

## Formal, Harmonic and Timbre Innovations in the Divertimento KV 131 by W.A. Mozart

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**Abstract:** *The Divertimento KV 131, is a rare work in concert halls, being considered a work of youth, but a closer look at the score brings attention to strange exceptions to the style of the time. The orchestral composition, with the quintet of strings, woods and four (natural) horns is an atypical case. The hexapartite construction, with two minuets, is also unexpected. But the appearance, in these minuets, of three or two trios, which transforms the traditional tripartite structure into rondo forms, is an absolute premiere and according to the analyst's knowledge, a unique case in Mozart's creation. The use of incomplete sonata forms, with a recapitulation section starting from the bridge, or from the secondary theme, or without the Developing section, denotes either the knowledge of Scarlatti's creations, or an extraordinary freedom. Certain key moments are treated intensely chromatically, with altered chords and chromatic modulations, which anticipate the late romantic harmony.*

**Key-words:** *minuet-rondo; horn quartet; chromatic harmony*

### 1. Introduction

The meeting with this Divertimento was accidental, due to the preparation and conducting of a symphonic concert from the previous year. At the first reading, followed by the analysis of the work, I was impressed by the completely unexpected features proposed by the young composer. I decided to research the historical context of the appearance of this work, but like many other works from the first period of the composer's life, the information is incomplete. I then looked for studies that included opinions, pertinent analyses about the paper, but this KV 131 is completely ignored, being possibly mentioned in hasty enumerations.

The historical context of the creation of the work is unclear, Maynard Solomon<sup>2</sup> suggesting that it was probably written for a wedding, due to the serenade character - love song - of the slow parts and the general bright atmosphere. However, certain tense moments, darkened by minor and chromatic intonations, can question the opinions of biographers.

The use of four horns is an exceptional situation, unusual for normal serenades or even for weddings, so it is possible that the work was written for an important public event. It exists the idea that Ignaz Leutgeb, an excellent horn player in Salzburg, for whom Mozart wrote the horn concertos later, was probably the first horn part in the first performance<sup>3</sup>.

Not even the title *Divertimento* written on the autograph score does not seem to have been written by Mozart's hand, which makes the purpose of the work remain shrouded in

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<sup>2</sup> Solomon, Maynard. 1995. *Mozart: A Life* (1st ed.). New York City: HarperCollins.

<sup>3</sup>[https://cso.org/uploadedFiles/1\\_Tickets\\_and\\_Events/2009/2010/Program\\_Notes/ProgramNotes\\_Mozart\\_Divert\\_Dmaj.pdf](https://cso.org/uploadedFiles/1_Tickets_and_Events/2009/2010/Program_Notes/ProgramNotes_Mozart_Divert_Dmaj.pdf).

mystery. The creation place also involves controversy, oscillating between Milan<sup>4</sup> and Salzburg<sup>5</sup>, between which Mozart travelled in 1772.

Many works of this type, which were composed for an occasion, had a single interpretation, being mostly lost. In this context, the fact that the work is available today to music lovers can be considered lucky.

## 2. Objectives

The constructive, formal and timbre particularities are the ones that immediately attract attention in listening to the work and the present study will focus on them. I will use as the main method of analysis, the comparison to the divertimentos, serenades, cassations, nocturnes and symphonies from adolescence of this brilliant composer, to reveal the novelties and uniqueness of certain solutions.

The hexapartite construction of the musical genre is a surprise, but a clear connection exists with the symphonic thinking and with the nature of this Divertimento, as an occasional music. The architecture of each movement is an exception to the regular structure of Mozart's works, as well as the other composers of the epoch.

The use of the winds, especially of the horns, is very important and gives us a clue for solutions that will become normal about one century after this work. The timbre surprises given by these exceptional solutions in orchestration were, for sure, extreme, for the audience of the premiere, but they are giving a lot of interest for today's audience as well.

In Mozart's early music, usually there are simple and clear harmonic solutions, but as we follow the score, there will appear a number of altered chords and chromatic surprising modulations, as well as a complicated tonal plan in some of the movements.

