

Mozart's autograph manuscript of his second piano concerto

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Concerto in B-flat Major for Piano, K. 238. Salzburg, 1776. 6 3/4 x 9 1/8 (172 x 232 mm), 80 pages.

From his earliest years as a child prodigy touring the courts of Europe to his death and burial at the age of 35, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a legendary figure. He was one of the most striking examples of artistic genius in human history. The composer's extraordinary musical gifts, expertly cultivated by his musician father, achieved an unparalleled fullness of expression in works that combine depth and fluidity with a seemingly effortless grace.

Printed scores, however faithful to the original, are stripped of the personality of the composer and immediacy with the moment of creation that characterize an autograph manuscript. To reach the wellsprings of Mozart's genius, one must turn to his musical manuscripts. Their assured, almost calligraphic appearance, reflecting the fact that the music was apparently composed mentally before Mozart put pen to paper, enables the reader to follow the score with ease.

The manuscript is made of the oblong-format paper (*querformat*) characteristic of Mozart and other composers of the period. The paper was mechanically ruled with ten staves, as is typical of manuscripts from Mozart's Salzburg years. This manuscript includes the unusual key signatures (with the order of the sharps and flats varying from staff to staff) that Mozart used in his compositions from about 1772 until his death in 1791.

It is believed that Mozart composed this piece to demonstrate his virtuosity as a pianist in local salons and at court. In 1777 Mozart gave public performances of K. 238 in Augsburg and Mannheim, and his sister Maria Anna (Nannerl), also a gifted pianist, performed his piano concertos in Salzburg. This composition was not published until 1792. The Library of Congress' autograph manuscript of K. 238 is housed in a plain black binding.

Octavo code: mzt238

