai". Both of them mean "very", but Mozart seems to use them differently in some places. This reveals that he has different thoughts on "molto" and "assai", and they should not be the same. Harnoncourt confirms this

¹² Harnoncourt, 96

idea by stating that “‘assai’ also could and can still be translated as ‘very’, but, like the French ‘assez,’ it also meant ‘rather’ or ‘sufficiency’.¹³ Thus it was frequently used to indicate just a slight acceleration or underscoring of ‘allegro’.” This means that molto allegro is faster than allegro assai. We will continue the comparison by discussing examples in the next section.

¹³ Harnoncourt, 94

CONSISTENCY IN TEMPO OF MOZART’S MUSIC WITH TEXTS

Operatic works contain many other elements besides music, such as text, dramatic situations, and staging requirements. By reading the text, we can gain insight into the music, as we see how the composer has illustrated the actions or emotions of the characters musically. We will start to explore Mozart’s works with texts by looking at *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, which were composed in 1786 and 1787. They will be examined together, because they were composed so close together, and close to the end of the composer’s life. Thus, they are composed in similar ways and represent Mozart’s mature musical and dramatic thought.

By examining the different kinds of tempo marks in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, it is not difficult to discover that Mozart used an overwhelmingly large number of allegro-related and andante-related tempo marks.

Tempo marks	Frequency and percentage of appearance in two operas	
	The Marriage of Figaro (72 tempo marks in total)	Don Giovanni (70 tempo marks in total)
Allegro-related tempo marks	35 (48.6%)	33 (47.1%)
Andante-related tempo marks	18 (25%)	17 (24.3%)

As shown in the chart, there are 35 allegro-related tempo marks and 18 andante-related tempo marks in *The Marriage of Figaro*, and 33 allegro-related tempo marks and 17

andante-related tempo marks in *Don Giovanni*. The allegro-related tempo marks occupy almost half of the total number of tempo marks, and andante-related tempo marks are seen about 25% in both operas. The domination of these two kinds of tempo marks indicates that in Mozart's drama, allegro is the basic fast tempo, and andante is the basic slow tempo. The alternating of fast and slow pushes the drama forward. Except for adjusting the allegro and andante to make these faster or slower, the rest of the tempo marks are used to transition between fast and slow. It is crucial to understand how Mozart uses the tempo marks that make the transitions, such as *maestoso* or *larghetto*, because these show the composer's specific thoughts on musical and dramatic development and connection. The arrangement of tempo marks is like bamboo. Allegro and andante comprise the bamboo stems and the rest of the tempo marks are the bamboo joints. These "joints" should be observed closely.

Maestoso

There are only two "maestoso" marks in *The Marriage of Figaro*. The first *maestoso* appears at the beginning of "*Hai già vinta la causa*" (No. 17). There are only four measures in *maestoso* at the beginning, but they are crucial, because this moment is a turning point of the plot, as the count finds out that he is going to be trapped ("*Hai già vinta la causa! Cosa sento! In qual laccio io cadea?*" - "You've already won the case! What am I hearing! In what trap have I fallen!"¹⁴).

The second *maestoso* appears in Act III finale, as the count is inviting everyone to join the wedding celebration of Susanna and Figaro. There are only eleven measures in this section, but it

¹⁴ Castel, 2:386

is also a pivot point in the action.

These two sections have three common elements. First, both of them are recitatives with orchestral accompaniment. Second, the rhythms are dotted with sixteenth-note pickups. Lastly, both of them are announcements sung by the count. As we have seen, the second *maestoso* is an invitation to the wedding. As for the first *maestoso* section, the count here asks two questions and finds to his surprise that he is falling into a trap. However, the two statements are related in that by announcing the wedding, the count is affirming its inevitability to himself. Both statements are, in fact, said to himself.

The examination of the *maestoso* sections leads us to the following conclusion: the tempo marks in Mozart's music imply character and drama. We should not think of tempo marks and metronome marks as identical. Metronome marks show the speed of the beats in a period of time, while tempo marks reveal the character of the music as well as pace, although not with the metronome's precision. Composers in the Romantic period often put tempo marks and metronome marks together with no worry of redundancy. As conductors and interpreters, we have to consider the meaning of the tempo marks without getting sidetracked by the particular speeds indicated by metronome markings.

In *Don Giovanni*, there are three sections which use *maestoso* as their tempo mark. There are two sections in "*Ma qual mai s'offre, oh Dei*" (No. 2) and one section in Act I finale. At the beginning of No. 2, from measure 45 on, Don Ottavio asks for help in moving the dead body of Donna Anna's father.

The second section is found at measure 125 and 126 of No. 2, when Donna Anna asks Don Ottavio to avenge her father's death, and Don Ottavio, following this *maestoso* section, swears to do this. This section is accompanied by the strings in a dotted rhythm.

In the first act finale, the *maestoso* section starts from measure 360. Similar to *The Marriage of Figaro*, when the count invites everyone to the wedding celebration, Leporello and Don Giovanni here invite everyone to the party that they will host, including the newly married Zerlina and Masetto.

As mentioned before, rhythm (not speed) is one of the crucial elements of tempo marks. The *maestoso* in Act I finale is a good example of this. The rhythm played by trumpet, timpani, viola, cello and bass at measure 360 and 366 and the similar rhythm played by woodwinds and violins at measure 361 and 367 resembles closely the rhythm in the aria "*Non più andrai, farfallone amoroso*" (No.9 aria in *Figaro*), especially measure 61



Although these two sections are written differently, in fact, they are played at the same speed. In other words, there are connections in Mozart's use of this rhythm even in different works. We can find some clues in the plot lines of both operas. As mentioned above, there is an invitation for celebration in the *maestoso* of the first act finale in *Don Giovanni*. In *The Marriage of Figaro*, the aria is sung by Figaro to Cherubino, who has been dispatched by the count to join the army.

The rhythm is that of a march, reflecting Cherubino's military fate. These two sections, even though they come from two separate operas, have a common feeling of pride, honor and encouragement. Even though the tempo mark of the aria is vivace, we can identify with the *maestoso* because the rhythmic figure of the march is played at the same speed. The vivace 4/4 and *maestoso* 2/4 are equivalent in speed and made so by the different note values.

We can arrive at the following conclusion from these observations about *maestoso*. When Mozart uses *maestoso* in his opera, it usually represents announcement, invitation or encouragement, and it is frequently used for a march rhythm.

Presto

As we have discussed in the *maestoso* section, tempo marks are associated with specific kinds of action or mood, which help us better understand the operatic drama. These communicate far more to our understanding than metronome marks. Observing Mozart's usage of a certain tempo mark in several different places suggests to us that there are similarities in meaning for Mozart among these sections.