These innovations need to be taken in consideration, in order to widen the importance of early Mozart works, to understand the extraordinary importance of his music in the Classical period.

## 3. Formal, harmonic and timbre analysis

On the musical genre, the motivation of a six movement work was, probably, to extend the length of the piece and to present a large spectre of expressions, of musical images, a vast diversity of melodies, that Mozart was capable to produce in no time. The order of the first three movements correspond to the symphony logic, with a complex *Allegro* sonata form<sup>6</sup> in the first movement, a short *Adagio*, in a strange sonata form, as the second movement, a Minuet, perfectly normal for the third part, if it didn't have three Trios. After that, an *Allegretto* in lied-sonata form, is giving a strange path, followed by a second Minuet (with 2 Trios). These two movements (the fourth and the fifth) look like a change of mind, as some parenthesis, or a secondary story, anyway, an innovation to the normal architecture of the work. In the end, the sixth movement (with an *Adagio* introduction, complete sonata form in *Allegro molto* and a powerful *Allegro assai* Coda) is giving the impression of coming back to the normal path of the genre. The extend of the general construction, also the use of two Minuets gives a new complexity to the whole work, which seems closer to Baroque music, to Handel's Suites, for example.

<sup>4</sup> Solomon, Maynard. 1995. *Mozart: A Life* (1st ed.). New York City: HarperCollins

<sup>5</sup>[https://cso.org/uploadedFiles/1\\_Tickets\\_and\\_Events/2009/2010/Program\\_Notes/ProgramNotes\\_Mozart\\_Divert\\_Dmaj.pdf](https://cso.org/uploadedFiles/1_Tickets_and_Events/2009/2010/Program_Notes/ProgramNotes_Mozart_Divert_Dmaj.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> With licenses, as I will explain later

### 3.1. First movement

The beginning of the work, in D major, *Allegro*, presents a sonata form, with incomplete Recapitulation section, which starts with the bridge, without exposing the main (first) theme. In addition, in Development appears, surprisingly, an episode theme (vaguely rhythmically related and with a similar expression with the third secondary theme, T2.3), as well as the free processing of a material from the Exposition Bridge (the third phrase, initially between measures 15-19). However, the developments of the main theme, of three of the 4 secondary themes, are missing from the middle section, which is not exactly surprising in Mozart's case, especially in youth works, in which his thematic processing capacity does not seem to be used at the same level as the creation of new, episodic themes.

Section	Subsection	Tonality/tonalities	Measure no.
Exposition	First theme (T1)	D major	1-8
	Bridge	D major-A major	9-19
	First secondary theme, T2.1	A major	20-29
	Second secondary theme T2.2	A major-E major (?) – A major	29-40
	Third secondary theme T2.3	A major	41-48
	Fourth secondary theme T2.4	A major	49-54
Development	First subsection, D1, new theme	A major – D major- A major	55-62
	Second subsection, D2, bridge material (measures 15-19)	b minor – A major - G major – e minor – D major	63-79
Recapitulation	Bridge (first two phrases, missing the third)	D major-A major	80-87
	First secondary theme, T2.1	D major	88-97
	Second secondary theme T2.2	D major-A major (?) – D major	97-112
	Third secondary theme T2.3	D major	113-120
	Fourth secondary theme T2.4	D major	121-128

Table 1. *First movement structure*

At the level of harmony, the construction is quite simple, typical for those times, but in the second secondary theme (T2.2.) appears in the second phrase (between measures 33-36) a succession of two diminished chords with the diminished seventh. The *D# -F# -A-C natural* chord in the measures 33 and 34 is ambiguous, interpretable as the altered Subdominant chord, in the harmonic variant of the homonymous key - *a* minor, or as the seventh chord from the Dominant key major, harmonic variant (E major – VII 7). It is followed by another similar chord, with a semitone below, *D - F natural - G# - B*, which brings an even greater confusion in the first phase (the successions of diminished chords with the diminished seventh, unresolved, will constitute stylistic markers of the great composers of late Romanticism), but which can be explained more clearly as the seventh chord, in the second inversion, of A major tonality, harmonic variant (A major – VII 4/3). After this very tense moment, the A major tonality clarifies, in a normal, natural version.

