CHANDOS

FEDERICO COLLI

MOZART

VOL. 2

Copper engraving by Heinrich Philipp Carl Boßler (1744 – 1812), after his own silhouette, now at the Mozarteum, Salzburg / AKG Images, London

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, c. 1784

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)

Works for Solo Piano, Volume 2

1	**Adagio, KV 540** (1788) in B minor • in h-Moll • en si mineur	**14:52**
	Adagio	
	Twelve Variations on 'Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman', KV 265 (1781 – 82) in C major • in C-Dur • en ut majeur	**13:12**
2	Tema –	0:57
3	Variazione I –	0:42
4	Variazione II –	0:41
5	Variazione III –	0:46
6	Variazione IV –	0:39
7	Variazione V –	0:48
8	Variazione VI –	0:37
9	Variazione VII –	0:43
10	Variazione VIII. Minore –	0:55
11	Variazione IX. Maggiore –	0:47
12	Variazione X –	0:41
13	Variazione XI. Adagio –	3:26
14	Variazione XII. Allegro	1:24

Ten Variations on 'Les Hommes pieusement', KV 455 (1784) **14:35**
in G major • in G-Dur • en sol majeur
('Unser dummer Pöbel meint')
from *La Rencontre imprévue* (1763 – 64)
by Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck (1714 – 1787)

15	Tema. Allegretto –	0:50
16	Variazione I –	0:42
17	Variazione II –	0:46
18	Variazione III –	0:44
19	Variazione IV –	0:46
20	Variazione V –	1:15
21	Variazione VI –	0:48
22	Variazione VII –	0:48
23	Variazione VIII –	1:19
24	Variazione IX. Adagio –	3:55
25	Variazione X. Allegro – Cadenza – [ ]	2:38

	Sonata, KV 331 (1783) in A major • in A-Dur • en la majeur	**23:16**
26	Tema. Andante grazioso –	1:36
27	Variazione I –	1:12
28	Variazione II –	1:30
29	Variazione III –	2:25
30	Variazione IV –	1:38
31	Variazione V. Adagio –	3:48
32	Variazione VI. Allegro	1:16
33	Menuetto – Trio – Menuetto da capo	6:34
34	Alla turca. Allegretto – Coda	3:12
		TT 65:56

Federico Colli piano

Federico Colli Plays Mozart, Volume 2

Introduction

The contribution made by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791) to human joy, both in his short lifetime and in the 234 years since his death, is inestimably large. His *œuvre* shows extraordinary achievements in every vocal and instrumental genre current in his time, from his sublime masses to his lewd catches and clever canons. Three decades before his birth, the 'new simplicity', or *galant*, revolution had commenced: counterpoint became less significant, melody became simpler, and symmetry began to rule at all levels, from motives and phrases to entire movements. Although he played the violin well enough to be appointed *Konzertmeister* in Salzburg at a young age, the piano was his instrument. After moving to Vienna, in 1781, he supported himself through his last decade as a prolific composer, virtuoso pianist, and teacher. His output for piano during these years is extraordinary: it includes seventeen concertos, nine sonatas, ten sets of variations, and many single-movement works. All the works in this collection were composed in this final productive decade.

Many contemporary accounts attest to Mozart's ability on the keyboard, from childhood to maturity, and certain themes emerge. Typically for the time, Mozart is praised for his virtuosity and precision, but these are seemingly less important than his expressive playing and, above all, his spectacular talent for improvisation in different genres, including spontaneous fugues. His strong sense of rhythm was also noted, but Mozart himself addresses nuances in this in one of his letters: he points out that people often do not understand his approach to rhythm, which is to keep the left hand very steady, while playing the right-hand melody very expressively and flexibly: in other words, not necessarily together with the left.

Mozart's Piano Variations

Mozart wrote seventeen sets of variations for the piano, these spanning his entire career from his tenth to his final year. He generally based them on songs which were popular at the time, and his publications may be a distillation of his famous improvisations on such tunes. The melody is generally

quite simple, allowing full rein to Mozart's imagination. After stating the tune, Mozart generally applies a 'transformation code' to the original song in order to produce each variation. This often starts by ornamenting, or dividing the notes into faster note values; but later variations may be transmuted into genres far removed from that of the original tune. Some variations can be very virtuosic, but sets of variations may have appealed to amateur pianists who did not wish to tackle an entire sonata movement: they could select suitable variations and omit others, without significantly undermining the effect of the piece.