When we look at the *presto* in *The Marriage of Figaro* overture, we also need to consider the time signature. *Presto*, clarified by Mozart, is "as fast as possible".¹⁵ However, this *presto* is in 4/4, and not 2/2, as one often hears. When one sees that the pulse is in quarters rather than halves, a different speed emerges - *presto* with regard to quarter notes is a different speed than *presto*

¹⁵ Harnoncourt, 94

applied to half notes. 170 for a quarter note is twice as slow as 170 for a half. However, many performances of this overture are pulsed according to the half note, with extraordinary difficulties appearing. For example, the bassoon is faced with an extraordinary technical test - the player must keep up with the string instruments, playing exactly the same notes. When one thinks the presto in quarter-notes, however, the bassoon part becomes much more playable.

One also needs to consider the clarity of the notes. There are two spots that deserve attention. The first appears at measure 4 and 5, especially measure 5.



The short chromatic scale and half-note appoggiaturas cause the strings to easily play out of tune and fall behind the beat. Additionally, the slide that has to be used to finger the passage is difficult to make clean. There are three ways to arrange the violin and viola fingerings of the first three notes of measure 5. The first way is to press the E, D# and E by the first finger. This makes the articulation difficult, because the first finger has to slide back and forth. This may not be the best solution.



The second way is to press the E and D# with the first finger and put the second finger on the third note. The third and fourth fingers should be placed on F# and G. This may cause two

problems: the downbeat may sound unclear and the hand has to assume an unnatural shape, which can easily lead to out-of-tune playing.



The third way to arrange the fingering is to use the second finger to play the first E, and use the first finger to play the D# and the second E. This method needs preparation from the previous measure. One must use the third finger to play G and F# at the end of measure 4 so that we are able to put the second finger on E in the next measure naturally and easily.



However, with all of these solutions, the tempo choice is the most important consideration.

Thinking of the quarter-notes is crucial to accuracy and clarity. If we think of quarter-notes as the basic pulse, then the presto becomes understandable and possible from the technical viewpoint.

This applies not just to the strings, but also the bassoon as well.

The second spot to consider is located at measure 14. The three grace notes are difficult to make sound clear when the tempo is too fast. There is simply very little space in which to play the notes. If the tempo is set too fast, the clarity of these grace notes has to be sacrificed in order to make sure that the C# is played on time. Once again, we find that Mozart's presto is an

understandable tempo mark only if we consider it together with the time signature. A frequent error is made here and in many other works when an extreme tempo, such as presto, is considered without looking at the context. (As Harnoncourt writes, “in the overture to Figaro, which is clearly written in and intended to be played in presto C, but is almost always played in 2/2”)¹⁶. The context here includes the rapid passage work for the strings and bassoon, as well as the necessary pulse in quarter-notes. Tempo marks must be considered in the full context of the music in which they occur. A conductor might very well conduct this overture in two, but the underlying feeling must be in four if one wants to make it possible to be played accurately.

In "*Se vuol ballare*" (No.3 Figaro's cavatina in the first act), we find a presto section. In the action up to this point, the count has made clear that he wants to reinstate the feudal right which he had previously abolished so that he can sleep with Susanna before she and Figaro are married. In the cavatina, Figaro says that if the count would like to dance, he, Figaro, can teach him, meaning that if the count threatens Susanna, he will have to deal with Figaro. The trills written for the violins in this presto section present us with an interesting case. As Harnoncourt says on page 116, “In very fast passages (trills) can also be reduced to one simple appoggiatura.”¹⁷ Why does Mozart notate this figure as a trill? He wants to have the dissonance of the upper notes in the violin figure which foreshadows the ascending line that Figaro sings, but he chooses to write this as a trill and not a grace note. Harnoncourt's opinion that the trill can be reduced to a single note clarifies Mozart's notation. Nevertheless, whether we play an appoggiatura or an extremely

¹⁶ Harnoncourt, 98

¹⁷ Ibid, 116

short and fast trill, there is still the problem of clarity in the fast tempo. The dissonance that Mozart clearly indicates is expressive of Figaro's fury. The upper notes cause friction within each measure, pushing the music upwards as Figaro's blood boils. The presto in other words, has to be played so that this upper note can be heard, clashing against the fundamental tones in every measure. Similar to the overture, the pace of the presto must be chosen to allow us to hear every note.

Another important presto is found in the count's recitative and aria, "*Hai già vinta la causa*" (No. 17). The count has suddenly realized that he is going to fall in a trap, and as mentioned above, the opening is marked *maestoso*. The presto occurs at the precise moment that the count resolves to foil the enemy's plans. The presto, in other words, marks a moment of action and resolution.

There are two more sections in *The Marriage of Figaro* which are related to this meaning of presto as a moment of resolution. The first place is located in the recitative after "*Porgi amor*" (No. 10), when Figaro sings "la" to the melody sung in the presto in the cavatina itself. On one hand, it indicates that Figaro is simply passing by the countess and Susanna as they are talking, and trying not to overhear what they are saying. On the other hand, it implies that Figaro is still immersed in his previous emotion, that is, the emotion of foiling the count's scheme successfully (even though the count has not done anything to Susanna yet). Interestingly, it also implies that it is not a long period of time from this moment to the beginning of the Act II when Figaro sings a snippet of his cavatina after the countess' aria "*Porgi amor*". This connects Act I and Act II

musically. This connection is indispensable because although the scene is changed visually in Act II, and the audience might regard this as a new chapter psychologically, Mozart makes clear that the drama is continuing.

The last place to which we will draw our attention is the *prestissimo* in Act II finale. The time signature of 4/4 is sustained throughout the *accelerando*, which Mozart indicates with the tempo marks “*allegro assai*”, “*piu allegro*” and “*prestissimo*”. Just prior to this scene, the unannounced visit of the count has upset the plan of the countess, Susanna and Cherubino. The count doubts that Cherubino is hiding in the closet of the countess, while the countess, Susanna and later, Figaro, try to help Cherubino run away and persuade the count to believe in their retelling of what happened to Cherubino. In other words, the situation is extremely chaotic. At this point, let us ask why Mozart uses *presto* or *prestissimo* instead of *molto allegro*. Until the end of scene 11, this chaos can be regarded as a whole. However, the unexpected entrance of Marcellina, Basilio and Bartolo brings more troubles to the chaos. The tempo changes suddenly from *andante* 6/8 to *allegro assai* 4/4 from the beginning of scene 12. Interestingly, it seems that the count was almost persuaded before scene 12, but everything flies quickly out of control after scene 12, and it is reasonable that the tempo gradually accelerates and flies a bit out of control at the same time. Therefore, “*prestissimo*” in this section should be regarded as a signal to speed up the previous tempo. This conclusion immediately brings out a question: why doesn't Mozart mark *molto allegro* or *presto*? As for *molto allegro*, Harnoncourt describes *molto allegro* as “the

fastest allegro tempo, approaching presto”¹⁸, and later he confirms his thought by stating that “allegro molto” must be faster than “allegro assai”¹⁹. Admittedly, molto allegro is approaching presto, so prestissimo should be very close or identical in tempo to molto allegro. However, as the most frequently used word among Mozart’s opera tempo marks, the use of “allegro” implies a basic mood or theme, and the adding of “molto”, “vivace”, “assai”, “spiritoso”, “meno” or “piu” are adjustments to allegro to make it either faster or slower. As for Presto, we have seen above that it seems to be associated with success, confidence and resolution, but the character of the finale of the Act II is that of increasing chaos. The prestissimo is used to push the tempo faster and intensify the craziness.

