FROZEN IMPROVISATION: THE MOZART PIANO VARIATIONS AS A MODEL FOR IMPROVISATION ON THE CLASSICAL STYLE

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Research Paper

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation of the research. Research question.

This research is part of a long time project which emerged from my activity as performer, improviser and music teacher. For more than fifteen years I have been working in aSspanish institution called "Instituto de Educación Musical" (IEM; Music Education Institute), created by the specialist on improvisation Dr. Emilio Molina, that puts improvisation in the core of music education. The IEM has developed a methodology that equips the student for a creative understanding of the repertory, learning from its constitutive elements. The usual procedure always start with just playing and singing, then analyzing, practicing harmonic and melodic structures, developing patterns, transporting them and creating new fragments based on the extracted materials. But, unlike other methodologies using improvisation, the IEM system can be easily adapted to the highests levels of performance, not only for the initial steps. More than 20 years of experience and good results are supporting that, but keeping always a high critical attitude and staying open to further evolution.

The fact that the IEM works in its upper levels with improvisation on styles suggested to me, around ten years ago, the possibility of using it as a tool for researching about historic practices of improvisation. Through contact with the pianist and improvisation specialist David Dolan, I started to realize that the mentioned idea was intrinsically tied to the issues of historical performance practice. Ornamentation, cadenzas, preluding, etc were aspects that should be adressed here. As a current piano performer, I then felt naturally inclined to study on historical keyboard instruments, necessary steps in research about this topic. From that time, I was teaching improvisation on styles in the IEM summer courses, but covering a wider range of periods, including major twentieth-century composers. I thought that taking some specialization on eighteenth-century music would give me fresh and more precise ideas also for later periods.

At some point I realized that Mozart was the ideal composer for taking under this perspective: he was himself a great improviser, we know also that he used improvisation as a tool for composing. The lectures given by Robert Levin on the subject were really inspiring and they triggered the process in a definitive way. The information available in letters, testimonies and period treatises is quite abundant. Mozart summarized at the highest level the eighteenth-century musical tradition, composing music whose qualities matched perfectly with the features of the Vienesse fortepiano.The study of his works on the appropiate instruments has been an essential part of this project, being in itself another source of information.

I had only a superficial knowledge of the Mozart piano variations, except for three sets that I used in my lessons in Spain . They are, in general, less played than his other piano works. But when I had a serious look at them, I found a particulary appropiate repertory for my research purposes and for the IEM methodology. Considering somehow that variations are in general connected with improvisation practices, they show some special characteristics, such as the traces of extempored playing (cadenzas, leads-in, etc.), the endless variety of characters, the consistence of piano writing in each variation and the relative simplicity of the harmony. All of those aspects allow one easily to isolate parameters for working with them separately, avoiding too much simultaneous complexity.

So, in accordance with all the above, my research question emerged in this form:

Could it be possible to use the Mozart piano variations as a model for improvisation in the classical style?

2. Research process. Methodology.

2.1. Steps in the research process.

The research process has been developed in three steps.

1) Setting the historical perspective. This research would be incomplete without the consideration of the status of improvisation in Mozart´s time. This has been done taking the aspect more connected to variations, namely the improvisation of embellishments. Preluding is not included here. Leads-in and cadenzas have been commented upon but are not the main topic of this research. The background about extempore embellishing in the eighteenth century includes the study of the main treatises about performance practice (C.P. E. Bach,Türk, etc.) testimonies and letters, pieces based on improvisation genres, written sources (embellished repeats, etc.) that reveal improvisatory habits, modern articles and books about the topic, etc. This involved also social aspects linked to the conception of music itself, the role of a musician, the way they learnt, when and where a musician was expected to improvise, etc. This step was based chiefly on the study of documentation.
2) This step consisted in a comprehensive look at representative variations sets and separate works that use such techniques, by Mozart and other composers before and after him. Those works were always in comparison with pieces not focused on variation, such as sonatas or single pieces. By means of that, I was trying to point out which features in Mozart variations could be representative of the classical style and should be emphasized. The use of musical analysis from several perspectives, illuminated with an intensive fortepiano playing, has been the basic tool. As a composition teacher in Spain and because of my IEM background I am currently working with several analysis techniques. The advice of my coach, Bart van Oort, was crucial in this step because his wide experience as a perfomer gave me key insights about such a vast repertory.
3) The third and final step, that constitutes in fact the main body of the written work, was entirely centered on Mozart´s variation sets. It included a classification of variations techniques, collecting abundant material from the fourteen sets and creating a repertory of exercises based on them. Those exercises are intended for developing the control of the basic aspects of the style from its own compositional and pianistic features, having the form of patterns to be practised on different harmonic structures, keys and metres.

2.2. Methodological considerations.

This research is technically oriented. The goal is to set up a guided practice from the perspective of improvisation. The project is not intended with the sole aim of restoring those practices as Mozart and others did, that is virtually impossible and has a very narrow perspective in

modern performance. The goal is the understanding of the style that we can get by means of that and how it might be used for a creative music education nowadays. Of course, the ability of playing extempore is a consequence of this methodology and it can be applied to some special situations in performance when it is historically justified. The symbiosis between an improvisation methodology and the musicological study of extemporization practices can enable the performer for doing it as stylistically accurate as possible, but I believe that it can serve to a broader range of "classical" musicians, even if they are not interested in doing it on the stage.

2.2.1. Terminology.

I am constantly using some words whose meanings need to be made precise for a correct understanding of the text.

I make practically no distinctions between "improvisation" and "extemporization",[1] using them as synonymous, There is no matter if the improvised thing is a short lead-in or a complete piece: they represent different levels of the same, but in both cases we need stylistic rules and knowledge of the music content, in variable proportions. According to the IEM methodology, the word "improvisation" means the control of determinate codes that allows us to create understandable music in real time, independently or as part of a composed work Those codes include how tonal harmony works in the style, the typical textures, the basic patterns of melodic creation and phrasing. This meaning of improvisation is close to that understood by musicians in the baroque or classical period, according to the treatises.[2] Improvisation always implies the knowledge of rules, even in case we were talking of "free improvisation".[3] The jazz musicians are also trained with very sophisticated codes.

"Ornaments" and "embellishments",are treated equally as synonymous., as are "diminutions" and "divisions" . A terminology problem arises in the border between "ornamentation" and "variation techniques". We usually consider that variation techniques involve ornamentation, but it can go much further. I consider that a peculiar feature of the classical variation, especially in Mozart, is the singularity, the creation of a new character in every variation with a relative independence from the theme. Translating it into technical terms, I am conviced that the manipulations of texture play the main role. For instance, changes in the accompaniment pattern can give new energy to the theme to a greater extent that adding some ornamentation. So there is a common space for both terms, but from a certain point it becomes the exclusive domain of variation techniques.

I am using some terminology that belongs to the IEM methodology. This terminology is mainly about melodic tools. Melodic creation in the tonal system always depends on harmony, so the guidelines for it are based on the harmonic framework.

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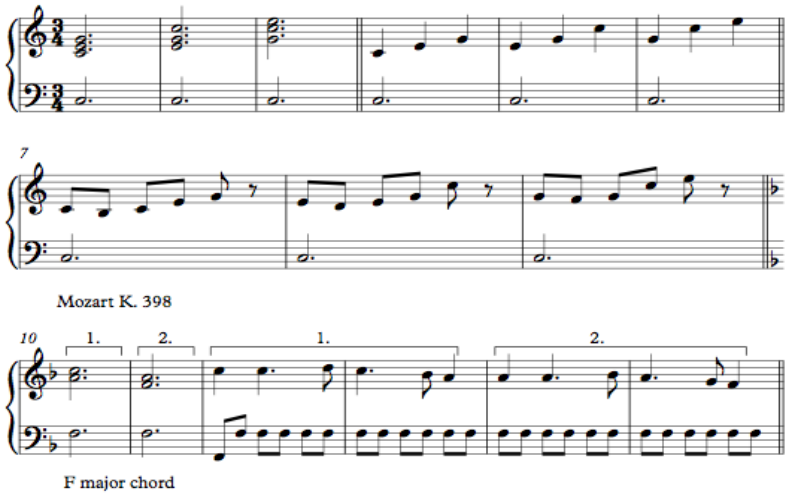
[1] Some authors like Vincenzo Capolaretti in *I processi improvvisativi nella musica: un aproccio globale* (LMI, 2005), make distinctions between both words..

[2] See, for instance, C.P.E. Bach in his *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, trans. and ed. William J. Mitchell (New York, 1949), chapter 7. English translation of the German original from 1753 (I) and 1762 (II).

[3] Remarks such as "avoiding tonal chords" or "sense of meter" are also rules.

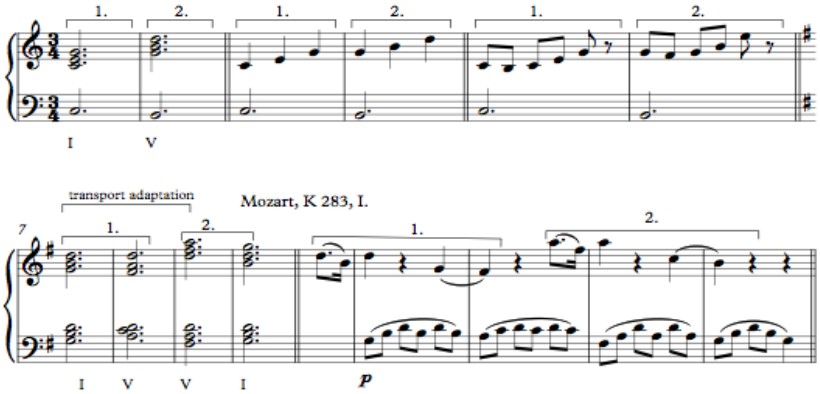
A) Level change. This means the register displacement of a melodic motive keeping the same chord. This should not be confused with inversions, which are determined by the bass part. Here I am referring to something that happens above. It is one of the more extended melodic tools and it is the one most often used in the proposed exercises, because it allows the work to develop melodically without changing chords constantly and ensures the coherence.

Ex. 1 Level change.



B) Transport adaptation. This happens when the same melodic motive based in one or more chords is transported to a new chord (or group), so that it keeps in the same relation with the new that it had with the former. This is the usual tool for creating progressions.[4] It doesn´t necessarily imply a change of key, but it can happens in certain contexts. For further clarification, if the motive started in the fifth of the first chord, it should start also in the fifth of the new, as in the Mozart instance given below. The comparison is always between the first chords of every sequence when there are more than one chord per each one. This is a limited tool for creating melody because of the possible discontinuity in register.

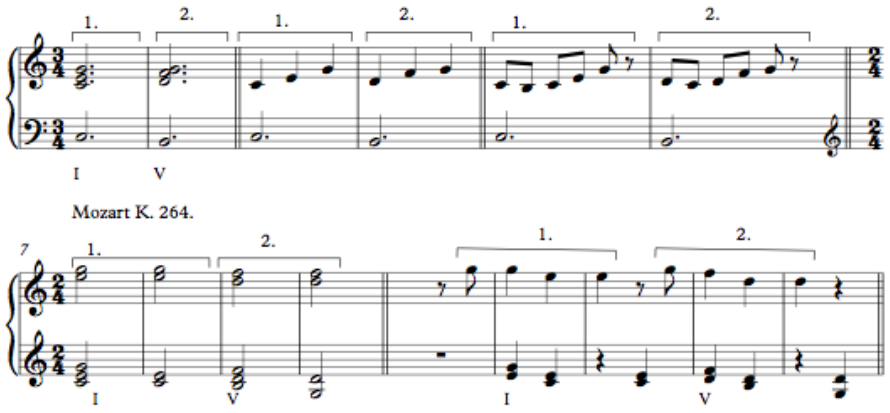
Ex. 2. Transport adaptation.



[4] I am using "progression" with this meaning: the effect of transporting (diatonically or with few alterations) an harmonic-melodic model. In case both parameters (melody and harmony) are not working in a unified way, I would say "melodic" or "harmonic" progression.

C) Voice-leading adaptation. It occurs when the same melodic motive is adapted to the new harmonic situation with the minimal movement for fitting well into the new chord. It is based in the current practice of voice-leading in classical harmony., so that the comparison between the first tone of each fragment shows the most logical movement of the involved part. This is the general tool for developing melody on a single motive, more than the transport adaptation explained above.

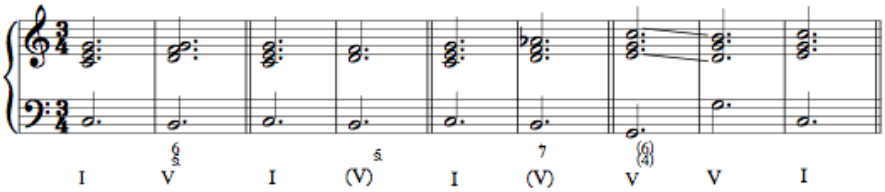
Ex 3. Voice-leading adaptation.



2.2.2. Harmonic symbols.

The harmonies in the examples are usually represented with Roman numbers for the fundamentals and Arabic numbers for the figured bass. When the roman number is in brackets, this means that the root is absent but it has to be logically supposed. Most chords that are apparently rooted on the leading tone of a key are in fact dominant chords, so we are marking "(V)" as a root to unify the dominant function on the same root. The typical case is the diminished seventh. On the other hand, the brackets for the arabic numbers mean that they are considered ornaments. The usual case is the cadential 6/4, that is considered a dominant chord with two apoggiaturas. Secondary dominants will be put in italics.

Ex. 4. Chord symbols.

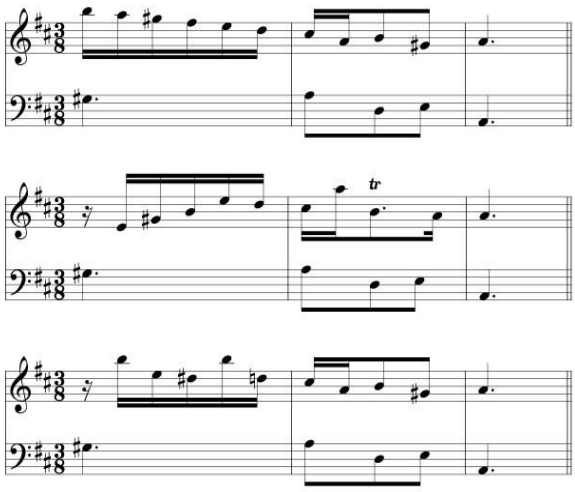


2.2.3. Developing patterns.

The IEM methodology uses one of the most common resources in improvisation teaching:

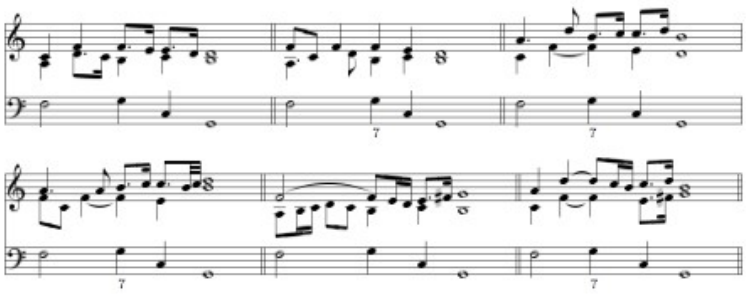
learning through patterns. In this aspect, the old Italian masters of *Partimento*[5] and the jazz tutors are close. As we know, the Partimento was a system of teaching composition grounded on basso continuo formulae that was very popular in Europe during the eighteenth century, grounded in Italy and having its center in the Conservatory of Naples. Francesco Durante (1685-1755) was one of the most famous masters, with an important collection of *Partimenti*. The next instance shows several realizations for a bass pattern with a simple A major cadence in 3/8

Ex. 5. Durante, *Partimenti Dimunuti,* 4.



The basso continuo manuals are also full of variants of bass patterns and their possible standard realizations:

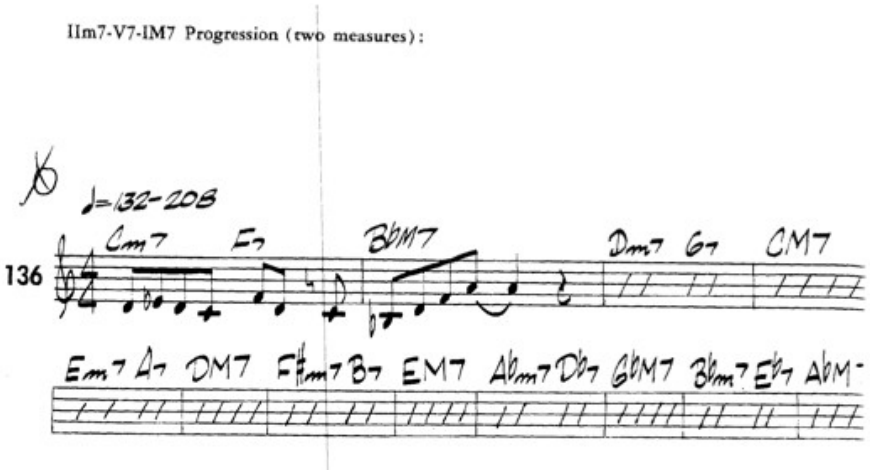
Ex. 6. Muffat, *Regulae Concentuum Partiturae,* 1699, 129.



Most jazz students are trained by practicing an extensive repertory of harmonically-based patterns (some of them extracted from solos of the leading figures) that they play in all keys and in several combinations. At a certain point, some of those patterns become part of the student´s language and can be used spontaneously.

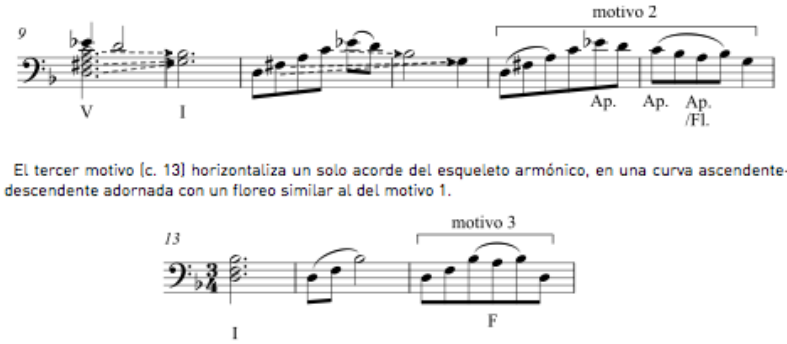
[5] For further information, see G. Sanguinetti,. *The art of partimento: history, theory, and practice (*OUP USA, 2012).

Ex. 7 Jerry Cocker, *Patterns for Jazz*, 96.



In the IEM methodology we also work with patterns that are derivated from the repertory, involving harmonic, melodic and textural parameters.

Ex. 8 Emilio Molina/Daniel Roca, *Armonia,* Vol. 2., 26



Having already the elements, the work is organized with strategies such as level change, motivic adaptation, progressions involving several keys , etc. with different transformations like changes of melodic direction or adding-sustracting ornamentation. Then, those elements can be combined more freely and used for developing larger units.[6]

The proposed exercises in this research will start usually in the same key that the last Mozart instance, but they are designed for being transported and developed into larger harmonic structures. Most of them are given incomplete on purpose in order to prompt the reader to continue them following the same logic. The abbreviation "t.b.c." will be at the end of some and means "to be continued". They are only tools for practice, not intended for a goal in themselves, but should be played as finely as possible. Roughly a half of them are presented in one-chord form, others in simple alternance I-V and a few in four or eight-bar structures. This research is focused on handling textures and melody when the harmonic and melodic framework is given; that is the way variations develop. The strategies for creating those harmonic and melodic frameworks on the classical style

[6] This is going to be explained into detail in the chapter 10.

are in general outside of the limits of this research, but in the chapter 10 I will give some remarks for that. For going further, I strongly recommend the work of Robert Gjerdingen about the Galant Style that examines carefully the formulae and *schemata* that were used more extensively in the period.[7] But when trying to set up larger musical units with the material that I am giving here, the themes that Mozart himself uses in his variations and in general the opening statements of most of his sonatas can provide the needed framework for a long term practice.

[7] Robert Gjerdingen: *Music in the galant style* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

PART ONE: BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

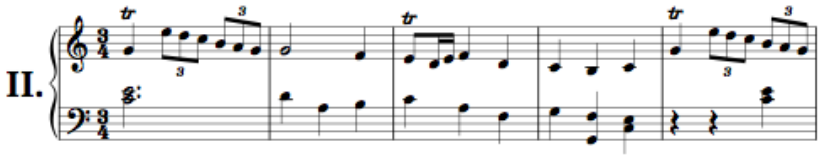
3. Improvised embellishments and variations in the eighteenth century.

3.1.The art of improvising embellishments.

In the middle eighteenth-century writings concerning music there is an omnipresent word, "taste", especially with its epithet:"good taste". In fact, around that time an important change took place in the concept of beauty, reacting against the complexity and seriousness of some baroque art. A simple and graceful tune that gently moves the affects was considered a kind of ideal in music. This led naturally to music in which lightness, flexibility and elegance are strongly desired. Too much craftwork is considered suspicious, because compositional artifices such as counterpoint or complex harmonies might disturb the nature of the desired singing melody. The polemics between Scheibe and J.S. Bach or between Rameau and Rosseau can serve as illustrations of those discussions.

But many baroque habits remained in this later music, namely the wide use for ornamentation. The musicians that were active about 1760-70 and even later were actually trained in the late baroque tradition. Most period treatises have long chapters devoted to the art of embellishing, either written down with symbols or small notes, or extemporized. We know from many sources that the improvised ornamentation was closely tied to the art of singing.[8] There are testimonies everywhere that claimed that singers were prodigal to excess in doing it. And if singing was a model for instrumental music, it is logical that improvised ornaments were also frequent in some instrumental music that allows it, like solo keyboard pieces. In fact, some scores seem naturally to invite improvised embellishments.