In Development section, the tonal plan is bolder, involving modulations to several tonalities, all closely related, with the tone of the part - A major, b minor, G major, e minor, D major.

In terms of timbre, the presence of the 4 horns and the 3 woodwind instruments, complete the sensation of a large but well-balanced orchestral ensemble, in which, for the time being, the speech is led by string instruments almost all the time. Two moments of timbre diversity appear in the Exposition and Recapitulation of the first secondary theme (T2.1),

proposed for solo flute (from measure 20 /respectively 88), then accompanied by oboe and bassoon, in a trio chamber moment (from measure 24, respectively 93).

### 3.2. Second movement

The *Adagio* presents, in A major, a bipartite sonata form<sup>7</sup>, which combines in just one section the Developing and the Recapitulation, as in many of Domenico Scarlatti's sonatas<sup>8</sup>.

Section	Subsection	Tonality/tonalities	Measure no.
Exposition	First theme (T1)	A major	1-2
	Bridge	b minor- A major V = E major I	3-4
	First secondary theme, T2.1	E major (B major? – E major)	5-9
	Second secondary theme T2.2	E major	10-14
Development and Recapitulation	First subsection, D1, with first theme (T1)	b minor – D major – A major	15-19
	Second subsection, D2, with first secondary theme (T2.1)	A major – D major – d minor – A major	20-24
	Recapitulation with second secondary theme (T2.2)	A major	25-29

Table 1. *Second movement structure*

The Exposition has subsections with very small sized themes, in term of measures, but the quantity and quality of music information is assured by the extreme beauty of the melodies and the instability of the tonal plan. The Development and Recapitulation sections seems to form together a single structure, which contains almost all the elements from the Exposition section, but the first theme (T1) and the first secondary theme (T2.1) are coming in other tonalities or expresses a major tonal instability, so they take part in the development process. It is just the second secondary theme (T2.2) that is exposed in normal tonal conditions, like in a normal Recapitulation section. It is a very strange, unusual for Mozart's types of sonata, the single example I've found in my exploration of this composer's music.

In terms of harmony, there are two moments of interest:

- the *A# - C natural - E - G natural* chord at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> measure, which should be clarified as a seventh chord, in B major, harmonic variant, with the sound of the second step altered descending (B major – VII 6/5, with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> altered), a chord that normally makes a marker for a Wagner music;

- the *C major* chord in the twelfth measure, third beat, which should be considered as a Neapolitan chord in root position, for B major, followed by the seventh chord of the same tonality, harmonic version; the same harmony will come back in the Recapitulation (measure 27), one perfect fifth lower.

The colors of these harmonies enriches the melodies and the diversity of expression by adding chromatic solutions to the normal and predominant diatonic music.

From the timbre point of view, the second movement use just the string quintet, so there are no particular elements to surprise the audience.

<sup>7</sup> Buciu, Dan. 2015. *Domenico Scarlatti între Baroc, Clasicism și Modern*. Bucharest: Editura UNMB.

<sup>8</sup> I couldn't find any evidence of connections between Mozart and Scarlatti's music, as the Italian composer was completely forgotten at that moment.

### 3.3. Third movement

The first Minuet, in D major, comes with an unique solution, with three Trios, and explores the timbre diversity as the primary interest. The actual Minuet, bipartite (A1, 8 measures, A2 12 measures) is played by the strings, and alternates with:

- Trio I, also in D major, for 4 horns, in a demonstration of the soloist potential of these instruments, used normally just for simple things, for secondary jobs; the microstructure is a bipartite one (B1, 12 measures, B2, 8 measures);

- Trio II, in G major, for the three woodwinds, with the flute as the leader in C1 (8 measures), and the oboe taking the lead in the first half of the second subsection (C2, 8 measures), followed by the flute;

- Trio III, in d minor, for the seven winds, combined (the microstructure is, again, bipartite, D1 - 8 measures, D2 - 8 measures);

At the end, a Coda reunites all the musicians, all the diverse timbres, by playing again the Minuet theme (A), in a varied hypostasis and with an interesting transformation of the structure (the original minuet is bipartite, the Coda is tripartite, Co1 – 8 measures, Co2 – 8 measures, Co1 – 8 measures).