In *Don Giovanni*, there are only two sections which are marked presto. The first is in Don Giovanni’s aria “*Fin ch’han dal vino*” (No. 11). At this moment, Don Giovanni is in a good mood and very excited about his plan to host a party and invite people, including Zerlina. He is ready and confident to carry out his plan successfully and to put Zerlina in his list of conquered women eventually. Similar to the “*Se vuol ballare*” (No. 3) in *Figaro*, the grace notes and trills need more attention. It is even trickier here: only the first violin has grace notes and trills in “*Se vuol ballare*”, but in Don Giovanni’s aria, flutes, oboes and first violin are all playing the quick grace notes together. These quick grace notes which appear so often in presto seem to control the tempo, and give it great character, perhaps because it requires so much efforts to make these grace notes clear in high speed. The second presto of the opera is located at the conclusion, and

¹⁸ Harmoncourt, 93

¹⁹ Ibid, 99

ends it in triumph. Here, the presto is in 2/2. Remember the difference of presto 2/2 and presto 4/4 from our discussion of the overture to *Figaro*. Technically, the speed of the notes at the end of *Don Giovanni* should be twice as fast as in *The Marriage of Figaro* overture.

In conclusion, although there may be exceptions, our analysis of Mozart's use of presto seems to indicate that one must contextualize the presto within the time signature and the figuration of the music in order to completely understand the speed of the music

Allegro

As the most frequently used tempo mark, allegro-related tempos set up the basic flow of Mozart's works, especially his operatic works. In *Don Giovanni*, there are several combinations of allegro-related tempos and the time signature 6/8, which are related to feasting or seduction. This combination appears six times in this opera. The first allegro 6/8 occurs in the first act chorus "*Giovinette che fate all' amore*" (No. 5). This is the first time that Zerlina and Masetto sing during their wedding. Both of them have their own solo sections within the chorus. In their singing, they advise the young people not to waste time by not taking relationships seriously.

The visit of Don Giovanni and Leporello brings uncertainty to the joyful situation. Giovanni tries to tempt Zerlina with his wealth in the duet "*Là ci darem la mano*" (No. 7). Zerlina refuses hesitantly, but finally accepts Giovanni at the second allegro 6/8 when they both sing "*Andiam, andiam, mio bene, a ristorar le pene d'un innocente amor!*" (Let us go, let us go, my beloved, to

soothe the pangs of an innocent love).²⁰ The relationship between the two sections of the duet is interesting. Mozart goes from an andante 2/4 to an allegro 6/8. Both of these tempi are in two. The tempo transformation demonstrates a procedure from seduction to its success, in other words, from an individual effort from Giovanni to a reciprocal reaction from Zerlina, and from two eighth-notes per pulse in the andante seduction to three eighth-notes per pulse in the allegro resolution. Although allegro is faster than andante, this allegro could actually be taken at nearly the same pulse as the andante, simply because there are more notes in 6/8 than 2/4. If the pulse is kept in two, the addition of the eighth-note in this 6/8 creates the feeling of faster speed.

The next combination of an allegro tempo with a time signature 6/8 is found in Zerlina's aria "*Batti, batti*" (No. 12). Like the allegro 6/8 of "*Là ci darem la mano*" (No. 7), this allegretto 6/8 should be considered in relation to the andante grazioso 2/4 that precedes it. Obviously, andante grazioso and allegretto are slower than andante and allegro, but the structures of the two pieces are nearly identical. In her aria, Zerlina tries to comfort Masetto, who she abandoned during their wedding, humiliating him. Indeed, Zerlina seems to be copying Don Giovanni's method of seduction as she tries to persuade Masetto that she loves him. Don Giovanni is using his cavalier status and wealth to seduce Zerlina, while Zerlina is using her pity or weakness to persuade Masetto. Zerlina is seduced and Masetto is persuaded, but their reactions are different. Zerlina joins Don Giovanni's singing in allegro 6/8, which demonstrates that she has fallen into passion. But Masetto does not join Zerlina in her aria, because he is still angry and resentful. These

²⁰ Castel, 1:291

similarities make us think of the relations between tempos carefully: the andante 2/4 and allegro 6/8 of the duet should be a reference for the andante grazioso 2/4 and allegretto 6/8 of the aria. The slower tempos of the aria may have to do with the lack of success that Zerlina has in persuading Masetto. However, what becomes clear when we compare these two pieces is how much similarity in drama and structure can help us in determining tempo and the meaning of the tempo marks.

The next combination of allegro and 6/8 is found in the last scene of the Act I finale, where Don Giovanni is hosting the feast for the peasants in his ballroom, including Zerlina and Masetto. Don Giovanni's purpose for hosting this feast is to separate Masetto and Zerlina so that he can have the chance to stay with Zerlina without being disturbed by Masetto. Don Giovanni is using his enormous power, both of personal magnetism and wealth, in his pursuit of Zerlina, and by staging this pursuit in the midst of public feast, he can hide his seductive motive. However, Don Giovanni is not able to separate the new couple and approach Zerlina directly as he did previously, because of Donna Elvira's sudden entrance. Again, the combination of allegro and 6/8 brings us into the worlds of enjoyment (the feast of the wedding), as well as romance and seduction.