Ex. 9 Alberti, Sonata op. 1, no.3, II (1748).



As the classical style evolved towards its maturity, composers tended to take more care in writing down the expected ornamentation. The use of more sophisticated textures, counterpoint devices or increasingly complex harmonies made narrower the room for improvising embellishments. From aproximately 1780 we can observe this process in the music of Mozart or Haydn.[9]

[8] See for instance Johann Adam Hiller, *Treatise on vocal performance and ornamentation,* ed. Suzanne J. Beicken (Cambridge University Press, 2001) English translation of the German original from 1780.

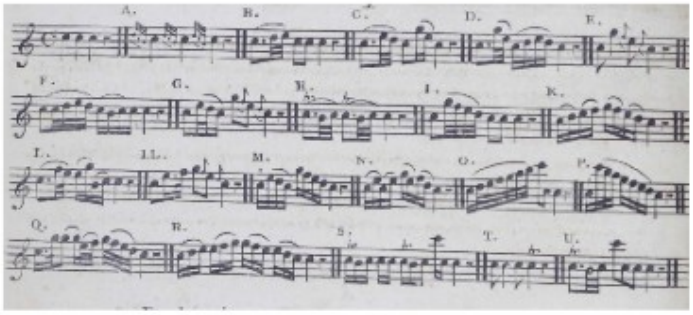
[9] Regarding Mozart, this fact is widely examined in Frederick Neumann, *Ornamentation and improvisation in Mozart* (Princeton University Press, 1986).

Nevertheless, this was a fairly gradual process and it is currently assumed that in some contexts this practice remained alive. Sources like the exuberantly ornamented version of the solo in the slow movement from the Piano Concerto K. 488 by Mozart, written by one of his better students, Barbara Ployer, proves that it was not still a forgotten art. Regarding this source, it probably doesn´t match our ideals about classical music because of its overloaded appearance, but it might reflect an actual practice even in mature classical style.[10]

There are certain disagreements among the specialists today. Frederick Neumann claims that improvising ornaments in Mozart must be practically reduced to his early works, where his writting was more sketched and closer to the Italian influence.[11] But, on the other hand, Robert Levin gives more room for this practice considering that some genres are so essentially tied to improvisation that spirit must remain.[12] In any case, the informed taste and the achieved experience of the performer will play an essential role as well.

One of the most detailed explanations about extempore embellishments can be found in the famous Quantz treatise, having focused the extensive chapter 13 entirely to this subject. This chapter was published independently in a english translation in 1780.[13] Quantz shows a systematic approach to the issue, considering that he presents an almost exhaustive ornamental elaboration from about 20 basic melodic patterns that can be found in practically any musical piece from that time. Here is the first example provided, based on three repeated notes without harmonic changes:

Ex. 10. Quantz, *Easy and Fundamental Instructions,* 4.



Quantz also provides a lot of valuable information about when and where they may fit better, some considerations related to their different *affekten*, advices for their right execution, etc. He states that the Adagio is the proper medium for doing these extempore variations,[14] but that may be introduced in faster tempos with good taste and criteria.

[10] See Robert D. Levin,."Improvised embellishments in Mozart's keyboard music." *Early Music* 20.2 (1992): 221-236.

[11] Neumann (1986). 183.

[12] Robert D. Levin, "Mozart and the keyboard culture of his time." *Min-ad Israel Studies in Musicology Online* 3 (2004), 25-26.

[13] The English complete tittle was *Easy and fundamental instructions whereby either vocal or instrumental performers unacquainted with composition, may from the mere knowledge of the most common intervals in music, learn how to introduce extempore embellishments or variations; as also ornamental cadences with propriety, taste, and regularity, translated from a famous treatise on music, written by Johann Joachim Quantz, composer to his Majesty the King of Prussia.* This is the source that I am using for future references.

[14] Quantz (1780), 19.

In his *Klavierschule,* Türk devoted the chapter 5 to the use of extemporaneous ornamentation.[15] It has three parts, thefirst and second on cadenzas and fermatas and the third on improvised ornamentation. Again, the slown tempo is claimed to be the most suitable.

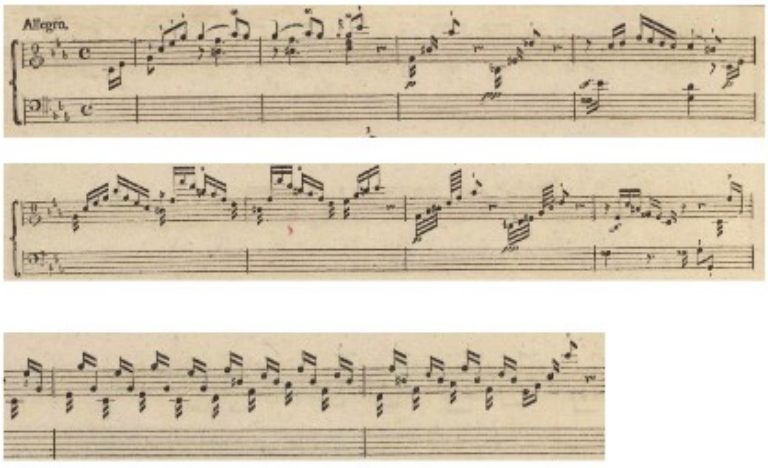
Some pieces that we have in both ornamented or unornamented versions are another source of information, where the written-out embellishments were intended to serve as a guide for their improvisation. They can be viewed as a sort of record of a regular improvisation. Other pieces where the ornamentation is fully integred in the texture and playing an essential role, like variations, are also important.

I am going to examine now the three cases where most authors agree that are best suited for improvising embellishments: rondos, sonata repeats and adagios.

3.1.1. Rondos.

Considering that, structurally, a Rondo is based on regular repetitions of one refrain, it makes sense to do something else whenever the refrain comes again. Certain amount of variation is so consubstantial to rondos that in most cases composers themselves actually included it in the scores:

Ex. 11 C.P.E. Bach, Rondo in C minor, Wq 59, bars 1- 4, 10-13 and 14-15.



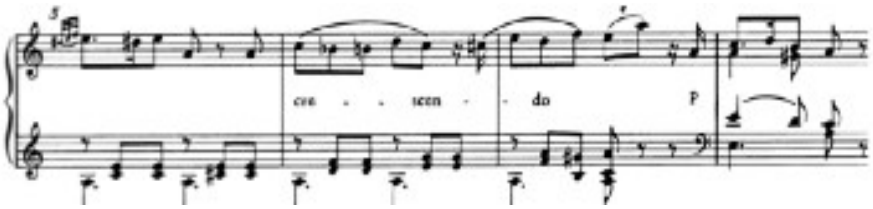
In this case there is much more than a simple ornamentation of the theme, the musc actually involves the use of variation techniques. In the second fragment the harmony remains with the same bass line, but in the third that line disappears.

The use of subtle embellishments is something more frequent, for making the refrain easily recognizable. Here we have a excellent model for mature classical music:

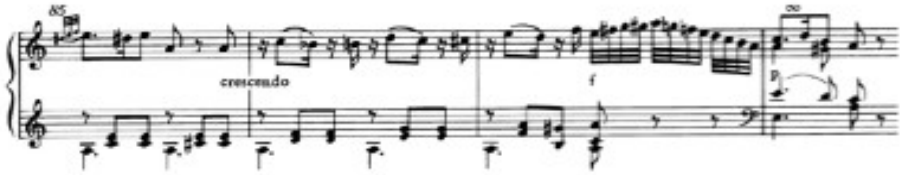
[15] Daniel Gottlob Türk,. *School of clavier playing, or, Instructions in playing the clavier for teachers & students* (Univ of Nebraska Pr, 1982). English translation of the german original from 1789.

Ex. 12 Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, mm. 5-8 (I), 85-89 (II), 133-136 (III).

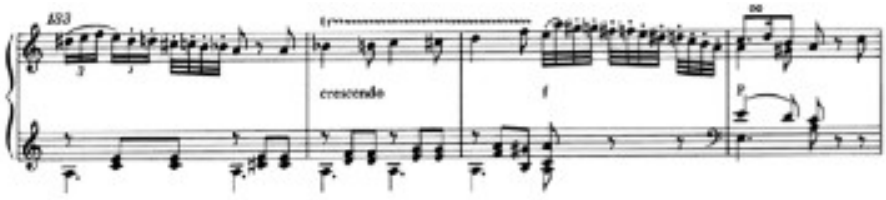
I



II



III



The slow tempo and the character here are in favour of the embellishments. The increasing activity in the melodic part is typical, as in the old tradition of diminutions. The use of rhythmic displacement is quite noticeable in II, that gives extra expresivity to the sigh figures in the chromatic ascending line. The left hand pattern remains unchanged, but in this case it is an expressive tool: it adds to the piece a resigned feeling of indifference to whatever happens on the singing melody.

There is a tendency to consider as absolutely unalterable any written out ornamentation (I refer to regular notes, not symbols or smaller notes). But sometimes it doesn´t mean that we should play only as written in order to perform according to historic practice: some instances of varied repeats in rondos were intended for publishing or written for particular circumstances, adressed to students or amateur players. I think, in agreement with Levin,[16] that the freshness derived from the use of some extempore ornamentation does more for the historical concern that the worries about the exact timing of an apoggiatura. The point in the rondo is not falling into excess, in order to always make the refrain recognizable. It is also important to have in mind the formal shape of the piece and reinforce it with the ornamentation, as Mozart did in his Rondo. Embellishments can have

[16] This thesis is recurrent in his writings. See, for instance, "Performance practice in the music of Mozart." *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart* (2003): 227-45 or especially "Instrumental Ornamentation, Improvisation and Cadenzas." *Performance practice: music after* 1600 (1990): 267-291.

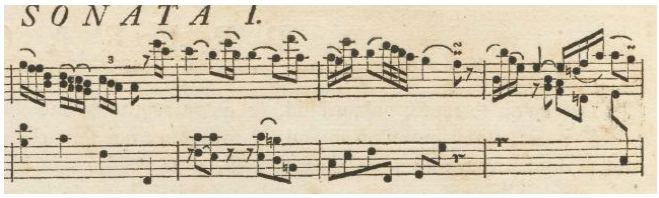
some important functions, such as emphasing tension points and contributing to the structural equilibrium of the piece.

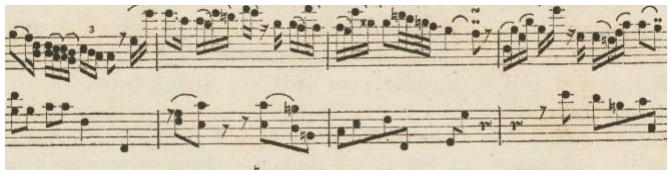
3.1.2. Sonata repeats.

The tradition of ornamenting reprises has close connections with the *Aria da capo*. Here, when repeating the first verse and music, the singers used to add naturally some flourishes. The idea of varying the music repeated in the same key was logically extended to instrumental music.

The *Sonates avec Reprises Variées* (Sonates with varied reprises), composed by C.P.E. Bach and published in 1760, are a precious written testimony of this practice. Bach was a respected composer and a reference for future generations. The pieces are keyboard sonatas, usually in three movements, with all the ornamented repeats written out in the score. This was not so usual, as the common practice was writing repeat signs and leaving the ornaments to the discretion of the performer. In the following instance of the first sonata, the changes include even the left hand part:

Ex. 13 C.P.E. Bach, *veränderten Reprisen Sonaten.* I (mm. 3-6, 13-16).





If we look at the whole movement, we can conclude that variation doesn´t always mean simple addition. In fact, there are some procedures of rhythmic displacement that are hard to classify, but that are inherent to the variation techniques that we will examine further. Some resources used by Bach are:

a) Changes in arpeggio patterns involving new leaps with the addition of apoggiaturas (bars 3-6, 1 4-17)
b) Use of contrary movement in the melodic line and octave changes (bar 7, 18)
c) Addition of short run figures (bar 9, 20)

To what extent can we apply such things in later works? The music of C.P.E. Bach, with its use of small motives and stereotyped formulas, has some flexibility for them, but in works like a late Mozart sonata they are more problematic and every case should be carefully examined. The complex textures and the more personal style leave less room for them. Considering Haydn, there are many *galante* sonatas, close to C.P.E. Bach or Wagenseil, that are better suitable for this practice.

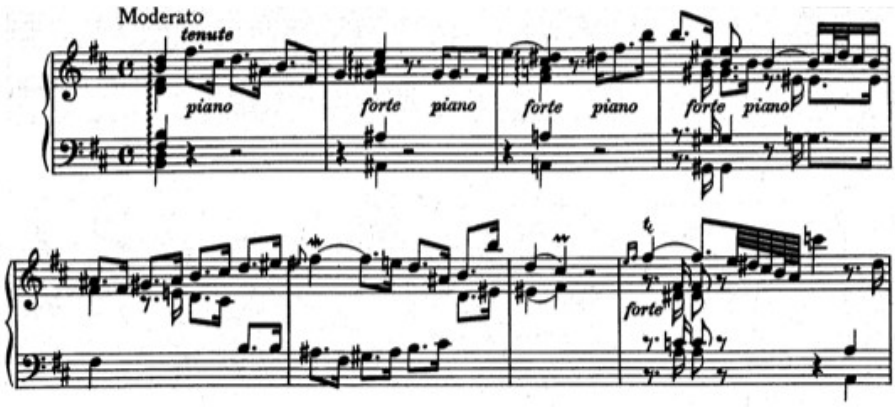
I cannot totally agree with the idea of practically avoiding any ornamentation in repeats. It is true that in some chamber and symphonic works Mozart wrote literally in the reexposition the same material as in the exposition, sometimes with slight colour or dynamic changes, so structurally it is not really needed as far as the piano sonata uses the same form. But in my opinion, it is more likely that Mozart wrote only the indispensable changes, just like he did with dynamic indications, and some small things might be done out of the score and taken for granted. And on the other hand, solo keyboard repertory was always the privileged medium for improvisation, so that we can consider that some habits remained there apart from the sonata formal conventions (and in the period they were not so aware of them) in spite of being more forgotten in the ensemble works.

3.1.3. Adagios and slow movements in general.

The use of embellishments is consubstantial to the nature of slow movements. Fortunately, there are also some good instances of ornamented versions that can be used as models.These are perhaps the best testimonies that we have about that practice. They were written out for different reasons, like publishing, helping some non-experienced players or even serving as illustrations in the treatises themselves. In the Türk treatise we have a short Adagio with this purpose.[17] It is true that we have a lot of very ornamented full-written adagios. But the more flexible relation that those musicians had with the musical text can enables us for considering much of the instances as one possible realization among other options, but not exactly as a sacrosant text fixing the immovable will of the composer.

The B minor Sonata Wq 49/6 (1744) by C.P.E. Bach has ornamented versions for the Moderato and the Adagio, first and second movements respectively. The most interesting is the first, of which the unornamented original is already full of detail. The *affekt* of the piece is highly expressive with a certain solemnity.

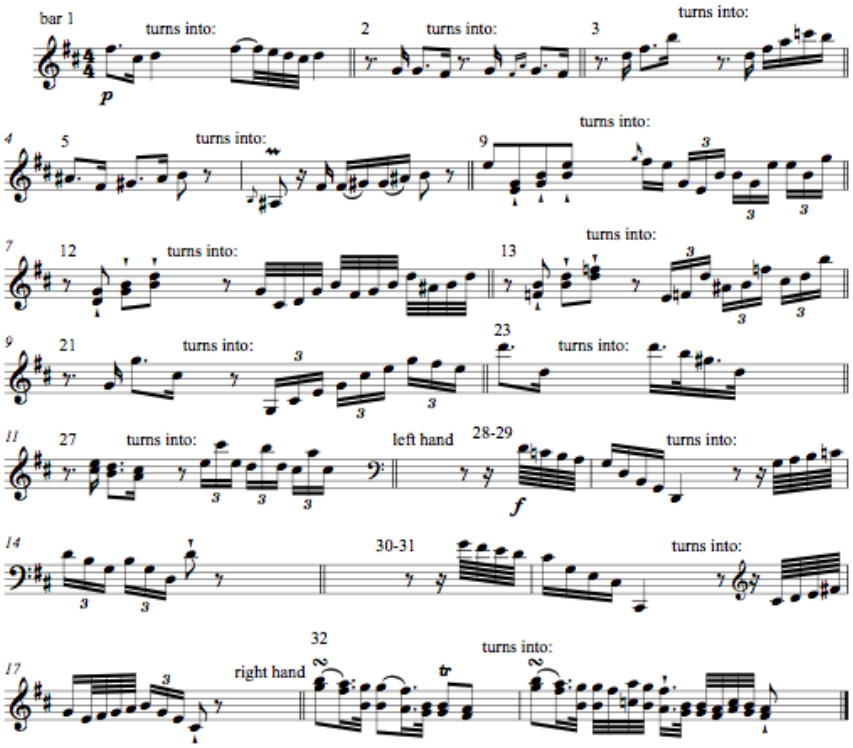
Ex. 14, C.P.E. Bach, Sonata Wq 49/6, I.



Now, let´s examine the most remarkable variants that Bach uses in the ornamented version. In some cases, as in bar one or five, the ornamented pattern is repeated to the extent that the original figure does, but in most cases Bach prefers to take differents variants in every measure, as in bars 9, 12 and 13 . The corresponding measures in the original are here in numbers (not italics) at the top left of every bar:

[17] Türk (1982), chapter 5, part 3.

Ex. 15 Variants used by Bach in the Moderato of Wq 49/6.

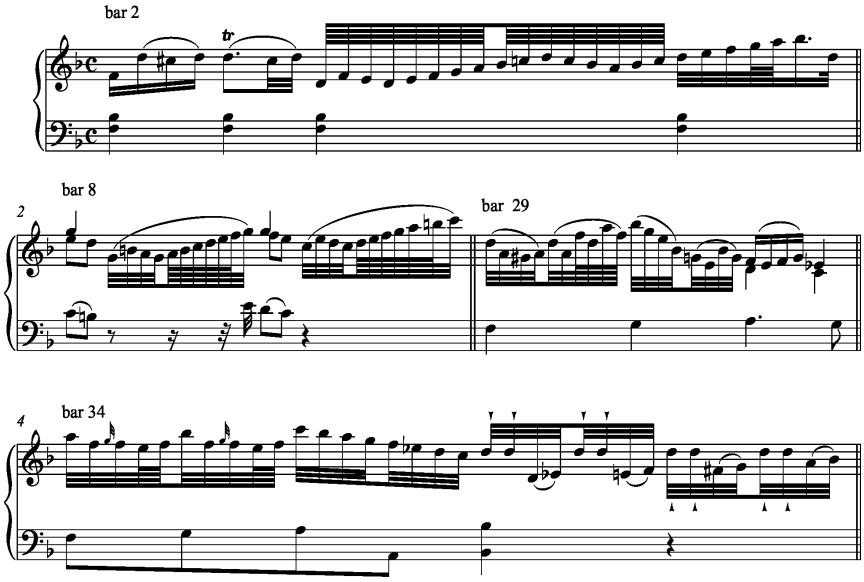


In the first bar, Bach uses one of the most common extemporized ornaments: the so called *tirata*, described by Leopold Mozart in the eleventh chapter of his treatise.[18] It consists simply of a sequence of step-wise ascending or descending notes that can be used in filling some leaps. Some other usual ornaments are also here: the use of neighboring tones (bars 2, 3, 32) mainly as apoggiaturas or the sigh figures (bar 5). But more interesting is the use of different arpeggiated formulas, involving sometimes non-chordal tones, like in bars 9, 12 and 13, from the simpler and unvaried patterns in the original. The ornamentation also based on arpeggios, includes in bar 21 change of direction and a much wider range. In bar 27 we have in addition the use of inverted intervals. Later, the transformations observed in bars 28-31 are actually true variation techniques, going beyond ornamentation. The changes in line direction and range are quite noticeable.

Mozart was particulary appreciated in playing adagios. The audiences praised his excellent taste in ornamenting, the delicacy of his playing and his sense of expression. From his youth he trained himself in writing embellishments for his own compositions and by others as an usual practice in composition. He has a very embellished Adagio in F major (K. Anh. 206a=A65, ca. 1772), which the non-ornamented original is lost and probably not by Mozart himself. The piece is particulary exuberant and shows some features of his later ones. I will outline some details:

[18] Leopold Mozart, *A treatise on the fundamental principles of violin playing* (Oxford University Press, 1951), 212-214 English translation from the German original (1756).

Ex. 16. Melodic patterns in the F major Adagio K. Anh 206a.



1. Observe the frequent combination of runs with turns, avoiding the use of pure scale patterns and making it more expresive (bars 2, 8 and 34). In the first example, Mozart takes care of placing the third at the begining of almost every beat, in order to show us clearly the harmonic content (as it is absent in the left hand). This makes the run more sinuous.

2. The use of light and fast arpeggios going to the treble, but obviating standarized figures (bar 29). The arpeggios are almost always combined with neighboring tones and turns, without any dryness.

3. The taste for the ascending chromatic apoggiatura (bar 34). It is true that it is a common feature of the classical style, but here it is quite integrated in the flourishes.

Two more excellent instances in a more mature style can be found in the Adagio variation inside the D major Piano Sonata K. 284 and the second movement of the F major Sonata K. 332, both with unornamented and ornamented versions by the author himself.

Some adagios have a rondo structure, like the second movement of the Sonata K. 457. The written embellishments usually printed as a fixed text were intended by Mozart only for publishing, as Professor Levin pointed out.[19] In the original manuscript Mozart used a kind of short-writing marking "D.C." the return of the theme, taking thus for granted that with every statement of the theme it should be done with some extra ornamentation.

