

The autograph manuscript of Mozart's "Gran Partitta"

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Serenade in B-flat Major for Winds and Contrabass, K. 361 (370a) ("Gran Partitta"). Vienna, 1781–84. 8 7/8 inches x 12 1/2 inches (226 x 318 mm), 98 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 ruled with twelve staves by hand, which is unusual because of Mozart's preference for the use of a rastration machine. 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.

This piece was first performed on 23 March 1784. It is believed to have been commissioned by the virtuoso clarinetist Anton Stadler (1753–1812), for whom Mozart wrote the Clarinet Quintet in A Major (K. 581) and the Clarinet Concerto in A major (K. 622). The Gran Partitta is the first composition in which Mozart included the basset horn, a member of the clarinet family; the score was first published in 1803.

This manuscript from the Library of Congress is bound in nineteenth-century fawn paper with black leather corner tips, titling piece, and spine. In 1799 it was sold by Mozart's widow to publisher Johann André, who gave the manuscript to Grand Duke Ludwig I of Hesse-Darmstadt in 1803. It later passed through the hands of Antiquariat Jacques Rosenthal in Munich and the Viennese musical bibliographer Otto Erich Deutsch (1883–1967), a biographer of Schubert, Handel, and Mozart; it was acquired by the Library of Congress through Dr. Jerome Stoneborough in 1942.

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