Inspired by the relationship between the two andante-allegro combinations of the first act (*La ci darem la mano* and *Batti batti*), the next allegretto 6/8 in Don Giovanni's Act II canzonetta (*Deh vieni*) can be studied in combination with the andantino 6/8 of the Act II trio (*Ah taci, ingiusto core*), which just precedes it. There is a delicate structural design in this andantino. At

the beginning, Donna Elvira is singing “Ah taci, ingiusto core! Non palpitarmi in seno! È un empio, è un traditore, è colpa aver pietà.” (Ah, be silent, unfair heart, do not throb in my breast; he’s an impious man, a traitor, it’s sin to feel pity).²¹ We can tell from the text that Donna Elvira’s desire for revenge is diminishing, and that a sense of love and forgiveness is arising in her heart. Don Giovanni seizes this opportunity to ask her for mercy and forgiveness, and promptly tries to seduce her. The tempo is in andantino 6/8 throughout, and we can take this to mean that Don Giovanni is trying to match Donna Elvira’s pulse. In the aria which follows *Deh vieni*, Don Giovanni tries to seduce Donna Elvira’s maid, and the tempo mark is allegretto 6/8.

Number of Combinations	Tempo marks	Time signatures	Sections	Dramas
1	Andante	2/4	"Là ci darem la mano" (No.7 Duet)	Zerlina refuses Don Giovanni's seduction with hesitation
	Allegro	6/8	"Andiam, andiam, mio bene"	Don Giovanni's seduction is successful
2	andante grazioso	2/4	"Batti, batti, o bel Masetto" (No.12 aria)	Zerlina tries to comfort Masetto’s anger
	Allegretto	6/8	"Pace, pace, o vita mia"	With angry and resentful, Masetto forgives Zerlina

²¹ Castel, 1:331

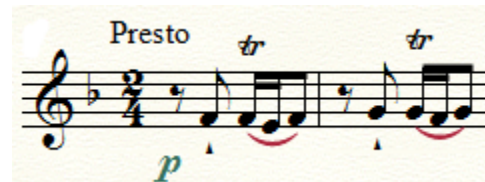
3	Andantino	6/8	"Ah taci, ingiusto core"(No.15 Trio)	Don Giovanni puts Donna Elvira off
	Allegretto	6/8	"Deh vieni alla finestra"(No.16 Canzonetta)	Don Giovanni seduces the maid

Allegro assai and molto allegro

A good example for the comparison of molto allegro and allegro assai is found in the section of *Don Giovanni* between the Act II sextet "*Mille torbidi pensieri*" (No. 19, page 328) and Leporello's aria "*Ah pieta, signori miei*" (No. 20). The first is marked molto allegro, and the second allegro assai, and their location close to each other in the score allows us to see the difference between the two tempo marks. The molto allegro forms the second half of the sextet. In the andante section which precedes it, Leporello disguises himself as Don Giovanni. Donna Elvira tries to protect this fake "Don Giovanni", while the rest want to execute him for his crimes. The molto allegro section comes just as Leporello reveals his true identity. It illustrates the confusion in which they are all dropped. They express their anger and surprise by singing "*Mille torbidi pensieri mi s'aggiran per la testa*" together (A thousand troubled thoughts are whirling through my head).²² After a short recitative, Leporello begs for mercy in his aria "*Ah pieta, signori miei*" (No. 20), which is marked allegro assai. The mood of anger and surprise in the sextet transforms into the fear of Leporello's aria. Logically, the anger and surprise lead to an

²² Castel, 1:350

urge for revenge, while fear leads to an attempt to calm people down. They are opposites of each other to some extent. But this is not why the tempos should be compared. The score provides more convincing evidence. There are at least three spots that imply an urgent tempo in the molto allegro section. The first place is in measures 131 and 132, where thirty-second notes descending scales are played by violins. The scales urge the music to the second beat. The second place is in the next two measures. The rhythm played by first and second violins resembles the presto section in “*Se vuol ballare*” of *The Marriage of Figaro*, which gives this rhythm a character of speed and movement.



Don Giovanni

vs

The Marriage of Figaro

The third place is located at measure 153 and 155. The thirty-second notes here function similarly to the thirty-second notes in measures 131 and 132, but these thirty-second notes, placed as they are on the down beat, also give a sense of reinforced accent, which rushes the notes to the next beat.

These three places give the music a sense of pushing forward. However, in Leporello’s aria, things change. The aria is written with the tempo mark of allegro assai. This tempo is still on the fast side, but has a sense of holding back at the same time. For example, at the beginning of the aria, the second beat half notes in measures 1 and 3 hold back the tempo, while the strong

downbeat is avoided. More importantly, the dynamic of the half-note is forte piano, which is a reinforcement of holding back. One may say this kind of rhythm also appears at measure 184 in the sextet. However, the forte piano of the half-note in the aria is a different dynamic than the forte of the half-note in the sextet. The forte piano conveys a sense of relaxing the sound and gives a sense in this way of ambiguity. The forte of the sextet gives no sense of relaxation or ambiguity. An urgency comes through at the beginning of molto allegro of the sextet, while the avoidance of a strong downbeat and the forte piano implies a different and more tentative feeling at the beginning of the aria.

We find that molto allegro is definitely faster than allegro assai in Mozart's tempo system, but more importantly, molto allegro indicates an onrushing of music, while allegro assai has the possibility of more ambiguous expression.

Andante

As we have discussed before, the actual speed that andante indicated was slowing down in Mozart's time. According to Harnoncourt, andante is even in Mozart's time to be regarded as fast tempo. Although andante is slower than allegro, it is still a faster tempo than in our time we consider it.²³ Nevertheless, andante is the basic slower tempo. Adagio or larghetto, which one might regard as slower, are really special tempo marks appearing in particular spots and not general use. Andante and the andante-related tempos balance out the fiery enthusiasm that is created by quickly running notes. In *The Marriage of Figaro*, andante undertakes different kinds

²³ Harnoncourt, 96

of roles in emotional expression, including love, relaxation, carefulness, questioning, lying, sorrow, joy, gloom, apology, etc. There will be a wide range of emotions when pieces are marked andante. In this opera, there are 18 andante-related tempo marks. Almost all of them are marked “andante”, except for one, which is marked “molto andante”.

Because andante is actually a fast tempo, according to Harnoncourt, molto andante is actually faster than andante, rather than slower as we might expect. In fact, Harnoncourt believe molto andante means to play “with great urgency”²⁴. The tempo mark occurs in Act II finale, when the count thinks Cherubino is hiding in the closet of the countess’ room. However, when the door is opened, both the count and the countess are surprised to find that Susanna, and not Cherubino, is in the closet. This amusing section is written with the tempo mark molto andante. Eight measures before the molto andante, at the beginning of scene 9 of the finale, the tempo is allegro, but Mozart slows down the music by using rests. In the procedure of slowing down, the syncopation played by oboes, clarinets and horns at measures 119 and 120 acts in a similar role as the brake of a car, creating a sense of friction. At the same time, the first violin switches from repeating sixteenth-notes to quarter-notes with two sixteenth-notes pickups, which anticipates the pulse-changing. The molto andante continues the sense of ritardando naturally. Even by only looking at the score, we can imagine how surprised the count is, standing there with his mouth open. The descending scales played by the strings from measures 122 to 125 enhance the sense of ritardando. It needs to be emphasized that Mozart does not mark ritard in these eight measures

²⁴ Harnoncourt, 92

and the actual tempo should be kept until the *molto andante*, but there is a sense of slowing down which implies that the tempo of *molto andante* is a little bit but not too much slower than *allegro*. The half rests with fermata at the end of measure 125 give the conductor a chance to extend the space of the measure and get ready for the new tempo. Hearing *molto andante* as slow tempo might cause us to relate the 3/8 to the 4/4 of the *allegro* in the following way: the half-note of the *allegro* equals the eighth-note of the *molto andante*. However, Harnoncourt himself holds true to his belief of the speed indicated by *molto andante* and conducts this section by making the quarter-note in the *allegro* equal to the eighth-note of the *andante*.