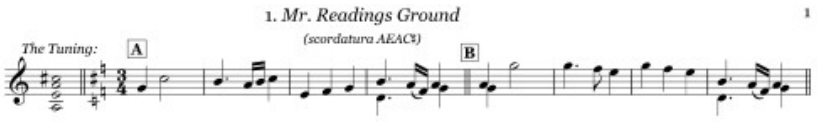
[19] Robert Levin, "Improvising Mozart." *Musical improvisation: Art, education, and society* (2009): 143-149.

3.2. General connections between variation techniques and improvisation.

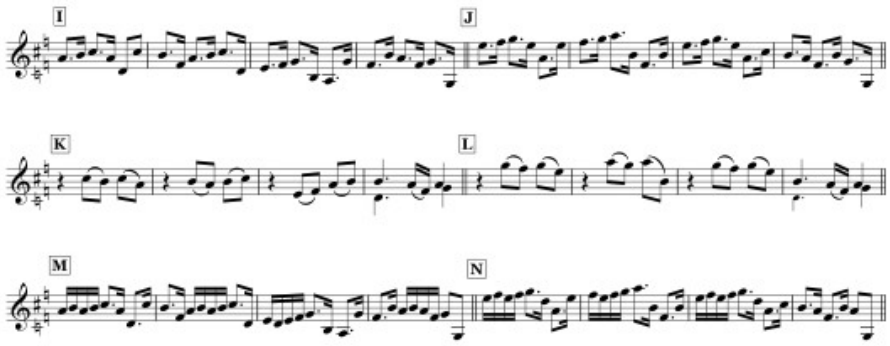
From the very beginning of the keyboard repertoire, dance forms, variation and improvisation were almost part of the same thing. The couple of dances for harpsichord, such as the pavana-gagliarda dyad, with their repetitions, naturally gathered some extempore ornamentation. Considering the abundance of *basso ostinato* patterns in the genre, the art of variation (improvised or not) had a wide scope for its development from late Renaissance to Classical period.Those works were called in different ways depending on national features and other aspects, so we have the Italian *partite*, the Spanish *diferencias* or the characteristicFfrench *pasacailles*. They were evolving towards a sophisticated re-elaboration of the given material, but in their origin were based almost only on the so-called "diminutions" technique.

This technique consists broadly in the division of the original thematic notes in shorter values with decoration purposes. In the following instance, the theme or ground is presented firstly and some diminutions below:

Ex. 17, *The division violin,* John Playford.



Some diminutions on the above ground:



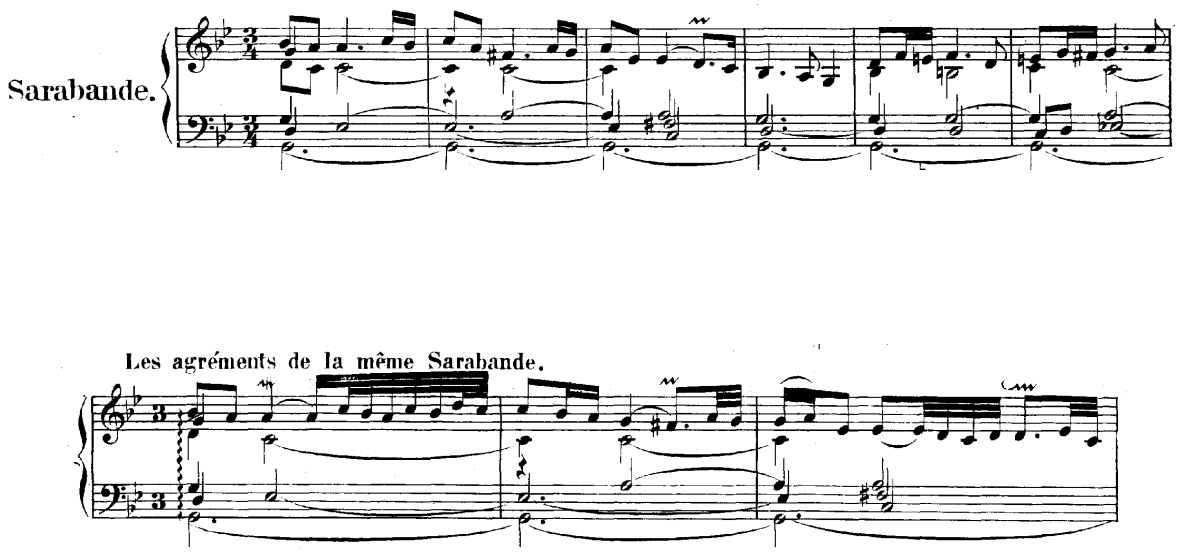
This practice was already current in the eighteenth century, so that in 1740, James Grassineau defined variation as:

Les différents manières de jouer ou de chanter un Air, soit en subdivisant les Notes en plusieurs de

moindre valeur, soit en y ajoûant des agréments.[20]

Friedrich E. Niedt published in 1706 a treatiste on variation, focused on variations of the bass line. He concluded his work presenting a suite of dance movements with the same bass line, considering the features of each dance. He put several doubles, that are close to the modern concept of variation (they were called "arpeggiated variation" by himself). A double is, in essence, an ornamented version of a previous dance with the use of diminutions. As Sisman recalls,[21] the practices of thoroughbass with the habit of decorating melodies, both rooted on improvisation, find a natural result in the written-out doubles.

Ex. 18, J. S. Bach English Suite in G minor, BWV 808. Sarabande and its double.



Mozart used to refer his own improvised performance with the term "variations" from 1781;[22] that proves the close relation between both terms in his mind. As we know, some variation sets by him were based on actual improvisations and the traces of extempore playing are spread into this whole repertory. Free passages such as fermatas, marked "capriccio" or "cadenza" connect some variations when they are close to the end. But the proper writing in most variations, with a tendecy towards the systematic use of an uniform material during each one, has a lot to do with features of the improvisation process itself.

4. Mozart between performance and improvisation.

[20] Quoted in Elaine Rochelle Sisman, *Haydn and the classical variation* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 52.

[21] Sisman (1993), 53

[22] Katalin Komlós, "Ich praeludirte und spielte Variazaionen" in R. Larry Todd and Peter Williams. *Perspectives on Mozart performance*. (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 31.

4.1. Mozart´s activity as improviser and performer.

Mozart´s legendary improvisation skills are a substantial feature of his genius, widely documented since the early biographers. Franz Xavier Niemetschek, one of them, wrote at the end of his life:

> If I could ask God for one more pleasure on earth, it would be to hear Mozart improvise again on the keyboard, no one who has not heard him has the faintest of what he was capable of achieving.[23]

But the references to improvisation practices in Mozart are in those testimonies more considered as part of the legend than as a subject for serious study, to the extent that only in recent years some scholars are asking themselves what Mozart did when improvised and in which context or traditions we can understand it today. And that perhaps is more important, what relevance it has for the knowledge of his music and of the classical style in general.

Professor Katalin Komlós is one of the most renowned specialists in this matter, also fortepiano performer. In his works we learn that improvisation, performance and composition were intextricably tied in Mozart, so that the borders between them are not always well defined. Some Mozart "compositions" were just extemporized, somehow neither sources nor any mentions of a written version have been found, as the *Figaro* variations whose repeated performances are reported.[24] But at the same time, a few actual written pieces have moments which demand to be completed in improvisation, with a kind of short-hand writing (K. 19d, III) or incomplete passages in several piano concertos like the K. 488 or 537. Considering that much piano music by Mozart was intended for his students or publishing we may wonder what would be left if he composed music only for playing himself.

In our days, improvisation has a sort of diffused meaning, but in the days of Mozart it had a much more concrete meaning not so distant from that it has nowadays for a well trained jazz musician. Improvisation is music spoken. As we can speak a language after knowing some general rules (grammar, syntax, logic) that work equally for both literature and oral comunication, the knowledge of some codes enabled musicians to either compose and improvise at a certain point of their training. Since Mozart´s early childhood, the abilities connected to improvisation were an essential part of his music education, grounded in the basso continuo and in a wide repetory of embellishments and galante patterns.[25] Apart from his indubitable gift, he had a lot of extemporization habits acquired during his formation that became, so to say, part of his system.

Extempore playing had some different genres as well. As Komlós discussed,[26] in Mozart we can distinguish between *gebundene* and *frie* arts of improvisation, according to the old German tradition. The first refers to the church style, based on counterpoint and devoted mainly to organ playing, that Mozart loved and practiced so much. The fugues that an adult Mozart wrote have something to do with those habits. The second group can include the free fantasia style that also

[23] Quoted in Hermann Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* (Yale University Press, 2007), 826.

[24] Komlós, (1991) 34-35.

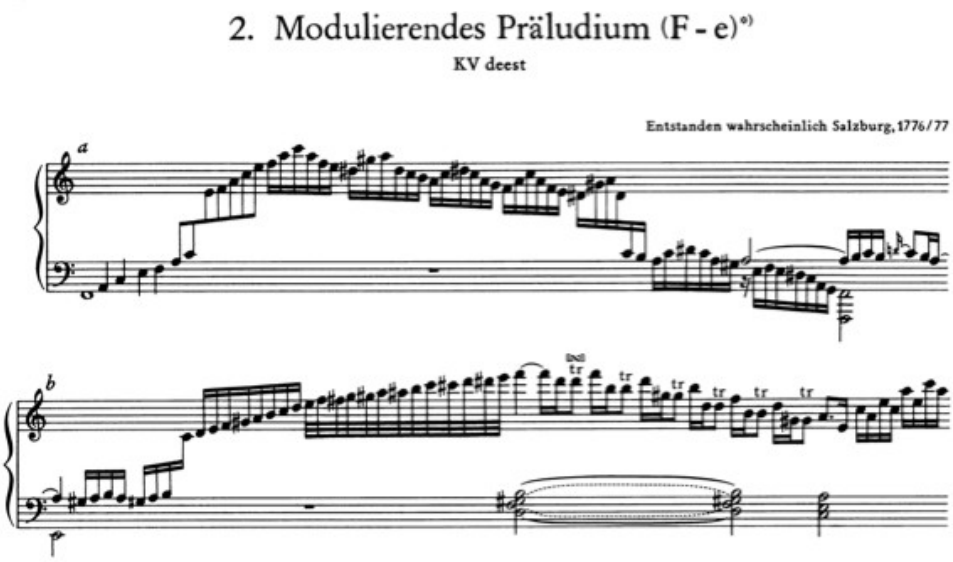
[25] In the opening pages of Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the galant style*. (Oxford University Press, 2007) he traces an eloquent picture of the importance of those galante codes for being succesful as a musician in the courts at that time.

[26] Komlós (1991), 29-30.

involves preluding, cadenzas and leads-in. The *galanterie* deserves a mention apart; it is a word that Mozart himself used for the new fashionable keyboard style based on "refined and articulate performance" where variations can be placed.[27] The reference instrument is here the fortepiano, capable of subtle nuances of dynamics and accentuation. In all improvisation styles, the clavichord could equally be used.

The free fantasia style can be found in several written works, which might give us a glimpse of what could be his improvisation style in this genre. Among the few instances, the preludes that Mozart wrote for his sister are considered a sort of illustrations of that.

Ex. 19 Mozart, Modulating Prelude.



This piece can be inserted in the German tradition as practiced by C.P.E, Bach, with no bar lines and capricious writing with abundant arpeggios and surprising harmonies. One of the compositional features that can be observed in the Mozart instances (also in the fermatas and cadenzas that essentially share the same style) is the long permanence of every chord, with repeated figurations based on the level change procedure besides long connecting runs.

We know that some works by Mozart, especially piano variation sets, originated in extempore performance and written down afterwards. This is well documented for the K. 398 and 455, but plausible for the K. 264, 354 and 613.[28] According to their circumstances of composition and features. Almost every Mozart performance included free extemporizations and the variations on famous songs or arias were among the most favoured by the audience, which used to ask for them just on the spot. The spectacular techniques in some of the variations (see the second variation of the K. 398) can be explained by the enthusiasm of a risk-taking improvisation.

Apart from the variations themselves, Mozart surely performed improvised variants in some

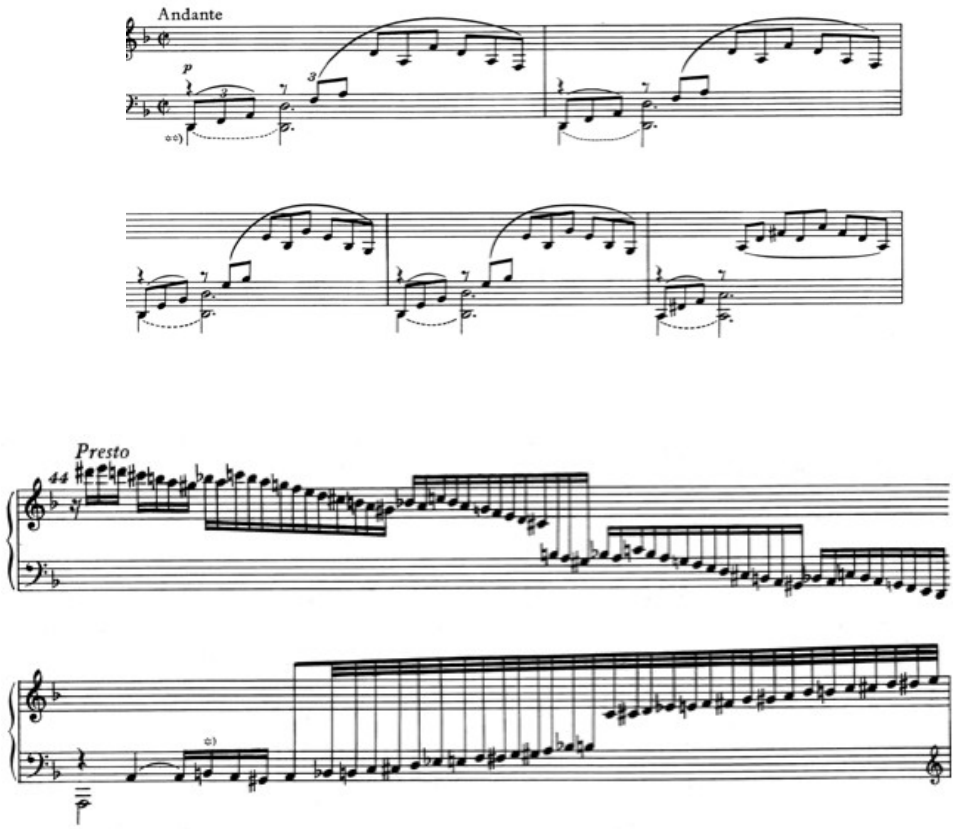
[27] Komlós, Komlós, Katalin. *Fortepianos and their music: Germany, Austria, and England, 1760-1800* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 51.

[28] Komlós (1991), 40.

written pieces according to the current practice, especially in adagios.[29]

Also, Fantasies may be pictures of Mozart´s improvising art, but only one of the three that we have for solo keyboard has come down to us as a complete work (K. 475). The K. 396 in C minor (finished by Stadler) and the K. 397 in D minor have more typical features of extempore playing. The non-thematic arpeggios at the beginning, and ,especially in the K. 397, the frequent fermata passages or the wandering theme are not distant from C.P.E. Bach.

Ex. 20, Mozart, D minor Fantasia K. 397 (opening and lead-in in bar 44).



The Fantasia K. 475, on the contrary, seems a much more structured work, in which nothing looks casual. This piece (and some of the cadenzas that wrote for his late piano concertos) seem to be something else. I believe that they reflect improvisation in a much more indirect way. Improvisation might be here playing the role of an abstract source of inspiration for a carefully written work.

4.2. Mozart´s solo keyboard Variations: the 14 sets in context.

The pieces studied here are the fourteen completed sets of variations for solo keyboard by Mozart. There is one additional set of uncertain authorship, the variations K. 460 on Sarti´s theme "*Come un agnello*", and other set in F major (K. 45) that is actually a transcription of the third movement of the violin sonata K. 547. Mozart also composed two variation cycles as movements of his piano sonatas K. 284 and K. 311 and one for piano duet K. 501. I have restricted myself to the fourteen mentioned above for methodological and practical reasons. This group constitutes in itself

[29] In spite of having many fully-written cadenzas, Mozart used to play "whatever occurs to me at the moment" refering to the Piano Concerto K. 271 as quoted in Christop Wolff, "Cadences and styles of improvisation" in R. Larry Todd and Peter Williams. *Perspectives on Mozart performance*. (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 232.

a vast and rich universe, covering from 1766 to 1791. The Mozartian procedures for variations are extensively showed there, so that taking even more material would have made this research hard to manage, considering that the goal here is mainly practical. In any case, those alternative sets have been regarded and taken into consideration from general viewpoints. For example, the D major cycle contained in the Sonata K. 284 has been cited in the previous chapter but it is absent in the part devoted to practice, because there are enough instances in the fourteen sets for illustrating this aspect.

Classical variations are traditionally considered a minor genre compared to sonatas or symphonies. After the masterworks of Johann Sebastian Bach, the form experimented a certain decline that can be appreciated in the scarce interest showed by his sons. It is frequenly stated that only when Beethoven composed the Op. 34 and 35 (1802) the genre flourished again, returning to its forgotten compositional values. In this view, the so-called "sonata form" eclipsed practically any instrumental music during the classical period.[30] Some facts underrated variation sets: their apparent absence of a careful structural plan, being a sort of sucesive miniatures; the use of naive and popular tunes as themes or the orientation to a broader audience, with some apparent concessions in detriment of musical quality. According to that, we can understand that Mozart variations are much less performed than his sonatas or concertos, with the exception of the famous variations on *"Ah, vous dirai-je maman"* K. 265.

Nevertheless, a thoughtful look to the genre in Mozart call in question some of those prejudices and bring out other important values. Especially after 1777, the organization of the variation sets reveals a careful planification, that is even more noticeable in the mature works. As Katalin Komlós explains,[31] they usually follow this model:

Theme	Variations 1-x (conventions and original ideas)	Penultimate var. Adagio	Last var.- change of tempo and metre	CADENZA- Original theme

The balance between virtuosism, delicacy and expression is eloquently expressed in the sequence of variations. For instance, in the K. 264, the contained *minore* variation is followed by an outburst of virtuosism with a couple of variations in broken octaves. The extremely ornamented adagios, with no parallels in other piano pieces by himself, have the sense of a lyrical meditation before the trouble-solving finale, with a calculated dramatic effect.

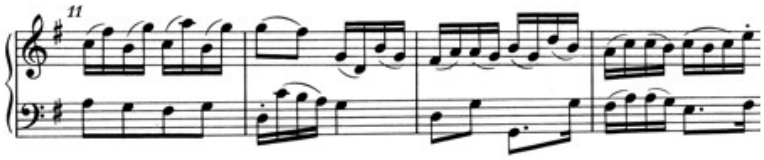
The fact that all variations were published during the lifetime of Mozart informs something about the preferences of the audience and the market. Variations were then fashionable and Mozart knew that people enjoyed the game of recognizing their beloved songs and arias costumed in different clothes. This orientation to the stage is not a weakness in terms of musical quality, being instead an oportunity for a more extroverted piano style, hard to find in his sonatas. We know that Mozart intended some of his variations as pieces for promoting himself (K. 179, 354, 264, etc.), so that they can illustrate even better than other pieces about his performance abilities.

[30] See, for instance, Charles Rosen. *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (WW Norton & Company, 1997).

[31] Komlós (1991), 35.

The first two sets K. 24 and K. 25 were composed in Holland in 1766 during the first extensive trip in which the *Wunderkind* Mozart was introduced to the main European cultural centers. On their way back from England to the continent, the family spent seven months in Holland, which explains the Dutch origin of the two used themes: *"Laat ons Juichen, Batavieren"* (K. 24 in G major) and *"Willem van Nassau"*(K. 25 in D major). They are conventional galante pieces, the second rather more virtuosistic, that fit perfectly well on the harpsichord. Nevertheless, the detailed writing in some fragments of the K. 24 suggests also the clavichord. (It should be noted that from this point all the musical examples are from Mozart variations, except when a different source is indicated).

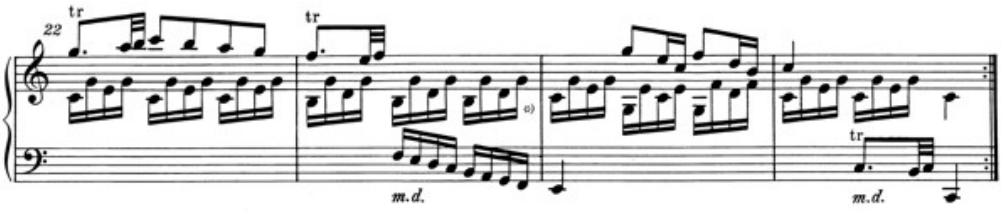
Ex. 21 K. 24, II, mm. 11-14.



The used techniques for variation are mainly based on the diminutions tradition, with a quite uniform texture in each variation. They have always a graceful character.

The two following sets, K. 180 and K. 179, written in Viena (1773) and Salzbourg (1774) respectively, have distinctive features. The first one was based on Salieri´s opera *"La fiera di Venecia",* demostrating a new style that finds in the fortepiano its ideal medium. This short set is surprisingly full of dynamic and articulation markings, in a general *amabile* character. The K. 179 on a J. C. Fischer´s *Menuett* is, on the contrary, a large and virtuoso cycle that constitutes his first major achievement in the genre. According to Komlós,[32] he frequently performed this piece in his pre-Vienna years and it circulated in some simplified versions, as did some other cycles such as the K. 264 ot the K. 573 for the use of students or amateurs. He uses here some pianistic devices developed further in later works, such as broken octaves and hand crossing:

Ex. 22 K. 179, IX, mm. 22-25.



