



NEWSLETTER OF THE

Mozart Society of America

Klorman, Edward. *Mozart's Music of Friends: Social Interplay in the Chamber Works*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Imagine yourself as the violinist in a trio of musical friends who have arranged to sight-read some unfamiliar pieces. At a certain point, you find yourself (that is, your violin persona) descending toward a hard-won cadence. But just as you reach that goal, you sense a subversive move by the cello: instead

of leaping to the tonic note as you had expected, he quietly slides up a step. What does that maneuver signify? Momentary disagreement? A mischievous undermining of your authority? An act of playful subterfuge, just where you thought your friends would join you in forming a harmonious closing punctuation?

The inherently whimsical, performer-oriented view that leads to such questions is the basis for this book's novel argument, which centers on the possibilities of what Klorman calls "multiple agency," whereby members of a chamber ensemble are heard to act autonomously, willing their parts into being as they interact with one another. Strictly speaking, of course, this is pure fantasy: no matter how artful their manner of phrasing, dynamics, or embellishment, performers are generally expected to honor the parts on their music stands. But if we attend closely

to those parts, hearing from inside the music as elements of initiative and response pass among the participants, we can perhaps unlock a vital musical energy that a more conventional, top-down formal analysis might overlook. From this alternative, in-the-moment vantage point, the deceptive-cadence situation described above opens up to interpretation not only as a manifestation of avoided closure but as a musically and emotionally charged moment of friction, surprise, or discord in the instruments' engagement with one another.

Armed with references to correspondence, contemporary accounts, and other documents, Klorman constructs a framework for his concept by examining Mozart's reasons for composing various duos, trios, quartets, and quintets, and by considering the circumstances under which those works were initially performed. The accent falls on what the author identifies as music of friends—compositions intended for enjoyment by the players themselves, and likely to be part of an evening of musically enriched socializing. Such an environment invites parallels between the music's interweaving lines and the give-and-take of animated conversation. This in turn leads to images of the music as an uncannily well-coordinated endeavor in group improvisation—improbable in any literal sense, but useful in capturing impressions of spontaneous exchange. As the author suggests, it helps that extemporization at the keyboard was a feature of Mozart's own music-making within his circle of Viennese acquaintances.

From this historically attuned perspective, Klorman strives to draw out the lively intermingling of thought and feeling that arises as individual lines jostle one another, vie for attention, play tricks, or confront one another with their differences. Thus we read that early in the last movement of the

String Quartet in G Major, K. 387, “suddenly (m. 17) the first violin changes the topic, breaking out into a flurry of virtuoso fiddling. ... Not wanting to be outdone, the second violin immediately jumps in (m. 23),” as if to say “anything you can do, I can do better.” Before long, the cello “seems to be fed up with this time-consuming rivalry, which has delayed the necessary modulation,” and therefore “barges in (m. 31), *subito forte*, turning the fiddling figure into the model for a sequence that leads the way toward the new key” (p. 118). Contemplating a deeper, more searching melodic exchange in the first movement of the Clarinet Quintet in A Major, K. 581, Klorman observes that “as the violin completes the first ‘pass’ through his carefree theme, the clarinet enters with his own, more affecting version, ... offering his wisdom and experience as a response to the violin’s innocence” (pp. 143–44).

Not content to limit his study to the personified interaction of melodic lines, Klorman devotes a long chapter, richly interlaced with theoretical commentary, to aspects of conflict, change, or ambiguity in phrasing and metrical accent. For example, he notes that in the second movement of Mozart's Violin Sonata in G Major, K. 379/373a, after measure 77 “a lively hypermetrical exchange ensues between the piano and violin,” pitting the piano's left hand (even-strong) against the violin (odd-strong)—a disagreement that gets sorted out several measures later when the piano defers to the violin's metrical accents (pp. 250–53). Elsewhere, a discussion of the second movement of the Trio in E-flat Major, K. 498, for piano, clarinet, and viola, finds us inside the minds of the three instrument-personas, eavesdropping on their snippets of imaginary monologue as they work their way through a thicket of metrical confusion: “oops, did we play too long? ... What a gaffe! If we enter here, that

should set things right and we can just move on. ... Hmm, ... it's all jumbled. I guess I should just play now and see what happens” (pp. 260–61).

Klorman crowns his inquiry with a revealing, descriptive analysis of the three-movement trio cited just above (K. 498), a composition evidently written for Anton Stadler, Franziska von Jacquin, and Mozart himself in connection with the Jacquin family's Wednesday musical salons. He imagines a narrative in which relationships among the three instruments, coy and wary at first, become warmer as things progress. By the time we get to the finale, a “flamboyant piano revels in the limelight,” and a frustrated viola “chimes in with ‘me too’ imitations” before venting frustration in a stormy C minor and eventually finding itself in the midst of a “three-way dispute” (pp. 286–87). As tensions subside in the course of a final, conciliatory episode, where a clarinet-violin duet is shadowed an octave below in the piano, the clarinet asks, “What exactly was our earlier disagreement about?” ... ‘Oh, it hardly matters anymore,’ replies the cheery viola, ‘and besides, it's more fun to play together this way anyhow’” (p. 288).

Engaging, entertaining, and thought-provoking, this volume is informed by scholarly zeal as well as by a keen musical sensibility as Klorman traces the sociable intricacies of Mozart's chamber-music textures from the dual standpoint of late eighteenth-century custom and present-day theoretical insight. The book thus makes a significant contribution to the Mozart literature, its usefulness enhanced by a wealth of quotations from pertinent sources as well as by an attractive, well-stocked website (mozartsmusicoffriends.com), where analytical videos help bring the author's multiple-agency scenarios to life.

—Floyd Grave