Twelve Variations in C major on 'Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman', KV 265

Listeners will recognise the tune of 'Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman' immediately, though under another name. Mozart was probably amused by the idea of creatively playing with one of the simplest melodies he could find. He likely chose the most basic of all keys, C major – in which the entire tune is played on the white keys – for the same reason. This French melody may have been maintained in oral tradition for many years, as it is today, but its first publication with text had for Mozart occurred very recently, in 1774. His variations were first published, in Vienna, in 1785, and many more publications followed swiftly, suggesting that the work enjoyed great popularity.

The theme is in the simplest possible ternary form, or A – B – A': three eight-bar sections, of which the first and third are identical, and the central one provides contrast. Section A is repeated, then sections B and A' are repeated together. Mozart keeps strictly to this form throughout all twelve variations, but adds a short coda to the final one. The first two variations are based on running semiquavers, the theme slightly disguised in the right hand. The next two involve running and leaping triplets, V alters the rhythm in an amusing way, while VI and VII return to different semiquaver patterns. VIII brings at last a key change, to C minor, and some serious chromaticism. Here Mozart promises a baroque style fugue, but cannot deliver it within the twenty-four-bar structure. Imitative entries are also found in IX and XI. X resembles a baroque keyboard toccata, while the finale returns to brilliant semiquaver passages.

Ten Variations in G major on 'Les Hommes pieusement', KV 455

The set of Variations in G major, KV 455, was

at least as popular as KV 265, being found in eleven manuscript copies and over twenty prints before 1810. *La Rencontre imprévue*, Gluck's *opéra comique*, was well-known in Vienna, having received its first performance there in 1764; revivals followed in 1776 and 1780. Mozart is known to have performed, or more likely improvised, a set of variations on Gluck's little arietta in 1783. We cannot know how closely this resembled the 1784 publication.

In the published version which we know today, Mozart made cuts which reduce the theme to the same format as KV 265. The first seven variations develop in a similar way to those of KV 265: they adhere strictly to the original ternary form, and, initially, similar figurations are used. Here, also, there is a variation in the minor key, which brings in beautiful dissonances and an affecting descending chromatic scale. However, there are differences: Mozart subtly commences his variations even in the second section of presentation of the theme itself, and the following variations are more diverse, dramatic, virtuosic, and less predictable than those in KV 265. The writing often resembles the brilliant figurations found in his piano concertos from the same period, and this trend culminates in the stunning cadenza which explodes out of what would have been the last bar of Variation VIII. It should more properly be called an *Eingang*, as it flows directly into IX. This *Adagio* variation follows the given harmony, but it unfolds so slowly and with so many brilliant and delicate figurations, that it could be the short slow movement of a sonata or concerto. The final variation, marked *Allegro*, in 3 / 8 time, commences exactly like one of Mozart's chirpy concerto finales in rondo form and, like those, it includes a Cadenza, followed in this case by a coda based on the theme.

Sonata in A major, KV 331

It was long thought that the three piano sonatas KV 330 – 332 were composed in Paris in 1778. Meticulous studies by Wolfgang Plath and Alan Tyson of the handwriting, paper, and watermarks of Mozart's autographs have now dated them to 1783. In June 1784 Mozart wrote to his father that he had given them to the Viennese publisher Artaria, who published them that year.

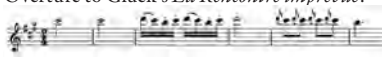
In KV 331, Mozart breaks with his own and the established tradition of commencing with a substantial movement in sonata form: instead, he provides a set of six variations on an original theme. This first movement is effectively the slow movement, which gives

the whole sonata a slow – fast – fast (SFF) format, although the distinctions between the first two movements are subtle rather than obvious. This format was unusual at the time, but it had often been used in the first half and middle of the century, and was later revisited by Beethoven in his Op. 5 cello sonatas.

It will come as no surprise that the theme has almost the same ternary form as those described above, though in this case Mozart adds a two-bar codetta to the sixteen-bar theme. It is one of Mozart's most charming and memorable melodies, a pastoral sicilienne marked *Andante grazioso*. Here, again, each variation retains the structure of the theme, Mozart appending a short coda to the final variation. There is the usual expressive variation in the minor key, but until the final variation, Mozart generally maintains the calm character and 6 / 8 time signature of the theme, refraining from any obvious virtuosity. Variation VI, again, has the style, though not the structure, of a cheerful rondo finale.

The *Menuetto* is in miniature sonata form: a first theme in the tonic A major, a contrasting second theme in the dominant, a 'development' of only twelve bars, and a recapitulation of both themes in the tonic. The tone is forthright and uncomplicated throughout, but the Trio provides contrast with its relaxing drop into the subdominant, D major, and its bell-like motives, echoed in different registers.