With the four sets composed in Paris in 1778 Mozart established his mastery of the genre. Among them there are two ambitious cycles, the K. 354 on *"Je suis Lindor"* and the K. 264 on *"Lisont dormait" ,* pieces probably connected with improvisatory performances and with the Mozart´s pianistic virtuosity at his highest.[33] Those variations exhibit basic key features of his

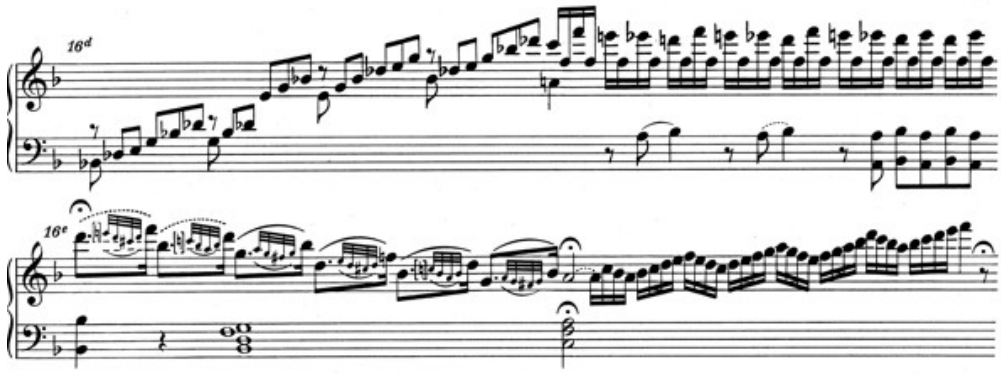
[32] Komlós (1991), 42.
[33] Komlós (1991), 40.

mature variation output:

1. The "character variation". That means that the variations are not intended mainly in terms of ornamentation, so that every one has a special singularity that goes beyond that and represents a true character portrait.
2. .The new role of virtuosism as a dramatic resource, avoiding the simpler technical display as a goal in itself. The evolution is quite noticeable from the K. 179 to the K. 264 from this perspective..
3. The use of improvisatory passages, such as cadenzas or leads-in, connecting some variations which actually recreate the feeling of an extempored performance and reinforce the unity of the work. The *Caprice* between the VIII and IX variations in the K. 354 has a dramatic function as well, moving from the playfulness of the previous minuet to the contrapuntal severity of the coming *minore.*
4. The superbly embellished adagios, with their extreme careful notation. They sometimes have got written down repeats with new variants.

From the K. 352 to the K. 613 all sets were composed in Viena except the Duport variations K. 573, written in 1789 in Postdam. The K. 398 and the K. 455 are linked by a concrete circumstance: they were the result of an improvised performance of Mozart in March the 23th of 1783.[34] The two sets have somewhat contrasting features: the K. 398 on Paisello´s theme *"Salve tu, Domine"* is perhaps the closest instance of a written out improvisation, but the famous K. 455 on Gluck´s theme*"Unser dummer Pöbel meint"* seems a more a through-composed work. In the former, everything has the appearance of having been naturally generated from the keyboard. The simpler variation techniques, the prominent role of virtuosism and the abundance of free passages reveals its status of a true "frozen improvisation".

Ex. 23 K. 398. *Cadenz.* Improvisatory passages close to the ending.

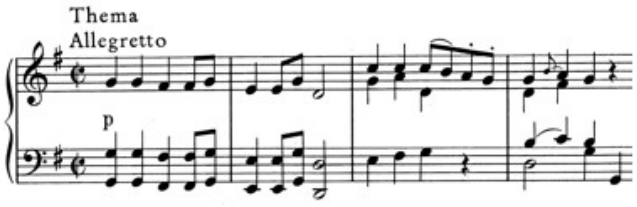


The K. 455 is perhaps the Mozart´s masterwork in the genre. The balance between all the elements is at such a level of refinement that it has only some parallels in his best piano concertos. The theme is taken from the Singspiel *"Pilger von Mekka"* by Gluck, a work with the fashionable Turkish ambiance. The theme has the comic feature of the rude opening in parallel octaves,

[34] Mozart, *Variations für Klavier* (Wiener Urtext Edition 1973), preface.

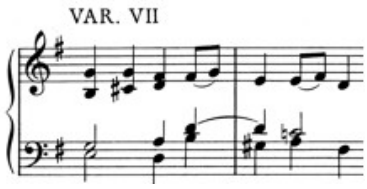
picturing perhaps the ignorant “thinking” people :

Ex. 24 K. 455, Theme.



Mozart treats the stepmotion descending fourth from G to D with a endeless repertory of imaginative ideas, displaying some clever reharmonizations:

Ex. 25 K. 455, VII.



Among the last three cycles, K. 500, 573 and 613, only the latter on Schack´s theme matches the high standards of the K. 455. The two ones before are works of indubitable quality but not above the Parisian levels. Maybe the external circunstances that made him compose them have something to do with that: according to Müller (1973, Critical Notes of the Wiener Urtext Edition) the K. 500 was composed for getting some money from the Editor Hoffmeister and the K. 573 for getting the favour of the cellist Jean-Pierre Duport.[35] On the other hand, the K. 613 has some points in common with the K. 398, namely the aspect of a major fantasia composed in one single gesture and the importance of improvisatory passages. But here everything is in a deeper level in terms of piano writing and compositional organization. The more dense piano scoring, the alternation of *maggiore* and *minore* or the changes in tempo and metre make of this final set a more than worthy *finale* for his whole pianistic output.

[35] Critical notes of the Wiener Urtex Edition of Mozart, *Variationen für Klavier* ,1973.

PART TWO: VARIATION TECHNIQUES AS BASIS FOR IMPROVISATION.

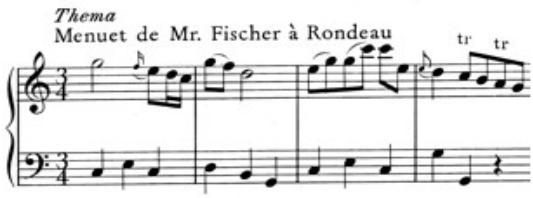
5. Primary elements of texture: the accompaniment patterns.

The Mozart piano variations constitute an excellent display of the typical accompaniment patterns for keyboard of their time in a widespread range of styles and characters. I will study the most remarkable ones.

5.1. Simple bass line.

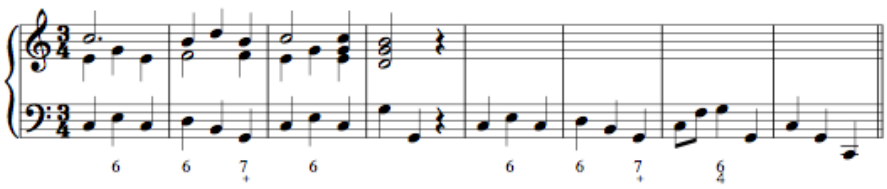
Here I am referring to a current bass part written as a basic line. The transparent two-part texture that often results has its roots in the basso continuo practice and was a typical feature of galante music, especially italian. Although one can find it through his whole production, it is much more frequent in his first four sets:

Ex. 26 K. 179.



Some of those bass parts can be used as basso continuo exercises. The goal is to be aware of the harmonic implications of the line. Some figures can be added based on the actual pieces, trying to keep the textures not overcharged and taking the phrasing into consideration. When starting, it is better to take the instances with less ornamentation and slower harmonic rhythm. Here is one suggestion for practice based in Mozart K. 179:

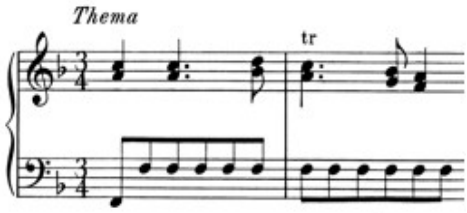
Ex. 27 Basso continuo exercise.



5.2.*Trommelbass*, *Murky* bass[36]. Ornamented variants.

Trommelbass, that means drumming bass, occurs when the bass tones are often repeated causing the effect of a drum:

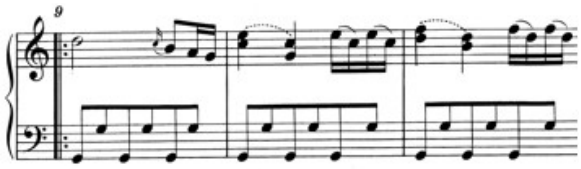
Ex. 28 K. 398.



This effect gives internal pulse to the bass line and works well in pedal points when some rhythmic activity is required.

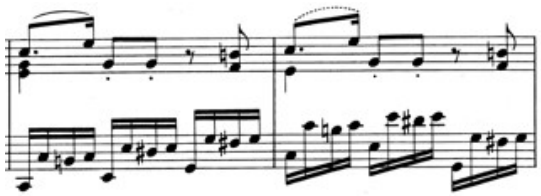
The so-called *Murky* bass is the bass in broken octaves, that also has an usual presence in galante and classical style:

Ex. 29 K. 179, mm. 9-11.



I give the name "ornamented Murky" to any formula that results of adding apoggiaturas or neighbouring tones to a simple Murky bass:

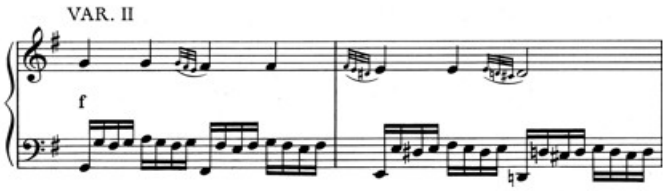
Ex. 30 K. 398, mm. 61-62.



When the Murky is ornamented with a long turn it results in a typical classical-style pattern:

[36] This terminology can be found in Daniel Gottlob Türk, *School of clavier playing* (University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 369-370.

Ex. 31 K. 455, II.

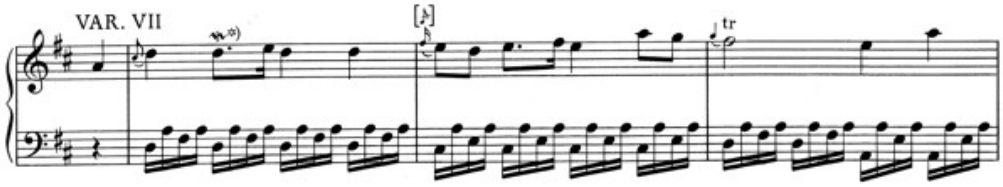


5.3. Arpeggiated patterns.

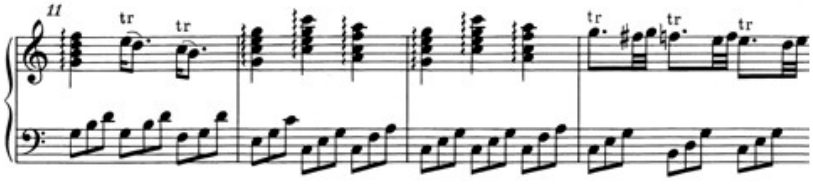
5.3.1. Basic Alberti bass.

The basic Alberti bass refers to the variants of arpeggio accompaniment in continuous movement, usually in short values (8th and 16th notes) within the limits of one octave. This is called "harpeggirte Bässe" by Türk.[37] The Alberti bass was almost omnipresent in the keyboard idiom from the galante music to the early romantic period. Since the early classical style has slower and more regular harmonic rhythm in comparison to the preceding baroque, the Alberti bass provided an indispensable ground for the melodic development in pieces of lively character with no complexities of texture. In Mozart variations it is extremely frequent. Here I will show some variants:

Ex. 32 K. 25, VII.



Ex. 33 K. 179, V, mm. 11-14.



In general terms, the Alberti basses can be classified depending on how much energy they give to the parts above, assuming either a rhythmical or a lyrical quality. This has to do with the note values, the more or less frequence of the bass pulse and with the tempo. Faster values and frequent bass pulses give more energy. When a lyrical atmosphere is wanted they acquire other features. For instance, in the Adagio variation of the K. 264, in spite of being a bass per beat, the

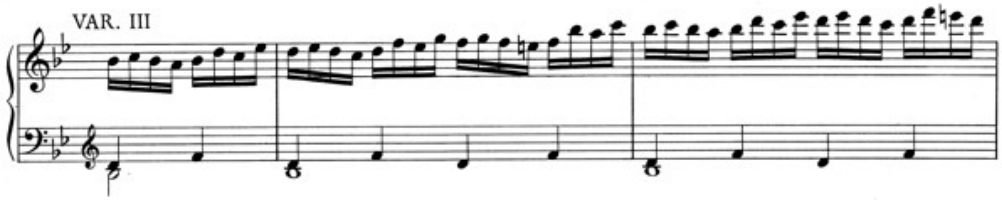
[37] Türk (1982), 370.

slow tempo and the relative heaviness of the double notes make a different effect:

Ex. 34 K. 265 XI, mm. 9-10.

This other variant, not so usual, is appropriate for a pleasant character and for ornamented melodies. Its piano and legato atmosphere lacks the vivacity of the typical ones. The explicit tenuto of the basses, one per bar, and the note values speak for themselves.

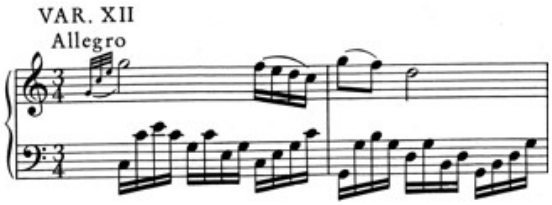
Ex. 35 K. 573, III.



5.3.2. Extended Alberti basses.

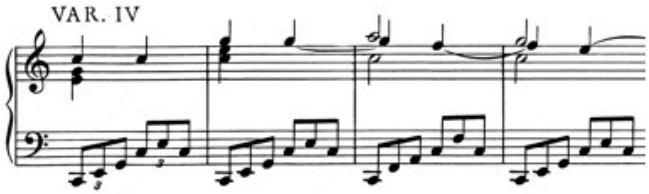
When the Alberti bass reaches more than one octave, it acquires a sort of virtuoso character that fits perfectly when more brilliance is demanded. I use for this the expression “extended Alberti bass”:

Ex. 36 K. 179 , XII.



Something similar can be observed in other instances. In the fourth variation of the K. 265, the solidity of the left hand here makes the effect quite different from a conventional Alberti bass, with the incisive quality of that register in the fortepiano:

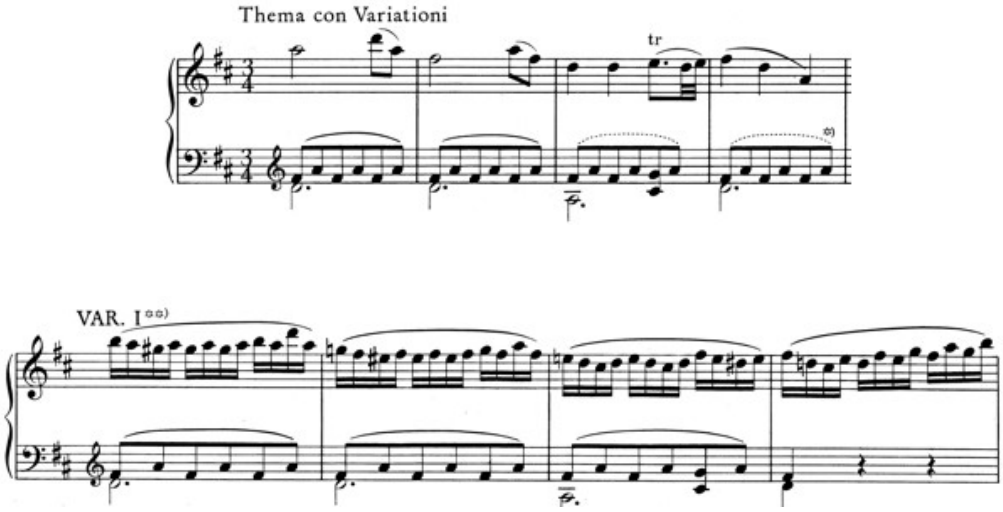
Ex 37 K 265, IV.



6. Variations based on ornamental procedures.

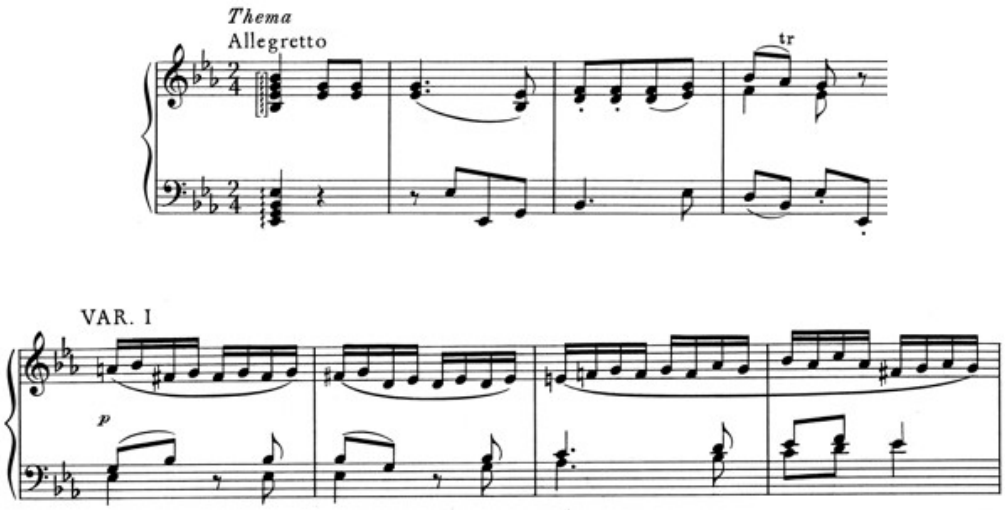
Usually, the first variation is chiefly an ornamented version of the theme, a technique based on the old tradition of diminutions. Although in most cases Mozart introduces slight changes of texture and character even in the first variation, in a few instances he remains in the realm of pure ornamentation, with practically no changes in harmony, dynamics or accompaniment patterns:

Ex. 38 K. 573, Theme and first variation.



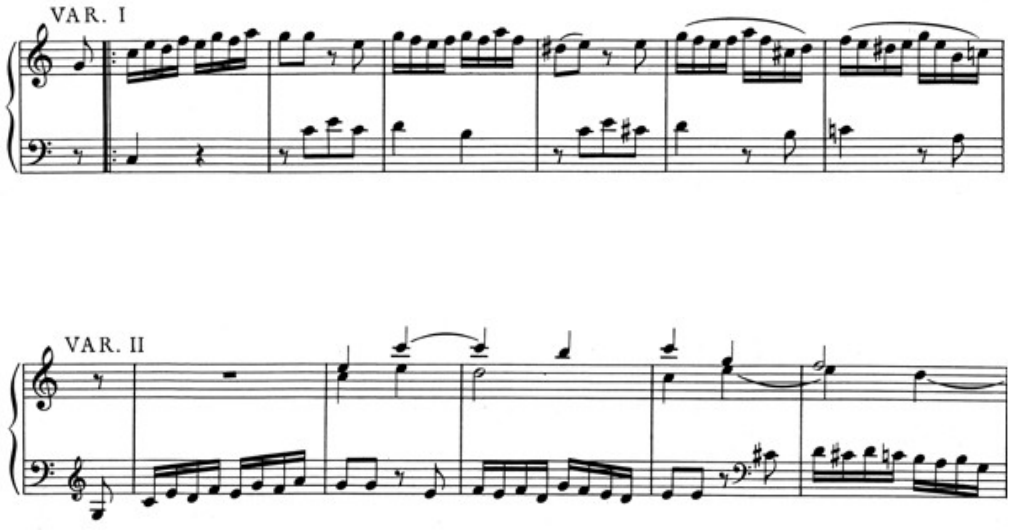
But more frequently, the first variation incorpores something else. In the following instance Mozart turns a quasi solemn theme into a lighter mood, even something humorous. The fluidity of the continuous sixtheenths rhythm, the absence of the thick opening chord and the chromatic apoggiaturas remove the initial weight. But the new rhythmic activity in the left hand is also an essential ingredient for the general effect:

Ex. 39 K. 354, Theme and first variation.



In accordance with the genre convention, the first two variations are frequently designed in pairs, using first the same or related figuration in the right hand and switching to the left in the second. (For example, see K. 264, 265, 354, 500). Usually, when using the left hand the patterns are clearly modified because of the necessary bass and harmonic functions, sharing the melodic elaboration with that role:

Ex. 40, K. 264, I and II.



Mozart displays in this type of variations an endless imagination and taste, especially in the mature ones. He shows a special ability to keep the feeling of freshness, playing with constantly renowed combinations of figures and avoiding any mechanical approach. Even when he is using a quite uniform texture (for instance, K. 265, I, IV, VI), he keeps the attention with slight changes here and there or taking advantage of the obsessive repetition as an expressive tool, either getting a mechanical sense or a sort of stubborn character. But assuming that these kind of variations are

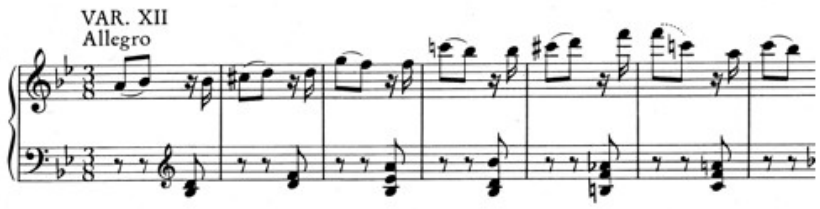
among the most usable for learning improvisation tools, I am going to analyze some basic procedures and see their potential for generating practical proposals. Although in fact they are not confined to the first variations in every set (they can be found across the whole numbers), is in the first ones where they are more systematic.

6.1 Appoggiaturas and neighbouring tones.

This is about figures that use the above or below auxiliary tone of a chord tone. The auxiliary tone can be accented and unprepared,[38] in which case it is called an apoggiatura. When prepared, it is a suspension When the auxiliary tone is unaccented, usually prepared,[39] it is called "neighbouring tone" (abreviated as n.t.). When unprepared, I will call it "incomplete neighboring tone", that is in fact an unaccented apoggiatura. Besides the passing tones, those are the basic elements of melodic ornamentation. Both appoggiaturas and n.t. have the characteristic of being often chromaticized when ascending in its resolution, but remaining diatonic when descending as can be noticed in the examples.