The result of this unprecedented construction is the transformation of the normal tripartite lied form into a rondo form, with this structure:

Section	A	B	A	C	A	D	A	Avar/Coda
Timbre	strings	horns	strings	woodwinds	strings	Winds	strings	Strings+winds
Tonality	D major	D major	D major	G major	D major	d minor	D major	D major
Measure no	1-20	21-40	1-20	41-56	1-20	57-72	1-20	73-96

Table 3. *Third movement structure*

The simplicity of the idea, the effectiveness of the result, in terms of amplification of the form and in exploitation of the timbre resources, has a single threat, which is, in my opinion, the reason why Mozart did not repeat this solution later: the rondo has a significant risk of loss of interest, at thematic and tonal level, because of the exposure of the principal theme (of the minuet) no less than 5 times (the fifth one, ornamented).

### 3.4. Fourth movement

The Allegretto, in G major (tonality that assures that the cycle of pieces will continue), use the strings and two woodwinds (flute - with soloist moments and oboe – with secondary role) to create a lied-sonata, by combining a tripartite lied with a sonata without Developing section:

Section (Lied)	A	Transition	B	Transition	A incomplete	Transition	B	Transition	A	Coda
Section (Sonata)	Exposition			Bridge/Development	Recapitulation				Coda ?	Coda
Subsection (Sonata)	T1	Bridge	T2	Bridge/Development	T1	Bridge	T2	Bridge	T1	Coda
Tonality	G major	G major-D major	D major	D major-G major-g minor – D major	G major	C major - a minor -G major	G major	g minor	G major	G major
Measure no	1 <sup>9</sup> -8	9-16	17-24	25-38	39-43	44-51	52-59	60-65	66-75	76-87

Table 4. *Fourth movement structure*

<sup>9</sup> All sections begin with upbeat

The lied-sonata form could be analysed as a complete sonata form, if the section between 25<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> measure is considered as the Development section, as it is passing three tonalities (including g minor). This ambiguity of the structure helps the artistic expression and the differences between the conductors, which could choose either of solutions.

In two moments (measures 38 and 65), the composer prepares, on a fermata (on the dominant chord), two *fiorituras*, two solo mini-cadenzas, usually performed by solo flute and solo violin.

Harmonically, the single moment of great interest appears at the 36<sup>th</sup> measure, where a Neapolitan chord, in root position, of the D major tonality is placed, followed by a seventh chord altered, in the same manner as in the 7<sup>th</sup> measure of the second movement of the work.

### 3.5. Fifth movement

The second Minuet, in D major, propose a response to the first one, with two Trios, in which he exploits again the timbre diversity. The actual Minuet, tripartite (A1, 8 measures, A2 8 measures, A1 8 measures), uses the four horns to play the first subsection (A1) and the strings together with the woodwinds, for the second subsection (A1). Then the minuet alternates with:

- Trio I, in G major, for flutes, 2 violins and bass section, with a bipartite micro-structure (B1, 8 measures, B2, 8 measures);
- Trio II, in A major, for oboe, violas divided in 2 and the bass section (the violas are the leader in the majority of the time, the oboe answers in 3 phrases of 4 measures each), the micro-structure is a Barform<sup>10</sup> (C1, 8 measures, C1, another 8 measure, C2, 8 measures);

At the end, the Coda reunites all the musicians, all the diverse timbres (as in the first Minuet), by playing again the first period of the Minuet theme (A1, 8 measures).

The result of this construction is a new rondo form, with this structure:

Section	A			B		A	C			A	Coda (a1)
Subsection	A1	A2	A1	B1	B2		C1	C1	C2		
Timbre	horns	Strings+ woodwinds	horns	Flute, violins, bass		idem	Oboe, violas, bass			idem	Strings+winds
Tonality	D major			G major		D major	A major			D major	D major
Measure no	1-8	9-16	17-24	25-40		1-24	41-64			1-24	65-72

Table 5. *Fifth movement structure*

The same composition strategy as in the first minuet assures the amplification of the structure and, this time, because Mozart uses just two trios, the risks are significantly lower (the minuet is heard just 3 times complete and a fourth time, just one period – 8 measures).