The final rondo is one of Mozart's most famous creations. It is simply marked *Alla turca*, which describes a musical style which was very fashionable, especially in Vienna, across the second half of the century: an attempt to imitate Turkish music. In bands and orchestras, it involves the use of many percussion instruments, and whether these are present or not, the music must be fast, uncomplicated, and strongly rhythmic, generally in 2 / 4 time. Mozart had previously written music *alla turca* in the A major Violin Concerto, of 1775 (CHAN 20263), and in the *Singspiel*, of 1782, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. It is unusual for the finale of a work in a major key to commence in the parallel minor, as this one does; however, the contrasting rondo episodes are all in A major, as is the final Coda. The Coda can be recognised by the appearance of a new melody, with which Mozart quotes the Overture to Gluck's *La Rencontre imprévue*:



Adagio in B minor, KV 540

The *Adagio* in B minor is the one work in this

collection in which the theme and variations form does not play a role. Instead, it adopts sonata form. Mozart rarely uses the key of B minor, and when he does, it expresses deep emotion or sorrow. Even in the first bar, Mozart signals that there will be some pain in this journey: the first three notes of the first subject are followed by an unexpected dissonant chord (a diminished seventh) marked *sforzando* (with sudden force). An iteration of this first subject in the left hand heralds the transition to the second subject, also in the left hand – which must alternate theatrically from the low bass register, where it plays a rhythmically angular arpeggio of D major, to the upper treble register, where it utters anguished sighing dissonances.

The development weaves both subjects together, the first appearing in four different, and sometimes remote, keys. The last two represent false recapitulations before the actual one, in B minor, a ruse which is quite effective because the work lacks the usual transitional passage in the dominant. This serves to signal the approach to the recapitulation from some distance away. In the development, the second subject is heard inverted in the right hand, also crossing over. In the recapitulation, the second subject appears in the tonic, B minor, which is normal in the form, but it does give the entire section an even darker tone than the exposition. This key requires the use of the very low F sharp, the second-lowest note on the Viennese piano of the time, which contributes to the general deep tone of the section.

Every iteration of the first subject includes some variant of the dissonant chord mentioned above – until its final appearance, in the tonic, at the end of the recapitulation, at which point the three notes are followed by a simple dominant seventh, a sign that the journey is almost over. The coda exists to secure and embed the tonic harmony, but this one has a beautiful surprise: a modulation to the major in the final bars. This had of course often been done before, but rarely is the effect as radiant as it is in the dark-hued context here.

A note by the performer

Dear Wolfgang,

It has been a while since my last musical *rendez-vous* with you and your music. It was August 2021 when I arrived at the studio to record the first volume of your solo pieces. I remember the dedication and the effort I devoted to studying and researching for that recording – analysing manuscripts, reading letters, studying

hermeneutical approaches and considerations of style and praxis.

Now, after four years, I felt the desire to return to your music, and to understand how all the ideas and concepts that I put into the first volume developed, as well as my own development as an artist and a human being.

A lot of things have happened in these four years, both in my life and in the strange world in which I am living. You know better than I do: the duty of an artist is to read and to understand the world in which he is living, surveying it with a look capable of piercing through the surface and of apprehending the reality beneath it. In other words: the mission of an artist is to capture the atmosphere of the world, and project this atmosphere into art, using the grammar of that art. We need a deeply focussed look in order to conceive a vision of the essence of the world; we need sensibility and reasoning capacity to filter out the superfluous; and we need technique to master the grammar and to extend that depth of vision and that sensibility into a beautiful, practical artistic realisation.

And understanding the world means, most of the time, to direct one's focus to the contradictions of the world in itself, and to operate in opposition to the world. That is why many artists, in the past as in the present, are described as being 'ahead of their times'.

In this second *rendez-vous* with you I decided to go even further in depth, with the same assumptions that governed me and my interpretation four years ago. On the personal plane, that is because I have become more conscious of the urgency that animates me and my choices; on the plane of the understanding of the world, it is because I strongly believe that what the world needs in this historical and artistic moment is consciousness of its animating or fundamental principle so that we may perceive the order in its beauty (this being a world in which the instinctive approach finds pleasure and which is seen as naturally beautiful). The world needs consciousness that beauty without any truth is an illusion (this being a world in which beauty has the duration of a reel of film and the depth of a 'like' on Facebook), consciousness that the real focus of existence is cultivation of the human essence, as in a new humanism (this being a world in which machines and artificial intelligence are dominating almost every single aspect of our life).

Who am I? As an artist and a human being, who am I? And what do I do here, in this world?

These two questions are always present for me, and I pose them to myself on these two matters, being and doing, within the framework of your music. Always.