6.1.1.Appoggiaturas. The apoggiatura reinforces its character if it is taken after a leap. It can assume the aspect of a graceful note or of a relatively long expressive one, depending on the context:

Ex. 41 K. 500, XII.

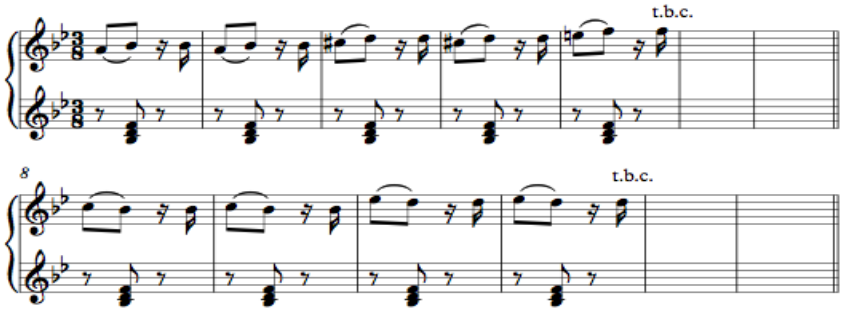


I propose the following exercise based on the K. 500, removing the harmonic complexity and taking only a tonic chord. The development is through level changes (in fact Mozart uses it in bars 1-2), with ascending and descending apoggiaturas. Each level is played twice for better assimilation.The exercise should be done on different chords:

[38] Following the most extended concept in music theory, in this context I mean "prepared" when the non chord tone is preceded by the same tone as being part of the previous chord.

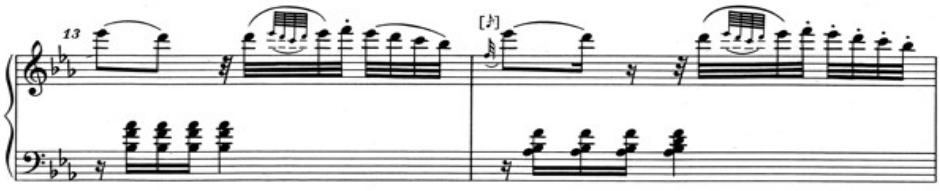
[39] Here, "prepared" means that the chord tone in which the auxiliary resolves is also played just before, being the dissonance in the middle of them. The result is a sort of measured mordent.

Ex. 42. Short apoggiatura practice.



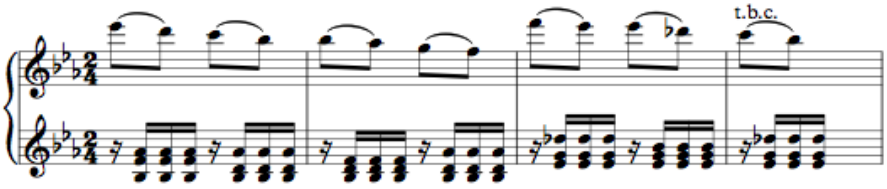
In the next instance the apoggiatura has a different character, long and expressive. It belongs to an Adagio:

Ex. 43 K. 354, XII, mm. 13-14 (note the E flat in the treble at the begining of each measure).



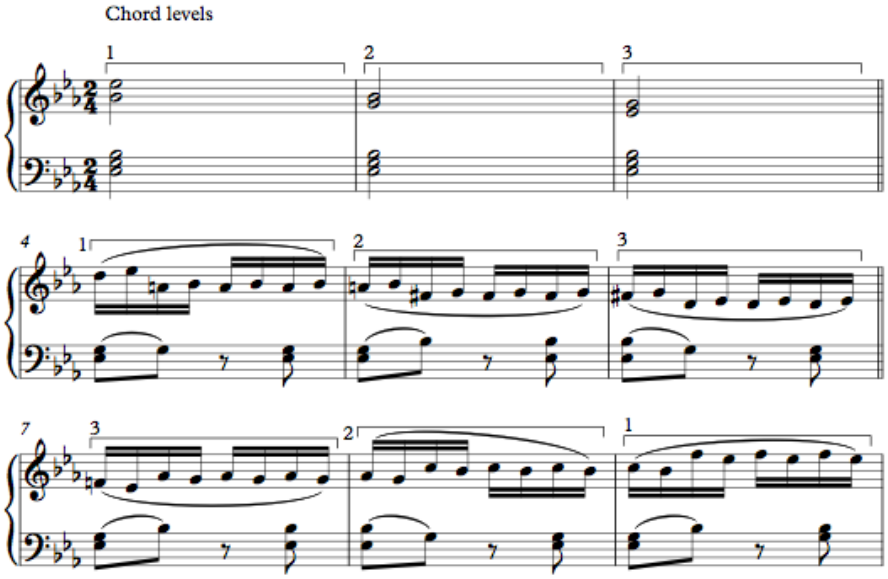
We can derive this exercise, focused on seventh dominant chords resolving in other dominants through the fifths circle. The starting key is E flat major. It must be played quite slow:

Ex. 44 Long apoggiatura practice.



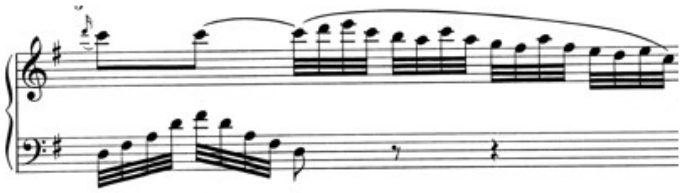
Based on the ex. 39, I propose working on chord levels and changing direction. This also can be done with other chords.

Ex. 45 Apoggiatura combinations.



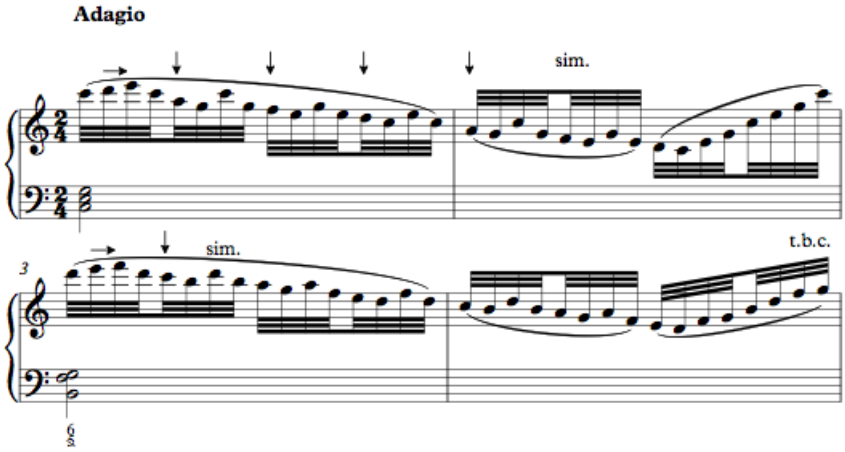
The apoggiaturas mixed with auxiliary chord tones generate some typical patterns. Here we have a figure that combines descending apoggiatura with auxiliary upper chord notes. In this instance we can assume the permanence of the dominant chord including the ninth (see from the fourth 8th note of the measure):

Ex. 46 K. 180, V, m. 3.



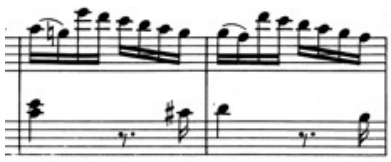
In the next proposal, I use a basic tonic-dominant framework with voice-leading adaptation that can be easily transported to every key. The horizontal arrows are for passing tones and the vertical ones for descending apoggiaturas:

Ex. 47 Longer pattern with apoggiaturas.



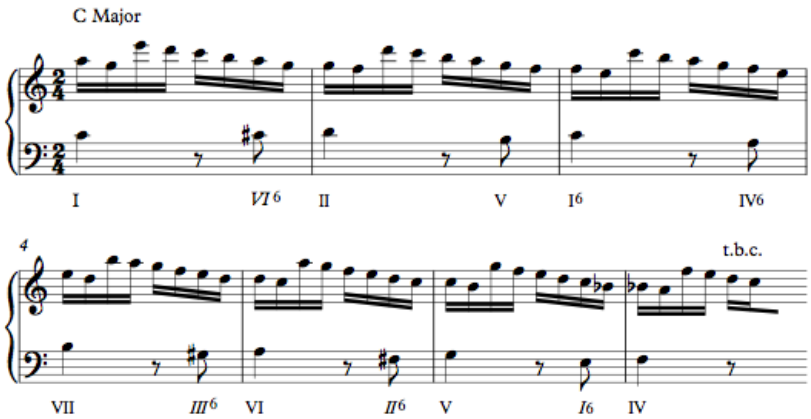
The apoggiatura in this instance generates a melodic pattern good for descendent sequences, which Mozart uses frequently:

Ex. 48 K. 265, I, mm. 4-5.



Taking this model I propose the following exercise. It is a descending progression essentially diatonic but with a few alterations for creating direction (usually by means of secondary dominants, marked in italics).[40] The roots are written for having an idea of the tonal logic.

Ex. 49 Descending progression with apoggiaturas and runs.

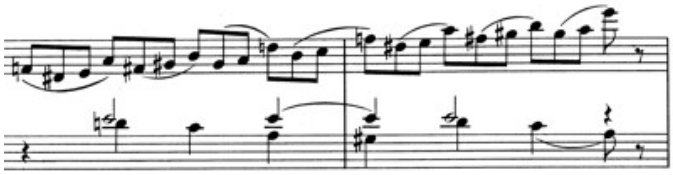


When the chord tone is approached by both auxiliaries above and below (or vice versa), we

[40] For other instance, see the mm. 22-25 in Mozart C Major Piano Sonata K. 279.

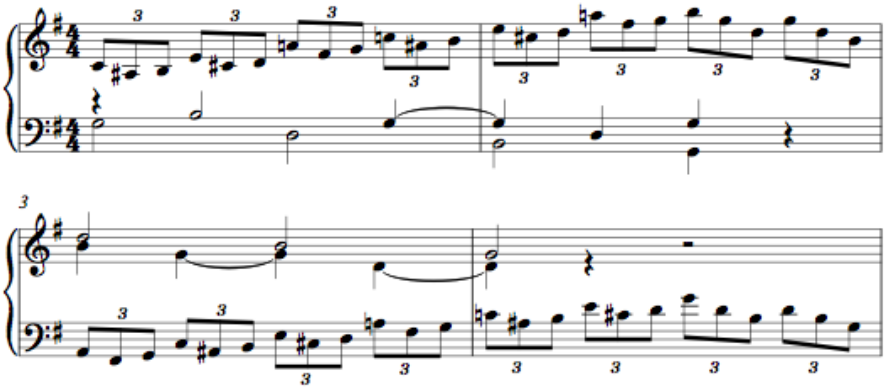
have the so called “double apoggiatura”. It is a kind of incomplete turn:

Ex. 50 K. 455, III, mm. 5-6.



For both hands, here is a proposal for practice on a G major chord. The other parts have been adjusted for completing harmonies:

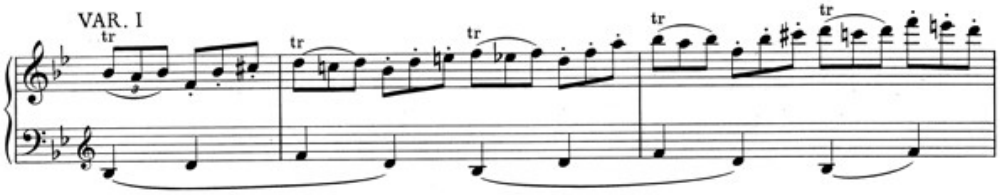
Ex. 51 Double apoggiatura.



6.1.2. Neighboring tones.

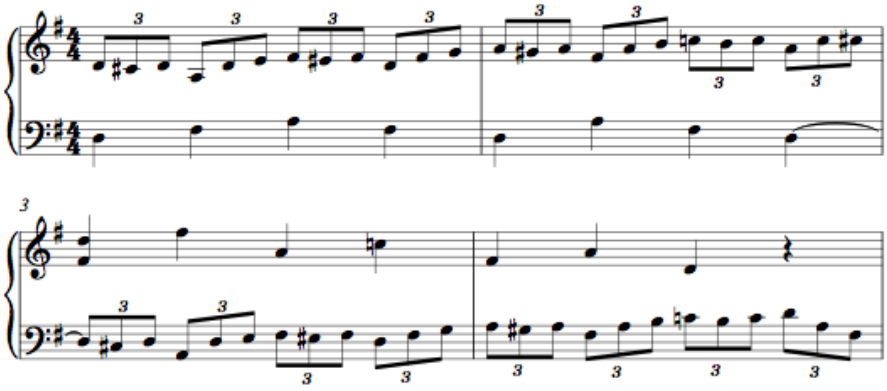
On the beats 1 and 3 of every bar we have lower neighbouring tones in a mixed figure that uses passing tones as well, ascending for levels in a tonic chord:

Ex. 52 K. 500, I.



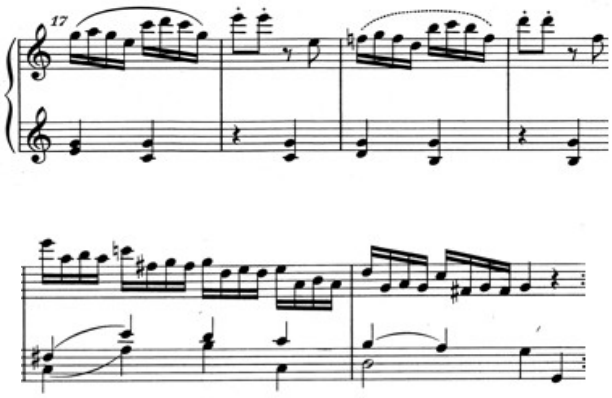
This instance can be use directly as an exercise, extended in a wider compass, using other chords including dominants. Here is one possibility for a dominant seventh in G major:

Ex. 53 N.t. practice through levels.



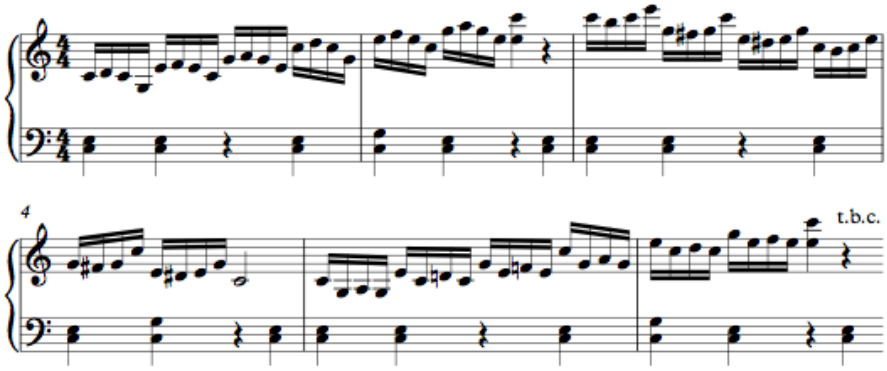
The use of n.t. can be combined with simple arpeggio designs:

Ex. 54 K. 264, I, mm. 17-20 and K. 455, V, mm. 11-12.



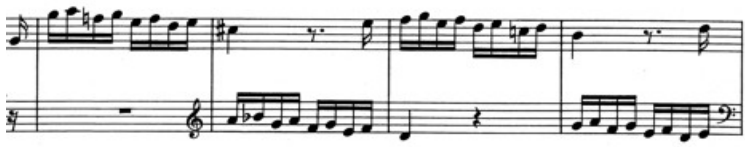
I propose this exercise that combines the two patterns given above and also uses direction change in the n.t.

Ex. 55 N.t. and auxiliary chord tones.



In its incomplete form, missing the main note at the end of the three-note pattern, it is quite effective in run pasagges in progression.

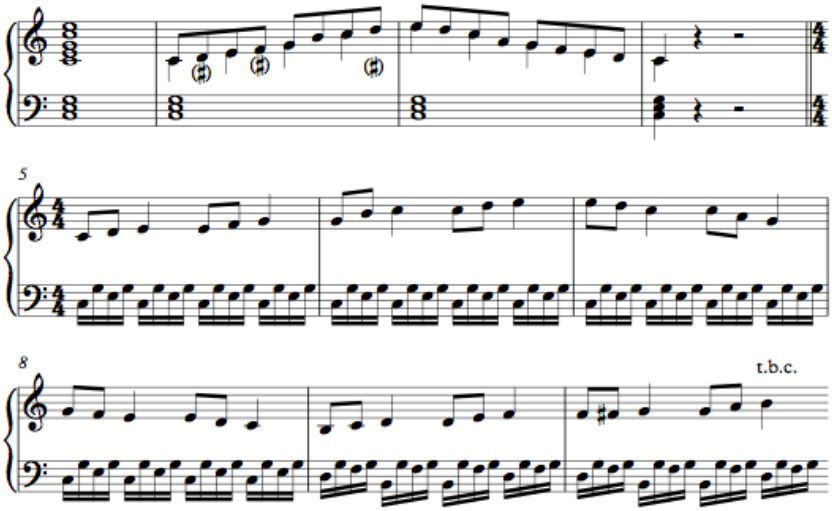
Ex. 56 K. 264, II, mm. 17-20.



6.2. Passing tones.

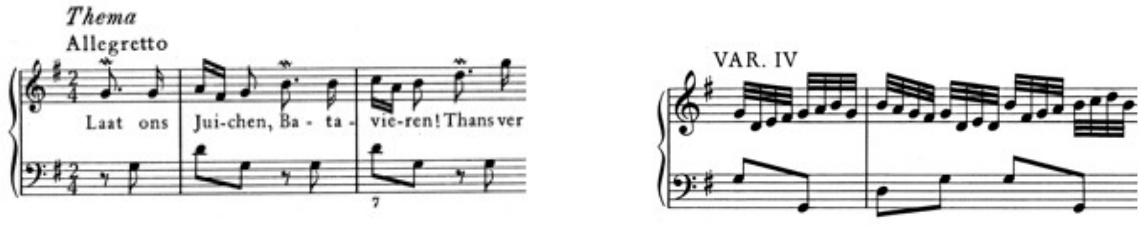
Passing tone (p.t.) is a non-harmonic tone that connects two different chord tones by step motion without a change in direction . It is the basic element for creating melodic movement, assuming that neighbouring tones basically have an ornamental function. When the distance between the chord tones is wider than a third, it is a common practice (not only in Mozart) to choose the closest passing tone to the arrival chord tone. When ascending, they can be chormaticised in order to create more direction.

Ex. 57 P.t. basic exercise.



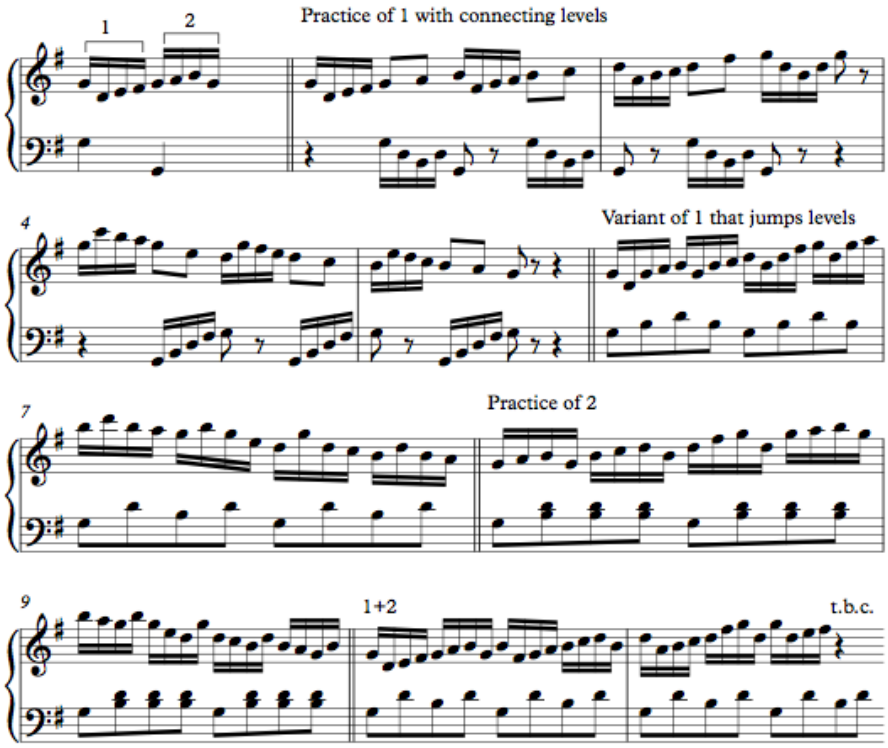
In variations, they can fill the gap between the thematic leaps. But more frequently they create connections between auxiliary chord tones that originally were not in the theme, being thus more ornamental, as in the upbeat of this instance:

Ex. 58 K. 24, theme and IV.



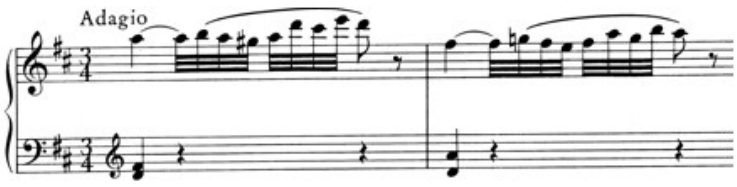
In the above fragment, two different passing tone figures can be observed in the upbeat. They are quite conventional and show their roots in the 4th species counterpoint.[41] Here are some proposals, taking first both separately and then together, for a G major tonic chord:

Ex. 59 P.t. Patterns.