Different time signatures shape the notes in *andante* into various pulses. The three main time signatures are 4/4 (six times), 2/4 (four times) and 6/8 (four times) in these *andante* sections. We can find no matter what emotions the sections express, there are two main characteristics among these *andantes*: First, they are usually about slightly negative emotions, such as sorrow, gloom and nostalgia. Second, if there are positive emotions, they are usually relaxed.

In *Don Giovanni*, the usage of *andante* is different from *The Marriage of Figaro*. The tempos are certainly the same when they are marked *andante* in the two operas, but the high percentage of the time signature 2/2 occurring with *andante*-related tempo marks in *Don Giovanni* draws our attention. There are 16 *andante*-related tempo marks in total in *Don Giovanni*, and eight of them are paired with 2/2. We will analyze them one by one to confirm the pattern, because we have enough confidence to suppose that the *andante*-related 2/2, to state it simply, is highly associated with Don Giovanni's crime, as well as the desire for revenge in the

other characters.

The first andante-related 2/2 occurs at the very beginning of this opera in the overture. We can skip this one for now, because it would give us a chance to understand andante-related 2/2 better as a whole if we do our research on the body of this opera and then come back to the music without texts at the very beginning. The second andante-related 2/2 is in the introduction of the Act I, where the Commendatore is mortally wounded by Don Giovanni. The accented triplets played by first violin imitate the rhythm of heart beats and imply the slow dying of the Commendatore.

The No. 9 Quartet is the third andante-related 2/2, and is sung by Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Don Ottavio and Don Giovanni. Before this quartet, Donna Anna does not recognize that Don Giovanni is the murderer of her father, and she asks Don Giovanni for help. Don Giovanni realizes that he is not recognized and is about to promise justice for Donna Anna. In the No. 9 Quartet, it is Donna Elvira who tells Donna Anna and Don Ottavio in front of Don Giovanni that he is not trustworthy. Don Giovanni tries to persuade Donna Anna and Don Ottavio that Donna Elvira has lost her mind. So, in the quartet, Don Giovanni is trying to cover up his crime, while Donna Elvira is accusing him of lying. At the same time, Donna Anna and Don Ottavio are expressing their confusion. Donna Anna recalls after the quartet that Don Giovanni is the murderer. Don Ottavio asks Donna Anna what has happened to her, and she starts to recover her memory. The fourth andante 2/2 comes in No. 10, when Donna Anna is asking Don Ottavio for revenge after speaking out her horrible memory. There are sextuplets recurrent in the violin and

viola parts of this section, which render a sense of tension, pain and excitement. The combination of these sextuplets and the thirty-second grace notes causes us to think the clarity of the sound.

The remaining four andante-related 2/2s are in Act II. The fifth one is in “*Metà di voi qua vadano*” (No. 17). Obviously, the andante con moto, which is marked here, is a little faster than andante. This is an aria for Don Giovanni. He disguises himself as his servant Leporello, and misleads the angry crowd to identify Leporello as Don Giovanni. Later, he disperses Masetto’s friends on purpose so that he can beat Masetto and slip away easily in the recitative that comes after the aria.

The sixth andante-related 2/2 is in the sextet “*Sola sola in buio loco*” (No. 19). All of the main characters sing together except Don Giovanni, because Donna Anna, Zerlina, Donna Elvira, Don Ottavio and Masetto think that the person who is standing in front of them is Don Giovanni. However, it is Leporello who is still impersonating his master. They threaten to kill Leporello, but he escapes after showing his real identity.

After Leporello’s escape, we find the seventh andante-related 2/2 in Don Ottavio’s aria “*Il mio tesoro intanto*” (No. 21). In this aria, Don Ottavio confirms that Don Giovanni is the murderer of Donna Anna’s father. His aria expresses both his love for Donna Anna and his resolution to avenge her father’s murder. The tempo mark is andante grazioso. The Italian word grazioso means graceful, which contains a sense of sweetness. According to Harnoncourt, andante grazioso is “gracefully walking-could be with a slight spring” and it is faster than

andante²⁵.

The last andante-related 2/2 is found in scene 15 of the Act II, which is the second scene from the end of the opera, the famous scene of Don Giovanni being dragged to Hell. The music recalls the music of the andante 2/2 in the overture. The statue accepts Don Giovanni's invitation and comes for "dinner". The first four measures create a sense of solemnity and announce the coming of the statue and the punishment for Don Giovanni. The dotted rhythm played by the strings in the next six measures imitates the heavy and stiff steps of the statue. Whenever the statue sings, it is with a 2/2 pulse, which contrasts to the music of Don Giovanni and Leporello. For example, from measure 487 to 501, the strings keep the dotted rhythm and the winds sustain the whole-notes and half-notes most of the time. In Don Giovanni and Leporello's section, however, the down beats seem to be avoided on purpose in some parts. For example, the long syncopations in the first violin from measure 443 to 448 and the off-beat fortes from measure 447 to 448 accompany Don Giovanni's singing. The off-beat sixteenth notes in the first and second violins from measure 449 to 450 accompany Leporello's singing. These sections create a sense of unsteadiness, which implies that Don Giovanni is restless psychologically while he is pretending to be calm at the same time.