© Kate Kondratieva
Dear Wolfgang,
Federico Colli

The first volume of your solo piano music, four years ago, was designed around a masterpiece: your Fantasy in C minor, KV 475. Essentially, I chose that piece – and I did it firmly – for one reason: the manuscript has not survived. I personally erected a scaffolding of thoughts on the fact that not everything we read in that score comes directly from your pen.

'The absence of a document is not documentation of that absence', a philosopher once said to me. In other words: if an autograph manuscript is lacking for a piece of music, that does not mean that everything that is not written on the page is not allowed. This assumption gave me the freedom (not the freedom of anarchy but on the assumption of responsibility) to operate freely in your music in order to find myself and to understand the world in which I am living.

With this second volume, I pursued this assumption to even greater depths, and the key work in the album is certainly your Sonata in A major, KV 331.

You may not know (of course you do not know!) that the last movement of this sonata is perhaps nowadays the best-known classical piece in the entire history of music. We are now more the 8 billion human beings on this planet and I bet that a good 90% of them, once in his or her life, has listened to this music, on radio or television, on the internet or in a live concert, as soundtrack to a film or as remixed in a bar. I can only imagine your face as you read these words: how can you possibly think that a little piece of music (no more than three pages) that you probably wrote in fifteen minutes, and probably without any major effort, has become the most popular music ever written?

But the essential reason why I decided to test myself with this music is always the same: we do not have the manuscript. We just have the first edition, an edition prepared by a copyist who may – may! – have worked on the basis of your manuscript. And again, the same question came to my mind: who can be certain that the copyist, or the editor, did not add some details in the score – or remove some others? When I face a piece of music for which the manuscript is missing, I must ask: am I reading all that the composer wrote – and wanted – or am I reading what the copyist also added – and wanted?

Tradition, the so-called history of interpretation, has laid down a certain approach to this music, on the basis of the first edition, and this approach has become the truth, the ultimate authority, of the piece.

But one particular circumstance gave me the courage to doubt the absolute truth

derived from tradition. By studying the story of this sonata, and by researching the sources, I discovered a bizarre but marvellous thing: in 2017 someone discovered, in the archive of a library near Budapest, a folded collection of papers. These have been analysed, and reports suggest that, one: those papers bear your handwriting, and two: those papers form part of the missing manuscript of the Sonata in A major, KV 331.

Immediately, a group of musicologists undertook the first logical task, namely to compare the papers uncovered in Budapest with the first edition of the Sonata. And what they discovered is bound radically to change not only the tradition of its interpretation but, I believe, the essential relationship between the interpreter and the score. By comparing the first edition and the manuscript the musicologists concluded that the two sources do not match. The first edition exhibits some major differences from the manuscript, differences in terms of dynamics, of articulation, of expressive markings, even of notes! Boom!

I clearly remember the day when I became aware of all those differences: wonder surrounded me, I was moved to amazement. I sat down at the piano and I kept playing: my ears thrilled at a totally new music!

I immediately decided that I had to study this Sonata, and I had to record it.

And so I did: Bärenreiter published a beautiful critical edition based on the two sources – I bought it and for one year I devoted intensive study to it.

The last movement is bizarre, Wolfgang: it is in the style of a *turquerie*, as an homage to the fascinating culture of Turkey, but also as a warning to the terror that the Ottoman Empire exerted on your European world.

Curiously enough (and I can see you laughing behind the veil of time!), despite the discovery of a large part of the manuscript, for the last movement this authentic source is almost entirely missing: we just have the manuscript of the last page, the Coda. And if we now know that the broken octaves in A major before the coda in the first edition are not original, then we do not know how to interpret the little *acciaccatura*, or *appoggiatura*, at the beginning of the first four notes of the movement.

Is that note – that B natural – an *appoggiatura* (an emphasised grace note preceding the main note) or is it an *acciaccatura* (a grace note preceding an emphasised main note)? I decided to play an *acciaccatura*.

Why? I have two bullets in my pocket.

The first: in the manuscript of the last

page of the movement we see clearly that you wrote many *acciaccature*. Why did the editor adopt the same way of writing also for the first four notes? If you, or the editor, intended an *appoggiatura*, given the fact that in the last pages there are many *acciaccature* written in your hand, why would you not have varied the manner of notation? Why would you have maintained the same one throughout?

The second: by playing an *acciaccatura*, the character immediately changes. It becomes right away more dancing, wilder, more Turkish. In a Turkish March, I cannot believe that this character should be wrong!