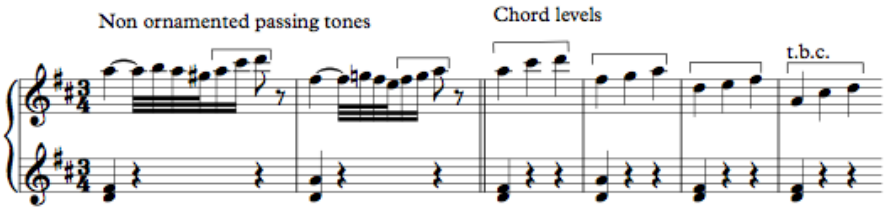


The passing tones can also be ornamented themselves. Observe this instance in which the p.t. is combined with a previous turn :

Ex. 60 K. 573, VIII, mm. 1-2 and explanation.



[41] Both figures can be found in almost every 4th species counterpoint exercise, of course in quarter-notes. They are a sort of complementary figures, because the first (1) tends to reach again the starting tone in the next beat but the other (2) has already returned and ask for a change in the coming beat.



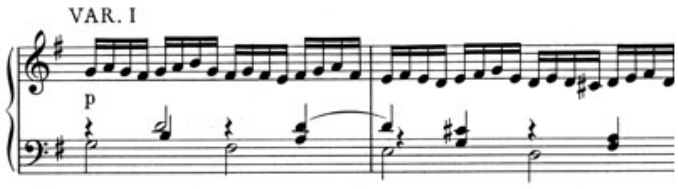
6.3. The basic turn types.

The turn is the result of using the upper and lower auxiliary tones (no matter which one comes first). besides a chord tone in a single figure. Several circumstances may slightly change the nature of the turn, depending on whether it starts with an apoggiatura or with the chord tone.[42] In the last case it may either return to it or resolve into a different note, being in this case the last tone of the turn a passing tone

A few patterns are more widespread and are more capable of fitting well whatever the character of a piece. Logically, we can find it across the whole repertory of variations, singly or more frequently in combination with run passages. The lower note of it is often chromaticized for creating direction to the main tone. One can observe several forms of it:

Starting on the chord note:

Ex. 61 K. 455, II.

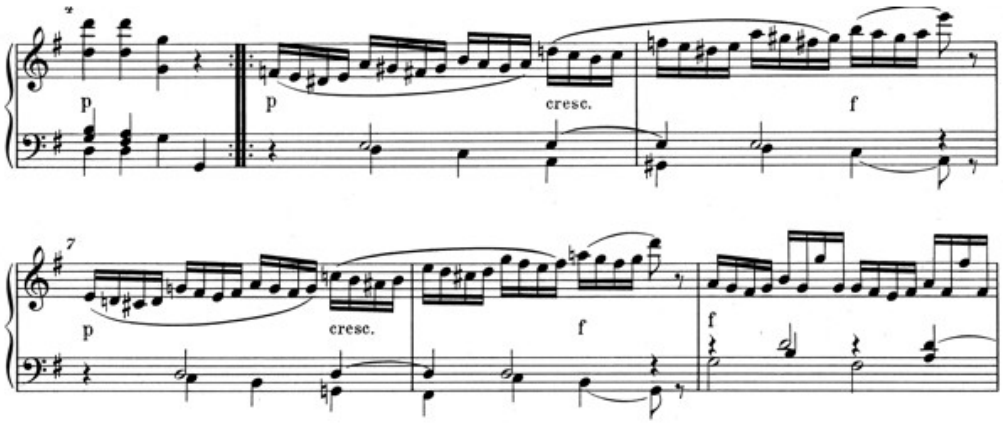


In this case, is a good ornament for staying in the starting tone, because it naturally can return to it. It should not jump afterwards, because of its ending in a non chordal tone

Starting on an apoggiatura:

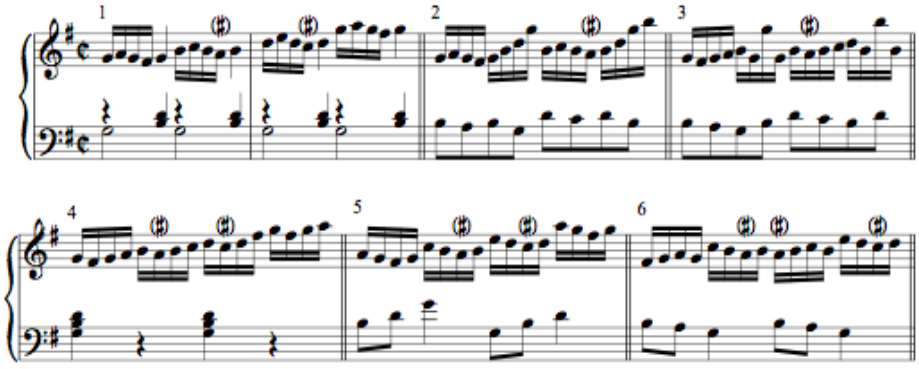
Ex. 62 K. 455, I, mm. 4-9.

[42] This is the usual situation when it is used properly as an ornament. But here the turn is being considered as part of the fully written notes.



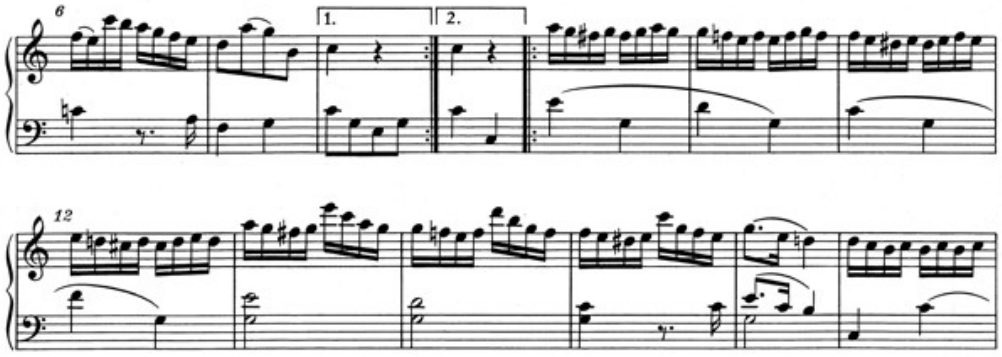
This form is more independent, because ending in the chord tone it can continue by leap. Although we are considering the turn itself, which involves only four notes, it can be part of longer figures in combination with other elements, as in the last measure of the above example. Based on the first variation of the K. 455, I give this proposal for practicing turns in several combinations on a G major chord.

Ex. 63 turn variants practice.



In the next instance Mozart uses the apoggiatura-starting turn in its two directions in each bar, then combining with an arpeggio:

Ex. 64 K. 265, I (from the double barline).

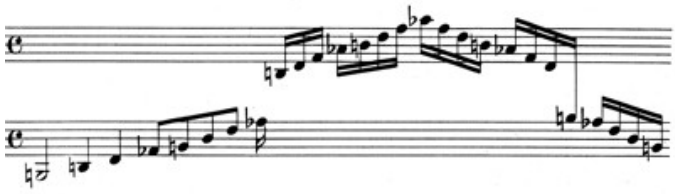


7. Variations based on chord-tone figurations.

7.1.Virtuoso non-thematic arpeggios.

Here is one of the most idiomatic effects in the keyboard: the fast display of one or more chords in a brilliante episode. Cadenza passages are one of the typical contexts for them. They usually have a purely ornamental function within a virtuoso character and Mozart uses them especially in some improvisatory places between variations, as cadenza passages or leads-in (i.e. Mozart K. 354, VIII, c. 41-43, K. 398). A certain amount of rhythmic freedom is customary.

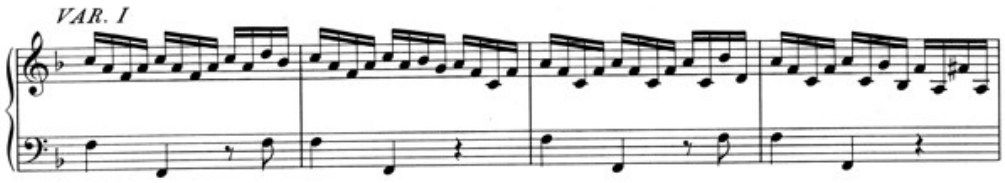
Ex. 65 K. 398 m. 139.



7.2. Thematic arpeggio figurations.

Here I include all the situations in which the arpeggio is an essential part of the thematic material, not just ornamentation or harmonic context. In other words, when arpeggio patterns are the way the main musical idea is expressed, generally in the right hand. One of the typical situations is when the theme is enriched with chord notes following a continuous formula:

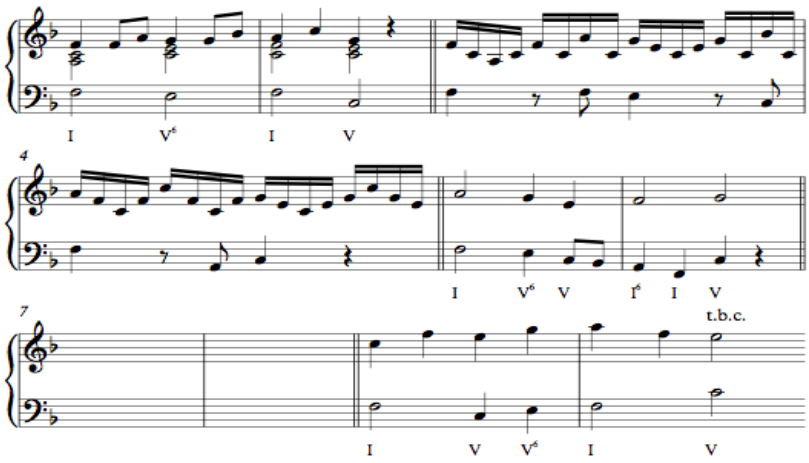
Ex. 66 K. 398, I. (See the ex.28 for the comparison with the theme).



Although the chord tones might here be considered ornamentation, I call them “thematic” in the sense that they form an unit with the theme notes. In the problematic cycle in A major K. 460, if

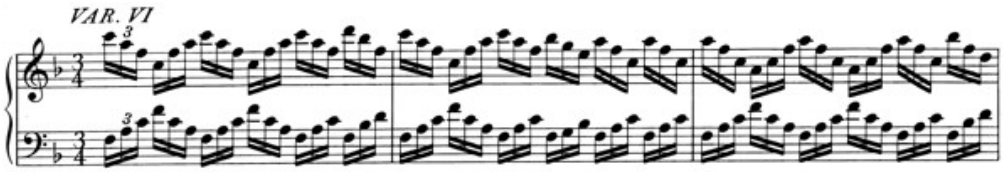
it is authentic,[43] we would have a similar instance in the first variation.

The following exercise uses a simple harmonic structure (I-V-V-I) with a basic treble-bass framework to be transformed into this type of piano writing:



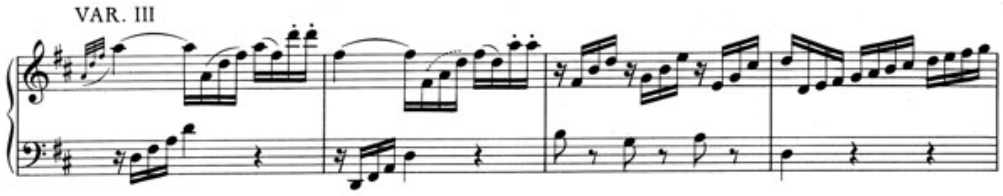
In certain cases this technique has a brilliante effect, perfectly suitable for a virtuoso ending.

Ex. 68 K. 398, VI.



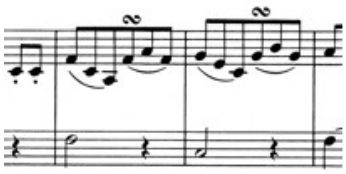
The arpeggio patterns seem to be used in variations with driving, more than expressive, qualities. In this fragment the original thematic leaps are turned into clearly articulated arpeggios. Note the adaptations in the pattern when the harmonic rhythm changes:

Ex. 69 K. 573, III.



Nevertheless, they also fit well in elegant and warmer situations:

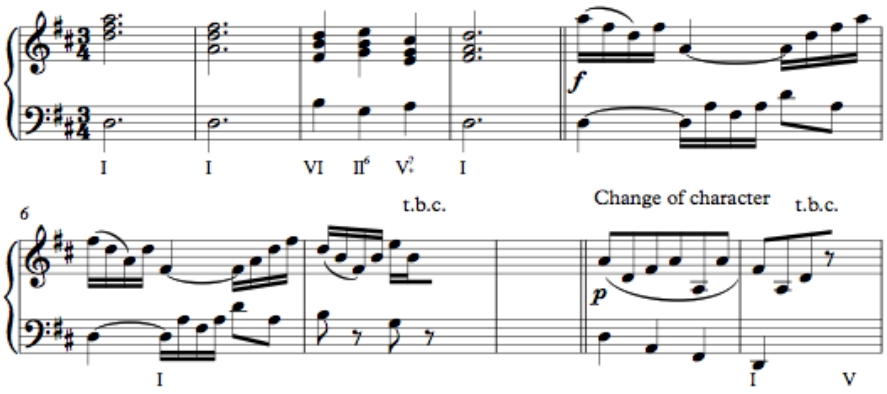
[43] The beginning of this set (Theme and first two variations) is accepted by the NMA (*Neue Mozart Ausgabe,* in english "New Mozart Edition") and was published in a fragmentary version by Barenrëiter.



A common feature here for these latter cases is the narrow range of the arpeggio, usually within a single hand position and, of course, the articulation and the content of the left hand. Longer notes there help for the whole harmonious effect.

The following proposal is based on the harmonic structure of the first four bars of the ex. 69 The idea is developing several possibilities with contrasting characters with the observed tools in Mozart´s examples (compass, textures, articulations, etc)

Ex. 71 Character variations with arpeggios.



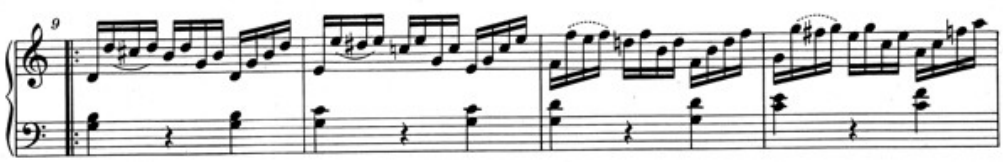
7.3. Ornamented arpeggio patterns.

Most of the cases of thematic arpeggio patterms given before belong in fact to variations that use them in combination with other figures. A variation based in pure arpeggio figurations for its whole length is something infrequent in Mozart.[44] But the panorama has a broader perspective when the arpeggio itself is ornamented.

The chord note patterns can be found mixed with ornaments such as neighbouring tones, apoggiaturas, etc. This view has the problem that in a general sense all melodic elaboration could be considered an ornamented arpeggio. But the point here is when the chord tones are the predominant element in the pattern:

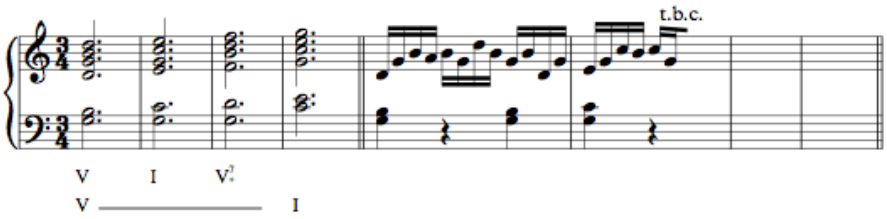
[44] It is often stated that the Mozartian preference for variety and colour, constantly refreshing the musical ideas, makes some cases of economy of material really noticeable, as the D Major Rondo K. 485.

Ex. 72 K. 179, XII (lower n.t.).



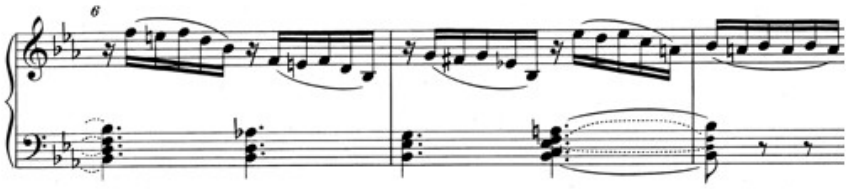
Here is another proposal for the same harmonic base. The reader can develop several ones like this simply placing the n.t. differently, taking the upper, using more than one n.t. in the figure, etc.

Ex. 73 Arpeggios mixed with n.t.



The following instance shows other options in a slightly different harmonic context, called "*quiescenza*" by Gjerdingen:[45]

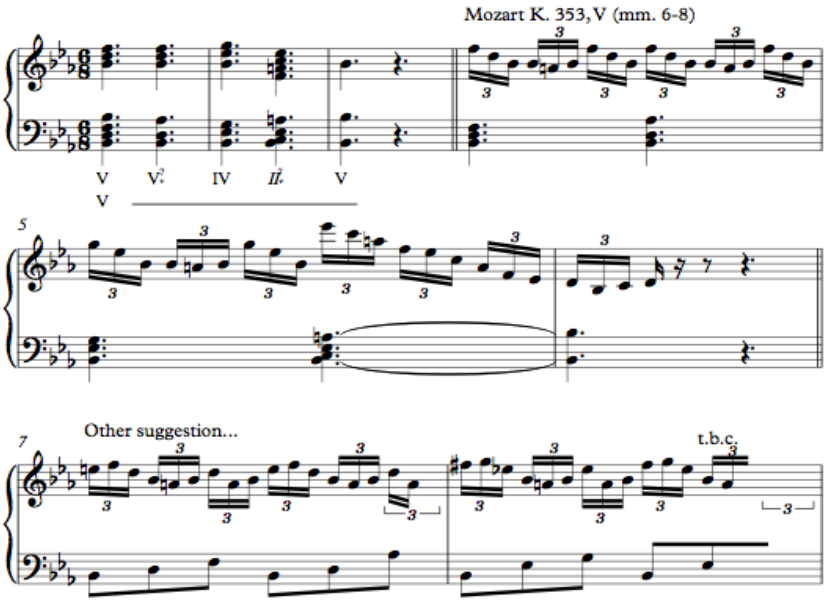
Ex. 74 K. 353, II (mm.6-8).



Mozart himself gives a good variant for practice in the fifth variation of this set. Here I present the harmonic analysis and another possibility with apoggiaturas and n.t. The reader can easily design new ones with similar features.

Ex. 75 Ornamented arpeggios on the *quiescenza* formula.

[45] Robert Gjerdingen,. *Music in the galant style* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 181.



8. Variations based on pianistic effects.

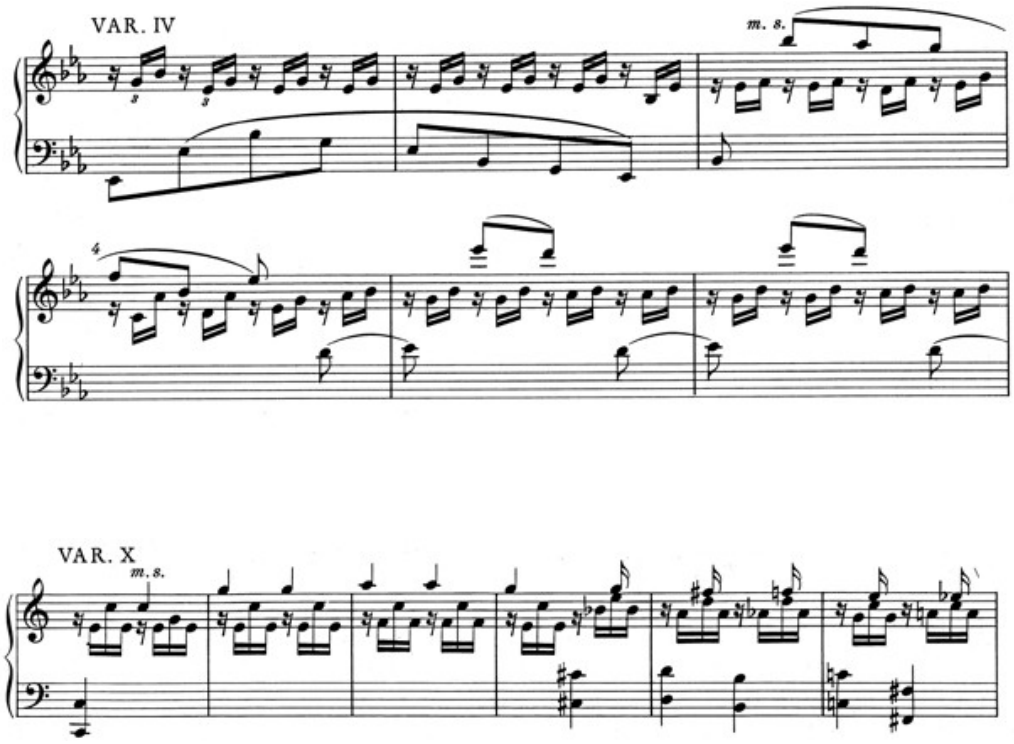
Some variations seem to emerge from the concrete possibilities of the keyboard., as if they were conceived as an exploration of special piano resources. Those pieces are a privileged display of Mozart the performer, showing his pianistic personality and preferred gestures. They announce the brilliante variation style of the early romantics, who made of variations one of their warhorses in public performance.

1 8.1. Crossing hands.

The use of crossing hands in keyboard playing was widely know by the harpsichordists. It has a impressive visual effect, allows for freeer movements and relaxation, keeping the same material in each hand, so that the texture is better understood. The Italian cembalists seemed to have preference for it, considering its presence in their music.