To summarize, we can say that in Mozart's mind, the andante-related 2/2 is associated with Don Giovanni's crimes, as well as the desire for revenge in the other characters. Even though Don Giovanni is not in every scene, the consequences of his actions affect everyone and are felt

²⁵ Harnoncourt, 92

throughout the score. The sixth andante-related 2/2 is an example, when all the main characters with the exception of Don Giovanni, are singing. The other characters think that Don Giovanni has been caught, but it turns out to be Leporello in his master's clothes, because Don Giovanni's scheme has been successful. Revenge motivates a lot of the music sung by the other characters. This music is found in the first, fourth, seventh and eighth andante-related 2/2. As far as the speed of notes is concerned, there are no differences between any of the andante 2/2s, except for andante con moto 2/2 and andante grazioso 2/2. Additionally, the tempo of andante 2/2 has been set up at the very beginning of the *Don Giovanni* overture. It is, and has to be the reference for all the other andante 2/2s, because this music illustrates the theme of this opera, which is the uncovering of Don Giovanni's crimes and bringing him to justice. One who has never heard this opera before would realize the meaning of the music at the beginning of the second act finale, when Don Giovanni will be brought to justice, when they hear the powerful andante 2/2 music of the overture repeated. In a sense, it takes the entire length of the opera to illustrate this meaning, and when at the finale, we realize what is happening, the effect is overwhelming.

Larghetto

Largo means "wide" or "broad" in Italian, and is slower than adagio. Larghetto is a little bit faster than largo. Mozart does not use larghetto frequently, and it only appears five times in total in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*. In *The Marriage of Figaro*, the first larghetto is marked in the countess' aria "*Porgi, amor, qualche ristoro*" (No.10), which is the beginning of the Act II. The countess expresses her disappointment in the count's infidelity. The contrast of

the sadness of the text and the brightness of the E-flat major tonality leads us to ask ourselves, is the countess completely sad? The answer is “no”. In the text, the countess sings is “mi rendi il mio tesoro” - “give me back my treasure.”²⁶ Thus, we can understand that although the countess is disappointed in the count’s infidelity, she still has the hope that he will apologize and return to her.

Interestingly, the second larghetto, which is in Act IV finale, is also in E-flat major. There are only twelve measures in this section. If one is only looking at the text, it is difficult to understand what is going on. Figaro sings “everything is tranquil and quiet... As the century’s new Vulcan, I will catch her (he means Susanna) in my net with her handsome Mars.”²⁷ To comprehend the content better, we have to check what happens before and after in the score. Before this section, the countess and Susanna are disguised as each other, as part of their plan to catch the count and avoid the sexual threat that he represents. The count and Figaro assume that the “Susanna” they see is the real Susanna. The count attempts to seduce this “Susanna” and Figaro becomes enraged. The count sings with “Susanna”: “Entriam, mia bella Venere, andiamoci a celar.”- “Let’s go inside, my lovely Venus, let’s go hide.”²⁸ Here, the count calls “Susanna” Venus. Therefore, Figaro cites the story of Venus, Mars and Vulcan, in which Venus betrays her husband Vulcan and falls in love with Mars. The consequence is that Vulcan catches Venus and Mars in his marriage bed. That is why Figaro sings “As the century’s new Vulcan, I

²⁶ Castel, 2:324

²⁷ Ibid, 2:439

²⁸ Ibid, 2:438

will catch her in my net with her handsome Mars.”²⁹ However, there is a difference between the myth and the situation of Figaro, which is worthy to talk about: Venus was “given” by Jupiter to Vulcan as a promise. There is no trust, understanding and love between Venus and Vulcan. But, according to the setting of the drama in this opera, Figaro and Susanna love, understand and trust each other. This is shown later when Figaro recognizes Susanna, who is now singing in her own voice, and is not trying to imitate the countess. At the same time, it is ironic that the count is not able to recognize the voice of the countess. The key arrangement also helps us to understand this scene. When the tempo turns from *larghetto* to *allegro di molto*, it still remains in E-flat major. That means the basic mood does not change. The love, understanding and trust between Figaro and Susanna cause a contradiction. The contradiction is that what Figaro sees (Susanna with the count) challenges what he knows (Susanna loves him). To some extent, we can conclude that in this *larghetto* section, there is sadness mixed with belief, love and trust.

In *Don Giovanni*, there are three sections that are marked *larghetto*. The first section is introduced by a short *Risolto* at the beginning of the “*Recitativo - accompagnato*” (No. 23). This leads into the rondo, which is also marked *larghetto*. This takes place in the second act, scene 12, when Don Ottavio asks Donna Anna to marry him. However, it is not an appropriate time for Donna Anna to get married, because her father has just been murdered. In this second *larghetto* section, Donna Anna is expressing her love to Don Ottavio and trying to clarify Don Ottavio’s misunderstanding of her love. As far as the drama is concerned, it is reasonable that

²⁹ Castel, 2:439

Donna Anna refuses the marriage proposal from Don Ottavio when she loves him deeply, because the death of her father and her desire for revenge make the wedding unrealistic at this time. We can imagine that Donna Anna is singing with a mixture of great pain and love. The Rondo section remains in a major key, which creates a similar brightness to the larghetto section in *The Marriage of Figaro*, which we have discussed previously.

The third larghetto is placed right before the ending presto of the entire opera. It is in G major and ends with an A major chord, which is the dominant of the D major of the presto section. Unlike the previous larghetto in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, this larghetto is in 2/2. Although a conductor may vary the beating to make the tempo accurate, the time signature 2/2 indicates a pulse in two instead of in four. The pulse is also confirmed by the notes in the cello and bass parts, where the quarter notes and half notes are placed mostly on the first and second beats. Despite the differences in time signature, there is a common rhythm found in all of the larghetto sections in *Don Giovanni*: an eighth note plus four thirty-second notes.



Even though the time signatures of the three sections are both 2/4 and 2/2, this rhythmic figure indicates to us that the speed of these notes has to be similar. More attention should be given to the thirty-second notes, because these notes indicate the basic subdivisions in these sections. In order for the audience to hear the thirty-seconds clearly, the tempo of the larghetto in the finale should not be too fast even it is in 2/2. The consideration is the same as we found in the

eighth-notes in *The Marriage of Figaro* overture, which is marked presto 4/4. Both of these demand clarity, and this leads to the same conclusions - Larghetto 2/2 should not be too fast even if it is marked in “2/2” and presto 4/4 should not be too fast even it is “presto”.

After researching the “larghetos” in Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, it is clearer to us what he wants to present when he uses larghetto in his operas. Usually, Mozart marks larghetto for the character to express his or her sincere love intertwined with another emotion, such as sadness or the pain of misunderstanding. No matter what kind of mental situation the character is experiencing, love is always the main theme in the larghetto sections. We may simplify the description of larghetto to “love with pain”.