But I shall tell you more! By discovering, through your manuscript, in even greater depth the style and the praxis of your keyboard playing, I realised that an approach of reasoned improvisation will be true to your personality as a performer. Many sources affirm that you – like many other composer-interpreters of your generation – would often improvise during your concert performances. I concluded that in order to be historically informed, and stylistically true, some reasoned improvisation can give an interpretation that 'extra thing': it can provide that flash of novelty which may prove useful in order better to understand the beauty of your music and the true source from which your music flows.

There is improvisation and freedom not only in the sonata, but also in the variations. Again, in the case of the Variations KV 265 we do not have the complete manuscript.

I used to vary not only the variations in themselves (the variations of the variations are a tricky approach: Maurice Ravel, a fellow composer of yours who lived many decades after you, was a master in this, and as the philosopher and musicologist Vladimir Jankélévitch said, Ravel teaches the world how to make that artifice a thing of beauty) but also the theme. Why not? I cannot doubt that it was a perhaps bizarre but nevertheless normal practice back in your time.

And the *Adagio* – what a piece, Wolfgang! I can only imagine the sorrow you were feeling for the loss of your beloved father... But I am unable to forget that you wrote it at a time when the terror of an imminent invasion by the Ottoman Empire was real and powerful. It sounds as though in the Sonata KV 331 you wanted to immerse yourself in the beauty, the charm, and the evocative oriental flavours of the Ottoman Empire, while in the *Adagio* you felt worry and fear over losing your freedom, your certainties, because the western world was on the brink of a possible war with that Empire.

Variations, *Adagio*, and Sonata are all so ideally interconnected, and it is the

combination of interpretative freedom, historic investigation, stylistic considerations, and documentation of sources that forms the glue that renders truth to the beauty of these works.

I am sorry for claiming your attention for so long, dear Wolfgang.

Wherever you are now, I do hope you know that there is a musician, here on our shared earth, who thinks about you and dreams about you, making every effort to discover the eternal truth behind the ineffable beauty of your music.

Forgive me if I do not prove equal to the call of this duty, but let my intentions at least be sufficient for you to see me as a devoted, always questing, human being.

Yours,

Federico.

Hailed by *The Daily Telegraph* for his 'beautifully light touch and lyrical grace' and by *Gramophone* as 'one of the more original thinkers of his generation', **Federico Colli** has earned international acclaim for his captivating interpretations and crystalline sound. After winning the Gold Medal at the 2012 Leeds International Piano Competition, he was recognised by the magazine *International Piano* as one of the '30 pianists under 30 who are likely to dominate the world stage'. In 2022, *Fortune Italia* included him in its prestigious '40 under 40' list for Arts and Culture. Born in Brescia, in 1988, he studied at the Conservatorio di musica 'Giuseppe Verdi', in Milan, Accademia Pianistica Internazionale 'Incontri col Maestro', in Imola, and Universität Mozarteum Salzburg, under the guidance of Sergio Marengoni, Konstantin Bogino, Boris Petrushansky, and Pavel Gililov. He has performed with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Mariinsky Orchestra, St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, and Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI di Torino, among others, alongside conductors such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Dennis Russell Davies, Sir Mark Elder, Fabio Luisi, Ion Marin, Sakari Oramo, Vasily Petrenko, Thomas Søndergård, Yuri Temirkanov, and Juraj Valčuha.

Federico Colli has appeared at venues such as the Wiener Musikverein, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Gewandhaus Leipzig, Royal

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Royal Albert Hall and Wigmore Hall, London, Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Rudolfinum, Prague, Philharmonie, Paris, Theatro Municipal, Rio de Janeiro, Kumho Art Hall, Seoul, and Lincoln Center, New York. A dedicated chamber musician, he collaborates with artists including Francesca Dego, Pablo Ferrández, Anastasia Kobekina, Timothy Ridout, Josef Špaček, and the Calidore String Quartet, and in 2024 made his début as performer-director with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and with Helsingborgs Symfoniorkester, at the Helsingborg Pianofestival. As an exclusive Chanos Records artist, Federico Colli released two discs of Sonatas by Scarlatti, the first chosen Recording of the Year by *Presto Classical*, the second Recording of the Month by both *BBC Music* and *International Piano*. A third album was devoted to works by Bach. A personal exploration of the music by Mozart began with a disc of solo piano works released in May 2022 and continued with an album of his Piano Quartets, released in August 2023. On the latter, *The Times* remarked: 'Without being mannered, he grabs your attention while leaving plenty of space for the other performers to spread delight.'

Also available

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Federico Colli Plays Mozart, Volume 1

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MOZART: WORKS FOR SOLO PIANO, VOL. 2 – Colli

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WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756 – 1791)

WORKS FOR SOLO PIANO, VOLUME 2

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FEDERICO COLLI piano

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