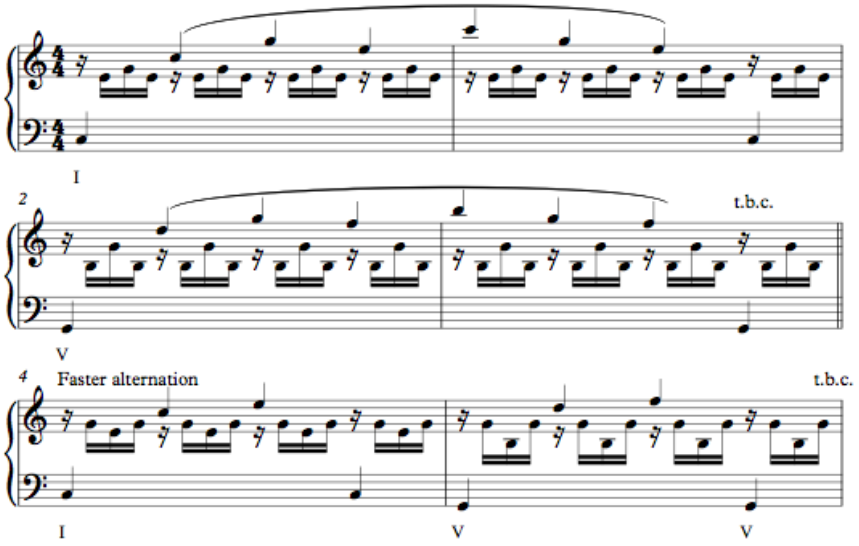
Mozart uses it in almost all his variation sets from the K. 179, including the ones in the piano sonatas. The common feature is the presence of an accompaniment pattern in the fixed hand, usually in the middle of the keyboard and the alternance between bass and melody in the jumping hand.

Ex. 76 K. 354, IV and K. 265, X.



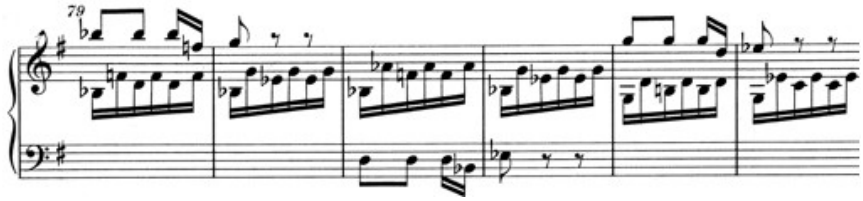
The options for melodic development are limited. Harmony and rhythm rule The easiest starting point is to concentrate on one chord and experiment, changing the fixed pattern, metres and chords. Then, one can add some basic changes suchs as I-V, increasing progressively the speed of the harmonic rhythm. Here are a couple of options, below with faster alternation:

Ex. 77 Crossing hands practice.



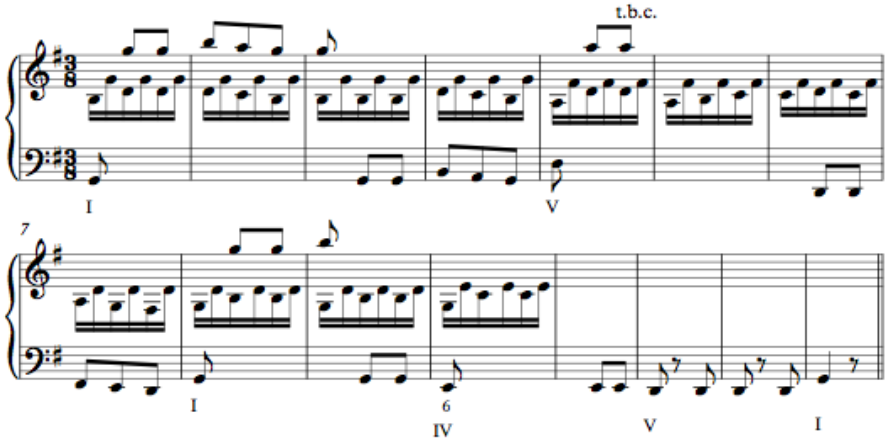
Imitations are also frequent, because the effect tends naturally to a dialogue between treble and bass.

Ex. 78 K. 455, X, mm. 79-84.



Based on some features of this fragment, I suggest the following phrase for practicing imitations. It is given incomplete on purpose, to be completed and followed by similar ones. Some adjustments have been done in the pattern for better voice leading.

Ex. 79 Imitations in crossing hands.

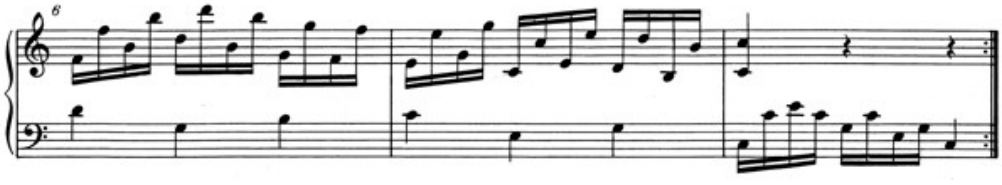


8.2. Broken octaves.

The use of broken octaves can also be found in harpsichord repertory (again mostly in Italian music) but belonging more properly to the lang of the piano. They work better with the possibility of dynamic gradation and weight control, easier to given them shape and brilliance. Its use was so popular in the classical and early romantic period that later composers like Schumann or Chopin seemed to have lost the taste for it, perhaps tired of the virtuosos. It is an impressive and powerful effect, especially when placed in the bass register. The Vienesse fortepiano allowed a technically easy way for doing it, with an almost glissando feeling in the player harder to find in the modern pianos.

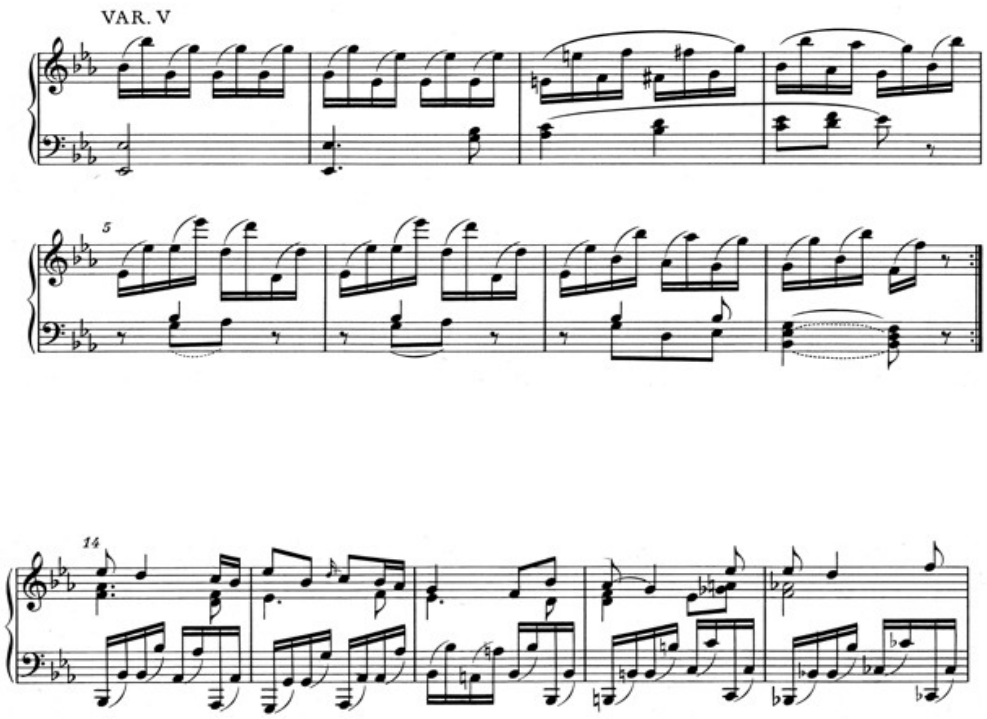
It consists basically in an octava reinforcement of a melody with rhythmic activity, in a way close to the effect of a string tremolo. Mozart uses it for the first time in variations in the K. 179.:

Ex. 80 K. 179 X, mm. 6-8.



The two hands are often alternated, either in the same variation (K. 573, VII) or in variations in pairs (K. 264, VI-VII) Mozart hardly gives slurs to such passages, but in the fifth variation of the K. 354 he wrote a detailed articulation. It seems reasonable to extend this careful shaping to similar cases where slurs are absent, according with the musical content of each fragment. In any case, shallow or shapeless virtuosism is something alien to Mozart´s music.

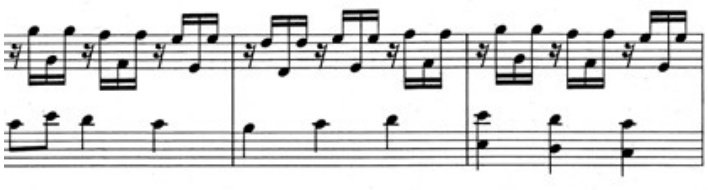
Ex. 81 K. 354, V and VI, mm. 14-18.



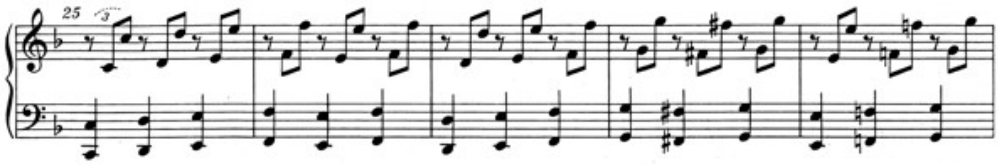
The extremely wide leaps contribute towards a certain acrobatic quality, more remarkable when placed in the bass because of the sharp sonority.

Sometimes the broken octaves assume other rhythmic forms:

Ex. 82 K. 179 VII, mm. 14-16.

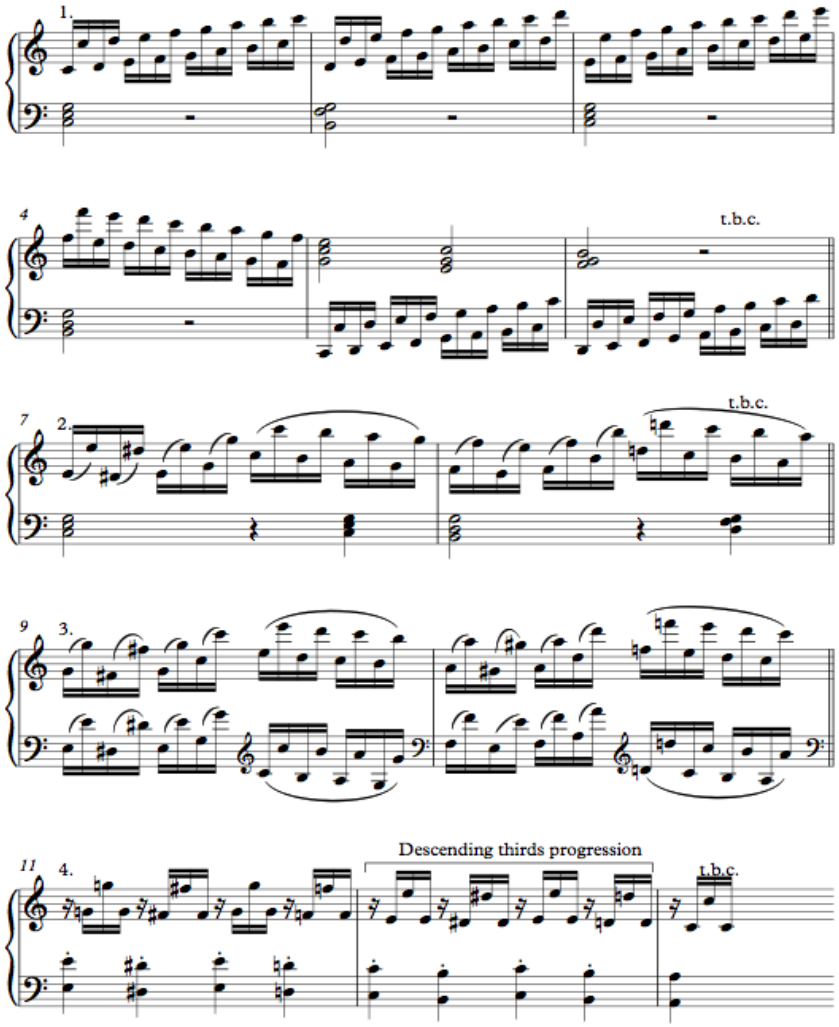


Ex. 83 K. 613, III, mm. 25-29.



I have designed some exercises derivated from the previous instances. It should be noted firstly that runs are the basic material for them,[46] so they can be taken as the center of practice. The first exercise uses runs with I-V harmonisation. The second is intended for practising the writing of the K. 354, with a pattern that goes stepmotion. The third is the same as the second but for both hands simultaneosly. The fourth proposes a descending progression with left hand supporting by thirds. It is based on the sixth variation of K. 264.

Ex. 84 Broken octaves practice.

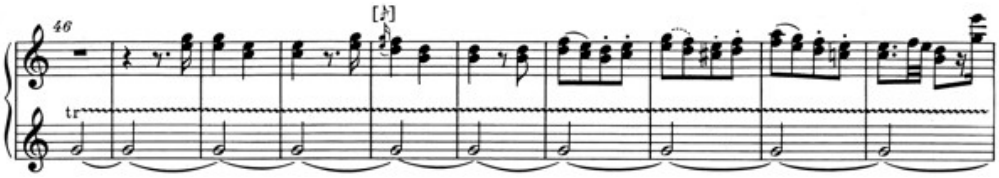


[46] The five octave keyboard can be easily exceeded when doing big leaps with them, apart of the intrinsecal technical difficulties.

8.3. Trill and tremolo variations.

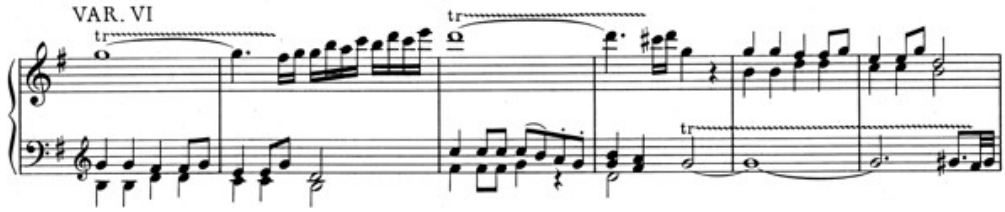
Some variations are characterized by the practically unvaried presentation of the theme (or fragments) over or below a long trill, working as a pedal point in tonic or dominant:

Ex. 84 K. 264, IV mm. 46-55.



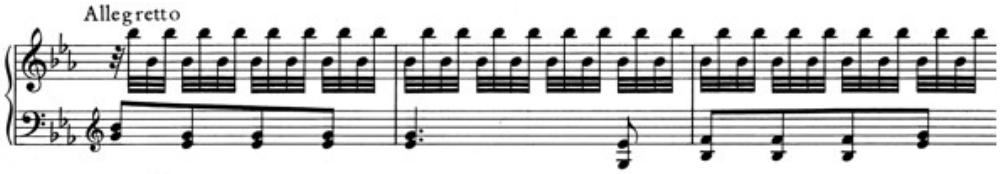
This can also be observed in K. 264, 352, 398 and 455. In the last, the trills are perfectly integrated in the texture; they fluidly disolve into the figuration:

Ex. 85 K. 455, VI.



In the variations X and XI of the K. 354, this function is assumed by the tremolo, much less frequent, but with a parallel in the Rondo of the Piano Sonata K. 309.

Ex. 86 K. 354, X, mm. 1-4.

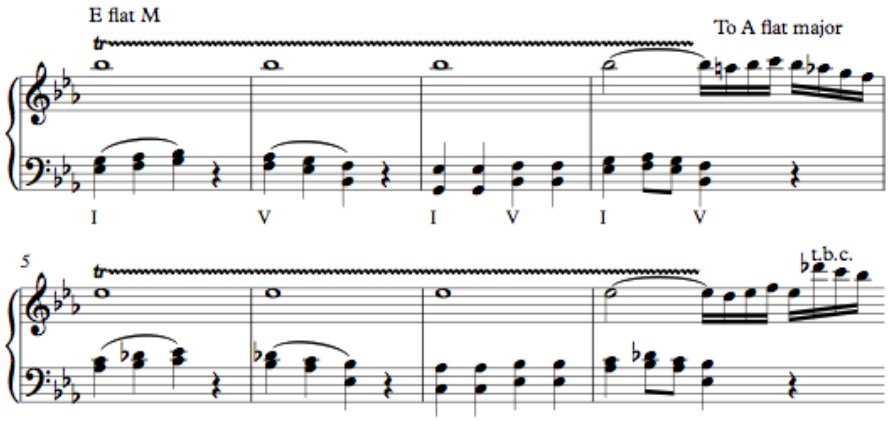


Ex. 87 Piano sonata K. 309 in C Major, III, mm. 58-61.

In most cases, those “trill variations” are placed just after a moment of remote distance from the theme (for instance, after *minore* variations), meaning a sort of succesful reconciliation, with

troubles left behind. Their effect can be compared to the trills just before the main cadence in the sonata form.

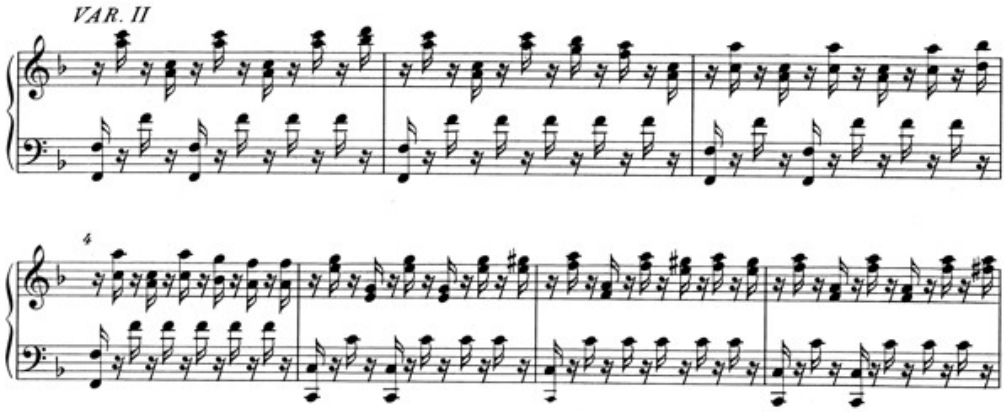
Both long trills and tremolos are special effects. Their use must be restricted to those structural points in improvisation in order to obtain a good result. For their practice, I recommend the use of simple materials and a thin texture in the other hand. The following idea can be done for the full fifths circle, major and minor and with reverse hands:



8.4. Pianistic experimentation.

Mozart variations are usually pieces intented for public performance, extroverted and with some winks to the audience. The virtuosism plays an important role in most variation cycles with certain doses of experimentation. One of the more eloquent instances can be found in the K. 398 set:

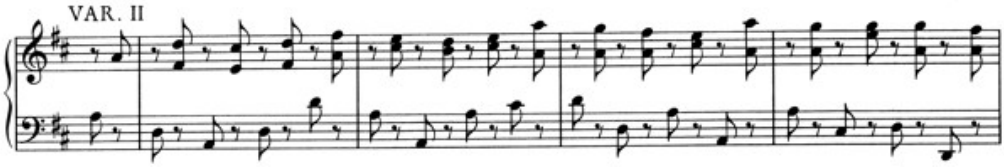
Ex. 89 K. 398, II.



This pianistic style reveals a free approach to the keyboard, with not many precedents and echoes in his production. It is full of energy and vivacity , but with a certain sense of comicity derived of its acrobatic nature and the stubborn bass notes. The amazing musical effect is completed with a strong visual component, with the two hands jumping through the keyboard in contrary motion.

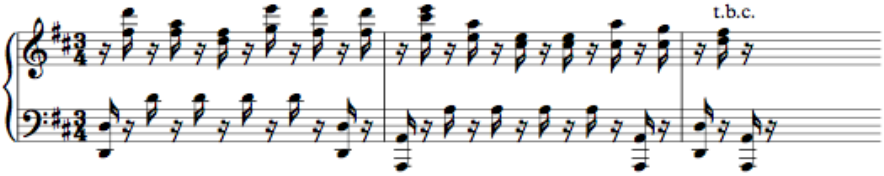
Curiously, it has a remote precedent in his second variation set, from 1766, but here in a quite conventional way:

Ex. 90 K. 25 II.



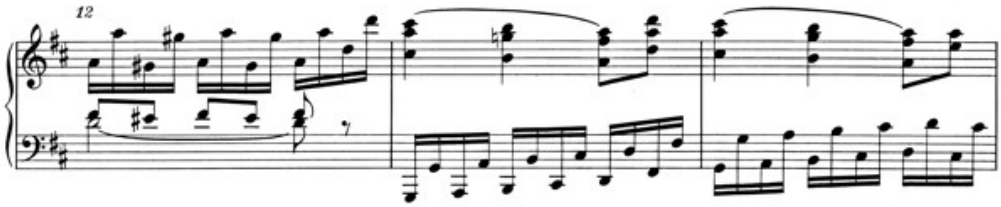
There would be some amusement in making a combination between the two. It is not hard to create several new variations based on other themes with the pattern of the K. 398. An instance for the K. 25:

Ex. 91 virtuoso pattern.



In other instances Mozart surprises with a massive piano scoring, close to the more audacious Clementi or Carl maria von Weber:

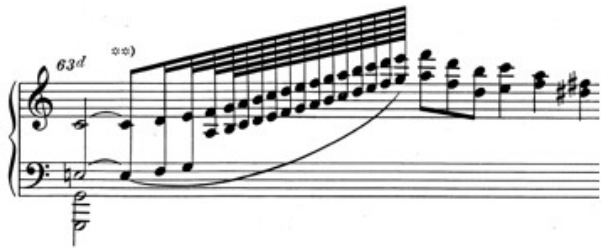
Ex. 92 K. 573 VII, mm. 12-14.