Adagio

Adagio is not frequently used in *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. It only appears three times in both operas. The only adagio in *The Marriage of Figaro* is near the end of Cherubino’s aria “*Non so più*” (No. 6), and comprises only four measures, where Cherubino is singing “E se non ho chi m’oda” (And if no one is near to hear me).³⁰ We have to research the context to uncover the reason why Mozart inserts a four-measure adagio in this aria. In the text of “*Non so più*”, Cherubino sings “...Parlo d'amor vegliando, parlo d'amor sognando...Parlo d'amor vegliando. E se non ho chi m'oda, parlo d'amor con me.” (...I speak of love when I'm awake, I speak of love when I'm dreaming...I speak of love when I'm awake. And if no one is

³⁰ Castel, 2:304

near to hear me, I speak of love to myself).³¹ Each sentence starts with “I speak of love”. The sentence fragment “E se non ho chi m’oda” intensifies Cherubino’s need to express his love: if no one is there, he will still speak of love. Mozart harmonizes the music of the adagio with melancholic color, using the chords of D diminished triad, B diminished seventh and C minor. From the chords he uses, we are able to understand that from Mozart’s point of view, “E se non ho chi m’oda” does not only mean that the people are not around Cherubino physically, but that Cherubino feels lonely psychologically. At the Tempo I, which follows the adagio, the music goes back to E-flat major. Thus, we can conclude that Mozart wants to create a contrast in tempos and harmonies, and the adagio does this with the use of these diminished and minor chords.

In *Don Giovanni*, the first adagio is in the duet of Donna Anna and Don Ottavio “*Fuggi, crudele, fuggi!*” (No. 2). There are only three measures marked adagio, during which Don Ottavio sings “Lo giuro agl’occhi tuoi, lo giuro al nostro amor!” (I swear it by your eyes, I swear it by our love!).³² We can connect this adagio to what we said about these measures when we discussed *maestoso* previously.

³¹ Castel, 2:303-304

³² *Ibid*, 1:269

The image shows a musical score for Don Giovanni, measures 127-132. The score is in 2/2 time and features a tempo change from Maestoso to Adagio in tempo. The vocal line (D.O.) includes the lyrics: "Lo giu-ro... lo giu-ro... lo giu-ro agl'oc-chi tuo-i, lo giu-ro al no-stro a-". The instrumental parts include Violins I and II, Viola, Double Bass, and Double Bass.

These six measures, viewed together, slow the pace until the fermata of the last chord. Don Ottavio sings “Lo giuro...lo giuro...” in maestoso with a sense of announcement, and the following adagio expresses an atmosphere of sincerity and honesty.

The second adagio in *Don Giovanni* is much longer than the previous one. It is found in the first act finale, when Donna Anna, Donna Elvira and Don Ottavio disguise themselves with masks and are invited to Don Giovanni’s party. Donna Anna and Don Ottavio sing “Protegga il giusto cielo il zelo del mio cor” (May righteous heaven protect the zeal of my heart), and Donna Elvira sings “Vendichi il giusto cielo il mio tradito amore!” (May righteous heaven avenge my betrayed love).³³

The time signatures in these three adagio sections are marked 2/2. This should remind us of the adagio 2/2 at the beginning of Mozart’s Symphony No. 39, which contains a lot of thirty-second notes. Conductors and players must control the tempo to ensure the clarity of these

³³ Castel, 1:318

thirty-second notes. Additionally, through the analysis above, we have found that adagio, or at least adagio 2/2 contains a mixture of solemn, sincere and melancholic characteristics, and it may be connected to a character wishing or swearing something.

A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF TEMPO IN MOZART'S LAST THREE SYMPHONIES ACCORDING TO HARNONCOURT

From Harnoncourt's perspective, the last three symphonies of Mozart, No. 39 in E-flat major, 40 in G minor and 41, the "Jupiter", in C major, "comprise an intimately linked cycle."³⁴ He observes that throughout its four movements, Symphony No. 40 is slowing down metrically and Symphony No. 41 reverses this process, and accelerates through the four movements.

Harnoncourt justifies this unusual opinion in the following way, "the G Minor Symphony has a retarding effect as concerns its tempo, i.e. each movement is metrically somewhat slower than the previous one. In the 'Jupiter' Symphony which concludes the cycle, the reverse is true: here each movement is somewhat faster than the previous one, a composed accelerando to the finale, as it were. The quarter-note in the first movement, the eighth-note in the second movement, the quarter-note in the third movement and the half-note in the fourth movement are all somewhat faster, respectively."³⁵

The only movements within the three symphonies that share the same tempo mark are the third movements, the minuets: these are all marked *allegretto*. These movements exist in the symphonic form at the crossroads of both the *ritard* and *accelerando* of which Harnoncourt speaks. However, minuet movements of the symphonies before Symphony No. 39 are only titled "*Menuetto*". It is a question why Mozart marked *allegretto* only in the minuets of his last three

³⁴ Harnoncourt, 95

³⁵ *Ibid*, 95

symphonies, and provided no tempo marks for the earlier ones. Harnoncourt says about the minuet form in Mozart's period, "Nothing is prescribed, yet every good Viennese musician understands and feels precisely how fast, with what swing, with what kinds of emphasis he has to play, but he also knows where a certain style calls for deviations from the beat."³⁶ According to this statement, composers at that time did not have to characterize the tempo for a minuet. However, Mozart felt the need to mark his last three symphonic minuets *allegretto* because, according to Harnoncourt, "the very fast minuet was never totally forgotten over the course of the 18th century: at the same time that the minuet was slowing down."³⁷ Harnoncourt also points out the direct reason why the tempo was slowing down because Louis XIV "ordered the minuets to be played much more slowly (and therefore also composed differently!), and so the new, slower tempo soon became fashionable."³⁸ His idea about minuet tempo tells us that the composers of that time had to clarify how fast he/she wanted it played. The minuet tempo was changing under the influence of the royal court and composers could not take it for granted any longer that musicians would know what the correct tempo was. It seems that Mozart was following the new slower minuet tempo that Harnoncourt references. *Allegretto* indicates a slower speed than his earlier symphonic minuets, such as those in Symphonies No. 25, 29, 31 and 35, and Mozart needs to mark these minuets *allegretto* precisely because musicians might have played these at the older faster tempo. A good reference for the actual speed that Mozart

³⁶ Harnoncourt, 100

³⁷ *Ibid*, 102

³⁸ *Ibid*, 102

wants for his last three symphonies is found in *The Marriage of Figaro*. *Figaro* was written in 1786 and the last three symphonies are in 1788. The minuet tempos in the opera and symphonies would be very likely similar. The minuet in the opera is “*Se vuol ballare, signor contino*” (No. 3 Cavatina). It is not specified as a minuet in the opera, but as we have seen above, it has the exact character of minuet, and provides strong evidence that the allegretto 3/4 at this time should not be too fast, because for one thing, it needs to contrast to the concluding presto 2/4.