On the harmonic language, there are no moments of surprise.

### 3.6. Sixth movement

The final movement has the most complex architecture, with a slow introduction (*Adagio*, 14 measures, in D major), followed by a complete sonata form in *Allegro molto*, finishing with an extensive Coda, in *Allegro assai*. The structure gives attention to the timbre diversity, choosing some particular solutions, in order to help articulating the form. A very interesting way to finish the work is used in the Coda section, where a thematic rondo is

<sup>10</sup> Bughici, Dumitru. 1978. *Dicționar de forme și genuri muzicale*. Bucharest: Editura Muzicală.

constructed, with four different themes, but without tonal diversity (the structure remains all the time in D major): A (Co1) – B (Co2) – A (Co1) – C (Co3) – A (Co1) – D (Co4).

The complete organisation can be observed in the next table:

Section	Subsection	Timbre aspects	Tonality/tonalities	Measure no.
Introduction	3 phrases	4 horns, then add of woods	D major – A major – G major – D major	1-14
Exposition	First theme (T1)	Strings / tutti	D major	15-30
	Bridge	Strings	D major-A major	31-35
	First secondary theme, T2.1	Flute+woods+strings	A major	37-45
	Second secondary theme T2.2	Flute	A major	45-55
	Third secondary theme T2.3	Solo horn, oboe	A major	55-63
Development	First subsection, D1, elements from T1 and T2.3	Woods with strings in dialogue with horns	A major	64-73
	Second subsection, D2, new themes	Strings and bassoon	e minor – b minor	73-83
	Third subsection, D3, new theme	Strings / tutti	A major	83-88
Recapitulation	First theme (T1)	Strings / tutti	D major – A major (!?)	89-104
	Bridge	Strings	D major	105-110
	First secondary theme, T2.1	Flute+woods+strings	D major	111-118
	Second secondary theme T2.2	Flute	D major	119-130
	Third secondary theme T2.3	Solo horn, oboe	D major	130-139
Coda	First subsection, Co1	Strings+ bassoon	D major	139-153
	Second subsection, Co2	Strings	D major	154-161
	First subsection, Co1	Strings+ bassoon	D major	162-177
	Third subsection, Co3	Flute+oboe/horns	D major	178-209
	First subsection, Co1	Strings+bassoon/ tutti	D major	210-241
	Fourth (final) subsection, Co4	Tutti	D major	241-255

Table 6. *Sixth movement structure*

If the timbre diversity is clear in this final movement, the harmonic language remains simple and in normal classical habits.

#### 4. Results, Discussions and Conclusions

Following the form analyse, the diversity of constructions can be observed, with different types of sonatas: a complete sonata form, with introduction and coda (6<sup>th</sup> movement), a lied – sonata (tripentapartite lied/ sonata without Development - 4<sup>th</sup> movement), a bipartite sonata (Development and Recapitulation in one section – 2<sup>nd</sup> movement), an incomplete sonata (with Recapitulation from the bridge – 1<sup>st</sup> movement). It is only in this work of Mozart, where we can find four different types of sonata form, which can be used as a school of discovering the sonata philosophy and dramaturgical logic. The two minuets are subject to some unique experiments, which transform them into rondo forms. This work seems to be the most innovative formal construction workshop in the Classical period.

As a secondary special discovery, the curiosity and love for the sound, for the timbre in Mozart's conception is quite a surprise and the solutions revealed by the analyses are unique as well.

Some chromatic harmonies are revealing already the mature Mozart, in his complete force of expression, as in the later c minor Fantasy, KV 475, showing us the surprising altered chords and chromatic modulations in the spirit of the next century.

Without being a masterwork, this Divertimento deserves a lot more attention from the conductors, orchestras and musicologists. Some features of this music are, for sure, extraordinary.

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