Let us turn now to other interesting aspects of the tempo marks and time signatures in the last three symphonies. The slow introduction to Symphony No. 39 is written in adagio 2/2, and this is the slowest tempo in the last three symphonies. To understand this tempo, we clearly need to refer to the discussion above of the adagio 2/2 in *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. The speed will be very similar to the adagio moment in the Donna Anna and Don Ottavio duet in the second act of *Don Giovanni*. One even finds here the dotted rhythm of the symphony in the words of Don Ottavio.

Allegro-related 3/4s are not frequently used in these two operas, and in fact, apart from the allegretto 3/4 in the minuets of the last three symphonies, an allegro in 3/4 only appears once in these works, in the first movement of Symphony No. 39. We observe that except for allegretto 3/4, any other allegro-related 3/4 in the two operas appear when there are quarrels or debates. We can find several examples: the allegro spiritoso 3/4 in *The Marriage of Figaro* “*Susanna, or via sortite*” (No. 13 trio), the allegro 3/4 in *Don Giovanni* “*Ah fuggi il traditor*” (No. 8 aria), allegro assai 3/4 in *Don Giovanni* “*Eh via buffone*” (No. 14 duet), allegro assai 3/4 in *Don Giovanni*

“*L’ultima prova*” (scene 14 of the Act II), and the allegro assai 3/4 in the last scene of *Don Giovanni*. The best tempo reference for the first movement of Symphony No. 39 is perhaps “*Ah fuggi il traditor*”, because, even though the character of the two pieces is somewhat different, their tempo marks are exactly the same.

A good reference for the second movement of Symphony No. 39 is Cherubino’s aria “*Voi che sapete*” from *The Marriage of Figaro*. The aria is in andante 2/4 and gives us the basic andante pulse, which allows the sixteenth-note pizzicatos in the violins to be played without being rushed. The second movement of Symphony No. 39 is marked andante con moto 2/4, thus it is a little faster than the aria. However, we can find the tempo of the symphony by first thinking of the aria.

With regard to allegro tempos in duple pulse, we can look at several movements in the last three symphonies. According to Harnoncourt, Symphony No. 40 was originally marked allegro assai 2/2 in both the first and last movement. Later, however, Mozart changed the tempo mark of the first movement to molto allegro 2/2³⁹. This is one of the cases that demonstrate that molto allegro is different from allegro assai in Mozart’s tempo system. Harnoncourt describes molto allegro as “the fastest allegro tempo, approaching presto” in Mozart’s usage.⁴⁰ We are not able to find any sections that are marked molto allegro in *The Marriage of Figaro*. In *Don Giovanni*, there are four spots marked molto allegro and three of them are in 2/2. We have discussed

³⁹ Harnoncourt, 94

⁴⁰ Ibid, 93

previously the tempo of molto allegro 2/2 in “*Mille torbidi pensieri*” (No. 19 Sextet), so this could be a reference for the first movement of Symphony No. 40. Additionally, the tempo might be conceived as slightly slower than the presto 2/2 at the end of *Don Giovanni*, because molto allegro is “approaching presto”.⁴¹

The last tempo mark that has to be discussed is allegro vivace 4/4 in the first movement of Symphony No. 41. Harnoncourt describes allegro vivace 4/4 as “lively, fast”, and he continues to state that “the liveliness refers to the figures in small note values, which should not be played too quickly, so that they may be enlivened in detail.”⁴² When seeing this tempo mark, musicians should pay more attention to the liveliness of these small notes and make sure they are clearly played. A good reference for the first movement of Symphony No. 41 is in the second act finale of *Don Giovanni*, which is also marked allegro vivace 4/4. The special concern in this finale is the clarity of these sixteenth- and even thirty-second notes. Similarly, in the first movement of the symphony, the main priority is the clarity and liveliness of the sixteenth- and thirty-second notes.

⁴¹ Harnoncourt, 93

⁴² Ibid, 93

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, we have looked at Mozart’s tempo systems by observing his *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and the last three symphonies through the perspective of Nikolaus Harnoncourt. Different tempos offer different sizes of space for each measure. If we regard the size of space for each measure as a cake, the values of the notes show us how to separate this cake. As a composer, Mozart is absolutely focused on the tempo, because the tempo allows the proper space for each note, creates the character of the music, and eventually influences the sound of the music significantly. The concept of sound does not merely mean the sound itself. It also includes clarity, tone color, quality, mood, phrasing, articulations, etc. Thus, the importance of tempo should never be underestimated in Mozart’s compositions. We also observe that Mozart uses specific tempo marks in certain situations in his operas. In the chart below, I have attempted to summarize these observations.

General tempo marks	Tempo marks + time signatures	Examples	Meanings
Presto	Presto 4/4	The Marriage of Figaro overture	Confidence of success or resolution
	Presto 2/4	The Marriage of Figaro: "Se vuol ballare, signor contino" (page 41)	
	Presto 2/4	Don Giovanni: "Fin ch'han dal vino" (page 155)	

Allegro	Allegro 6/8	Don Giovanni: No. 5 Choral “Giovinette che fate all’ amore” (page 91)	Feast, seduction or implication of sex
	Allegro 6/8	Don Giovanni: “Andiam, andiam, mio bene, a ristorar le pene d'un innocente amor!” (page 114)	
	Allegretto 6/8	Don Giovanni: No. 12 Zerlina’s aria “Pace, pace, o vita mia” (page 170)	
	Allegro-related 3/4	Don Giovanni “Ah fuggi il traditor” (page 118)	Quarrel, debate or happiness
	Allegretto 3/4	The Marriage of Figaro “Se vuol ballare, signor contino” (page 41)	Minuet
Andante	Molto Andante 3/8	The Marriage of Figaro: "signore, cos' è quel stupore?" (page 174)	Amusing moment
	Andante	The Marriage of Figaro	First, slightly negative emotion. Second, if positive emotion, then relax.
	andante con moto 2/2	Don Giovanni: No. 17 Aria “Metà di voi qua vadano” (page 290)	Don Giovanni’s crime, as well as the desire for revenge in the other characters
Maestoso	N/A	The Marriage of Figaro: “Hai gia vinta la causa! Cosa sento! In qual laccio io cadea?” (page	Announcement, invitation or encouragement

		258)	
		Don Giovanni: "Ma qual mai s'offre, oh Dei" (page 50 and 55)	
Larghetto	N/A	The Marriage of Figaro: "Tutto e tranquillo è placido" (page 396)	Love with pain
		Don Giovanni: "Or che tutti, o mio tesoro" (page 466)	
Adagio	Adagio 2/2	The Marriage of Figaro: "Non so più" (page 75)	A mixture of solemn, sincere or melancholic (may happen when the characters are making a wish or swear)
		Don Giovanni: "Fuggi, crudele, fuggi!" (page 55)	

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