The use of glissandi deserves certain attention in this context, in spite of being quite exceptional. In the ending of the K. 264 Mozart uses a glissando in sixths, much easier in a fortepiano than in a modern instrument.[47]

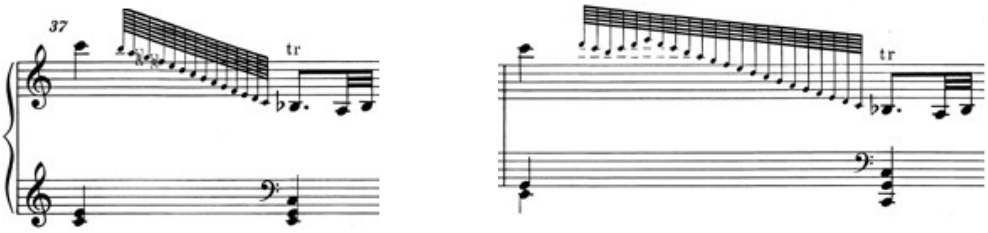
[47] The glissandi in octaves can be found in some famous works from about the turn of the century, as the C major Piano Concerto by Beethoven op. 15 (1796).

Ex. 93 K. 264 IX 63d.



In the Adagio of the same cycle, some other passages might be proposed as be executed in glissando:

Ex. 94 K. 264 VIII, 37 and 61.



This special effect might have its place in mainly in cadential points but with extreme frugality considering the style.

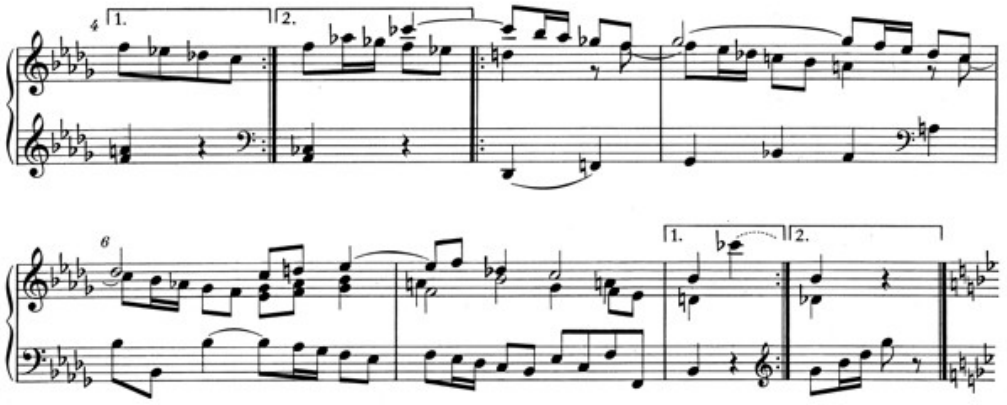
9. Particular types of variations.

9.1. Counterpoint-based variations.

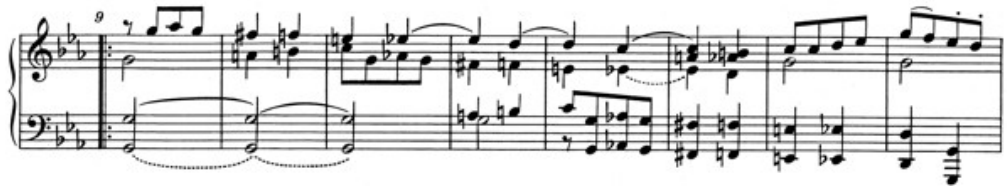
The presence of counterpoint is obviously to be expected in this repertory, but here I mean more precisely the use of imitative techniques. In this sense, contrapuntal variations have a strong tradition in the genre, taken to its perfection in the great cycles by Johann Sebastian Bach. But this practice was somewhat overshadowed in the subsequent decades. Considering that Mozart took the genre with its contemporary features, variations based in counterpoint are scarce and mostly confined to the later sets. With Beethoven, the tradition of solid contrapuntal variations came back to life in cycles like the “Eroica” Variations op. 35 or the “Diabelli” set op. 120.

The contrapuntal music par excellence in Mozart´s days was church music, conserved especially by Italian masters from whom Mozart could learn during his several trips to Italy. This tradition is evident in his preference for serious and minor variations for the use of counterpoint:

Ex. 95 K. 500 , VII, mm. 4-8.

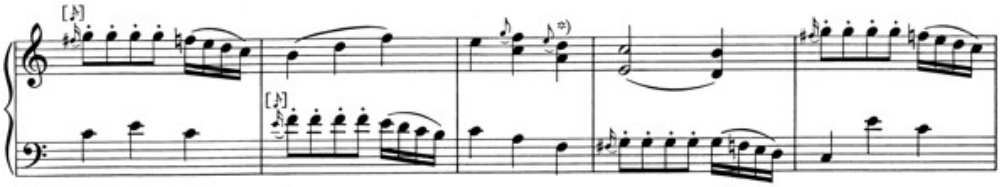


Ex. 96 K. 265, VIII, mm. 9-16.



The imitative techniques are used with great amount of freedom, sometimes resembling partial canons (see also the examples above for this):

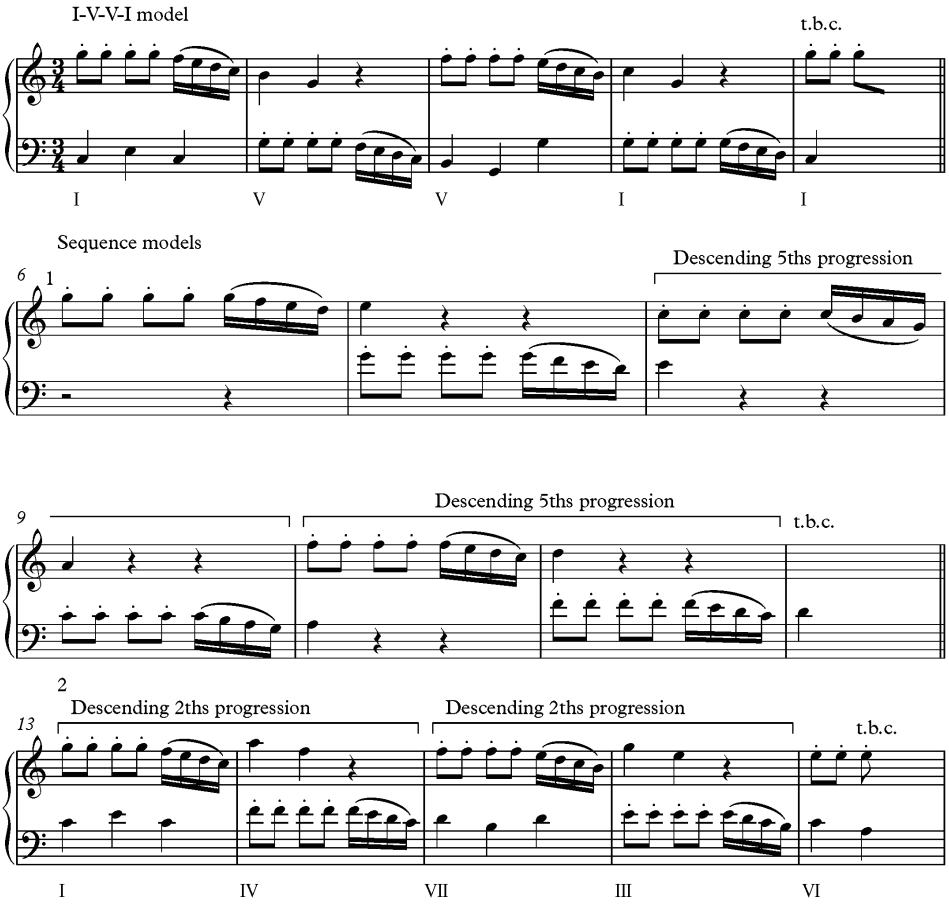
Ex. 97 K. 179, II.



Mastering counterpoint in improvisation is a lifetime´s task and I am not trying to simplify it in a few lines. It is evident that the chromatic subtleties of the K. 265 require extensive training in part writing and harmonic wisdom. But it is at least possible to establish some ideas for using basic imitative tools. First, as can be observed in the K. 179, the limitation to practically two chords is a good starting point. The organization in sequences is other useful aspect. Here I am proposing some exercises based on the K. 179 first bar motive. Starting with a I-V-V-I framework trated in canon and then two possible sequences. Some adjustments have been done for the harmonic logic.[48]

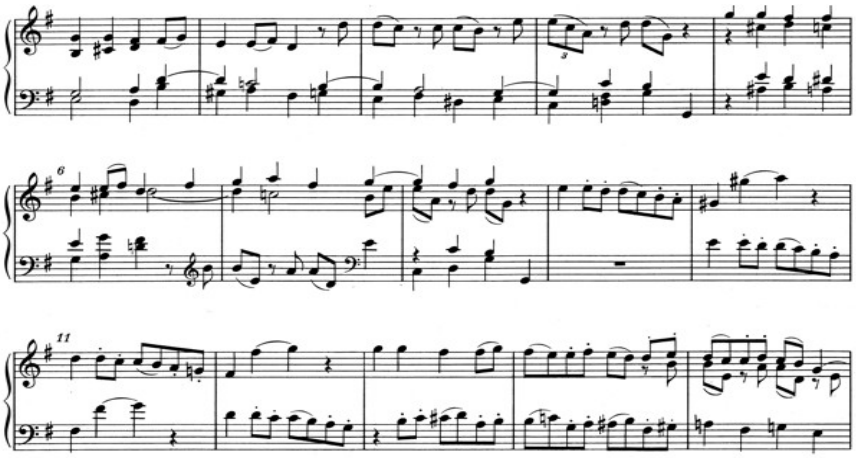
[48] In the first sequence (1) there are no harmonic markings because the example is based only in the relation in sixths between the parts which can be harmonically interpreted in different ways.

Ex. 98 Contrapuntal exercise.



One of the best instances of contrapuntal variation is in the K. 455. Observe the canonic progressions from bar 9, the ingenious combinations with the cadential motive (4,7-8, 15) and the use of invertible counterpoint (mm. 13-16, mm. 21-24):

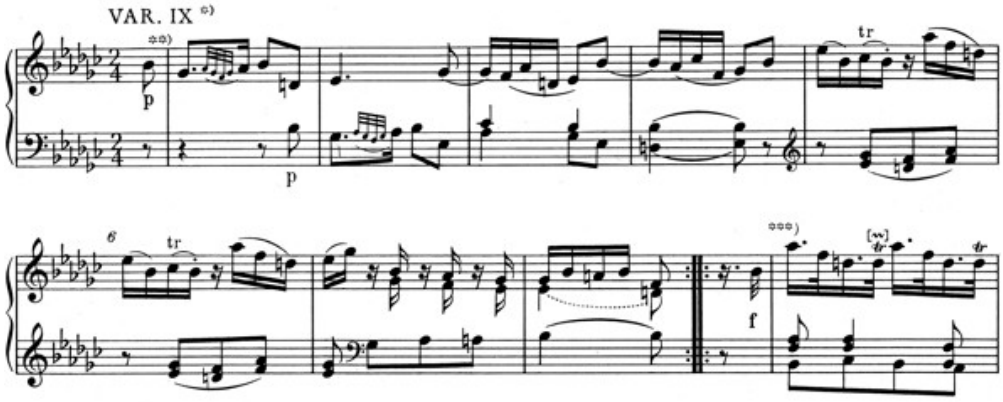
Ex. 99 K. 455, VII.



9.2. Minor variations.

The "minor" variation in a major key set is a common place in the genre. All variation cycles by Mozart are in major keys and most of them have their customary *minore*, except the first four. They are chiefly character variations, not so focused in concrete techniques and with a greater degree of complexity in general. The original theme tends to be turned into something else, hard to describe in terms of actual compositional techniques:

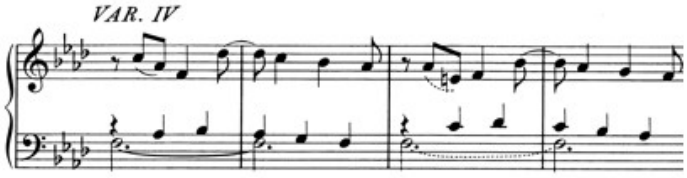
Ex. 100 K. 354, IX (See the theme in ex. 39 for comparison).



In spite of practically using the same harmony as the theme in the first 8 bars, the changes in texture, the syncopations, the fragmented melody with the careful articulation transforms an almost trivial statement into an imploring declamation. Perhaps it should be considered also the obscure connotations of the key of E flat minor.[49]

This tendency to an *agitato* character, more than sad or melancholic is frequent in Mozart tretament of minor mode.[50] Here I can show some instances where the syncopated rhythms or the prescribed articulation creates a feeling of internal tension.

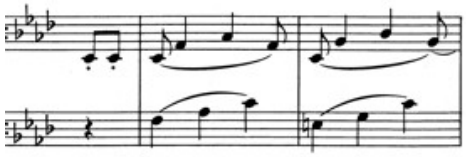
Ex. 101 K. 398, VI, mm. 1-4.



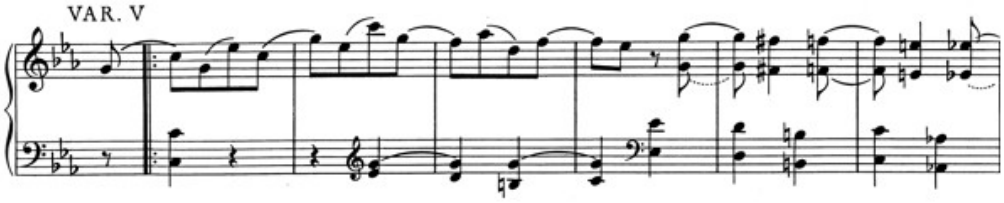
[49] The key was considered as "horrible, frightful" by Charpentier (1692) and Schubart described it in 1784 as follows: "Feelings of the anxiety of the soul's deepest distress, of brooding despair, of blackest depression, of the most gloomy condition of the soul. Every fear, every hesitation of the shuddering heart, breathes out of horrible Eb minor. If ghosts could speak, their speech would approximate this key" quoted in Rita Steblin,. *Key characteristics in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: a historical approach* (UMI Research Press, 1982).

[50] See for instance the A minor Piano Sonata K. 310, the G minor symphonies K. 183 and K, 550.

Ex. 102 K. 613, VI, mm. 9-10.

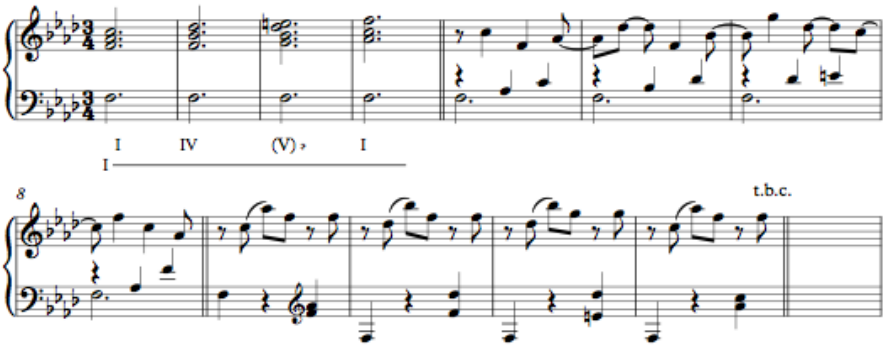


Ex. 103 K. 264, V, mm.1-6.



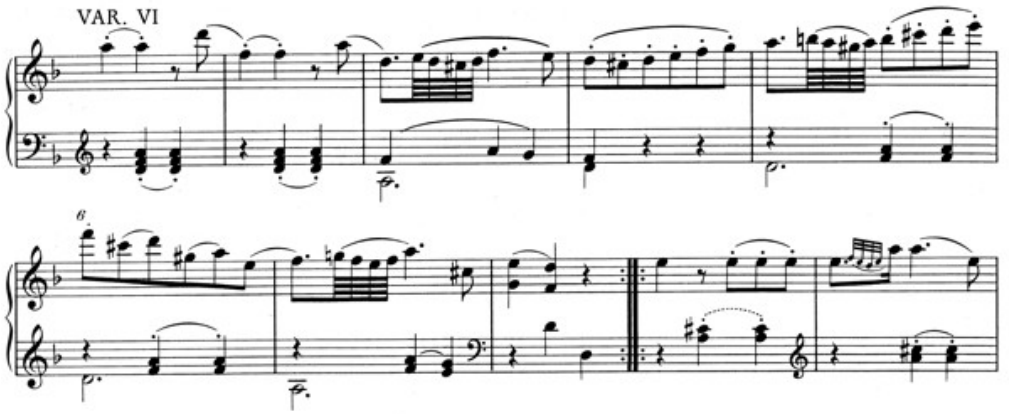
Based on that, I suggest several patterns for developing on a proposed standarized base. Some others figures can be easily created for practice. After doing succesfully several of them, one can try the more complex frameworks of Mozart, which usually show more contrapuntal complexity and irregularities in the harmonic rhythm.

Ex. 104 Minor variations practice.



In the K. 573 Mozart has a minor variation that is a good starting point for developing melodic tools. Its relative simplicity in harmony, left hand writing and melodic economy fits perfectly with practice demands, being at the same time one of the most expressive moments of the set.

Ex. 105 K. 573, VI.



Let´s take three elements of this fragment:

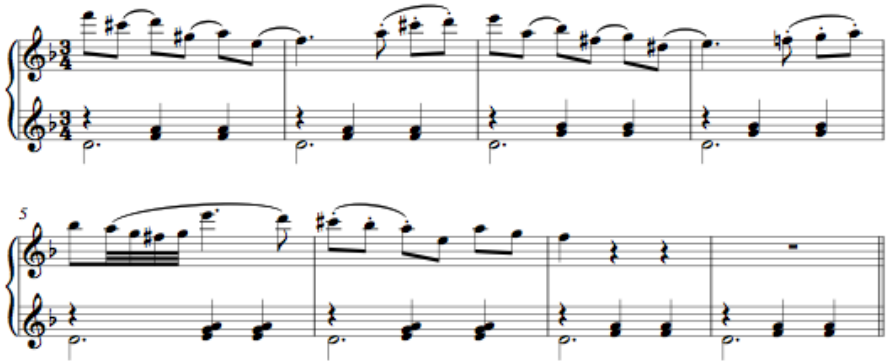
a) The left hand pattern in measures 5-7.

b) The melodic figuration in bar 6 based on unaccented apoggiaturas for a descending apreggio (the slur will make the effect of being accented).

c) The connecting elements: turns and short runs (mm. 3-5).

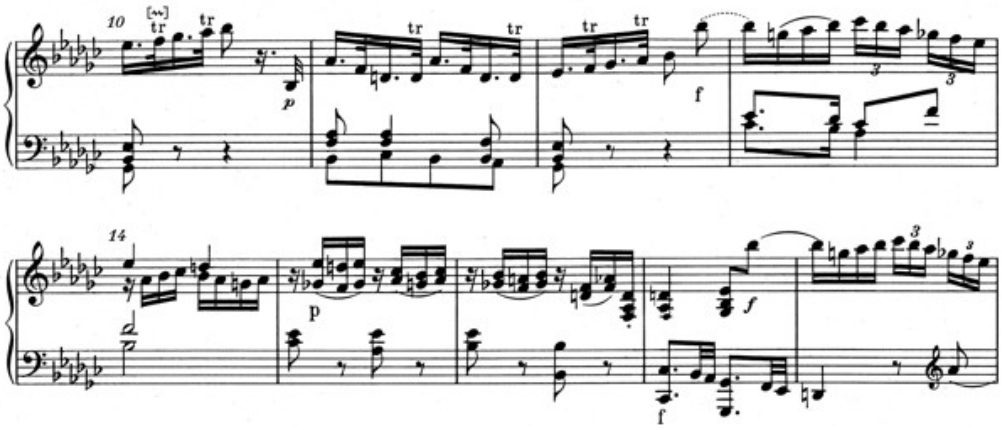
I recommend first working on every element separately, taking only one chord in the first attempts and practising four-bar structures with tonic and dominant afterwards, as in the Mozart example., and then trying some combinations for developing more complex phrases. I give one possibility with the harmonic content of the ex. 104:

Ex. 106 Minor phrase practice.



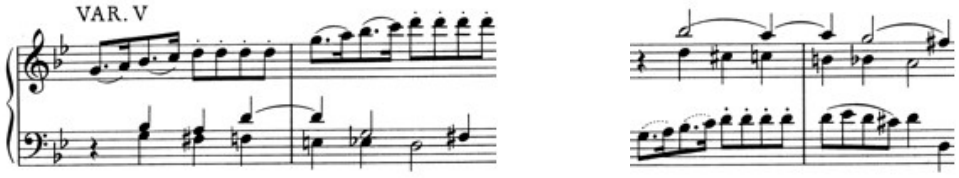
The abrupt dynamic and textural changes are among the features of these variations, related to the *agitato* character mentioned above. Harsh sonorities, as the unexpected basses in *forte* in bar 17 or the dissonances in bars 11 or 13 are not precisely signs of a depressed character:

Ex. 107 K. 354, IX, mm. 10-18.



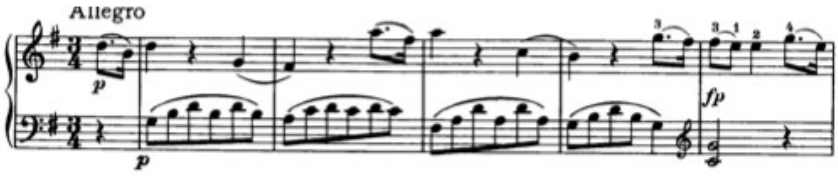
The chromaticism inherent to the minor mode is also favoured by Mozart, with some preference for the chromatic descending fourth:[51]

Ex. 108 K. 455, V (mm 1-2, 7-8).



Another good exercise is trying versions in minor of phrases in major by Mozart, taken from different pieces, keeping in mind the above considerations. I am giving one instance to be completed:

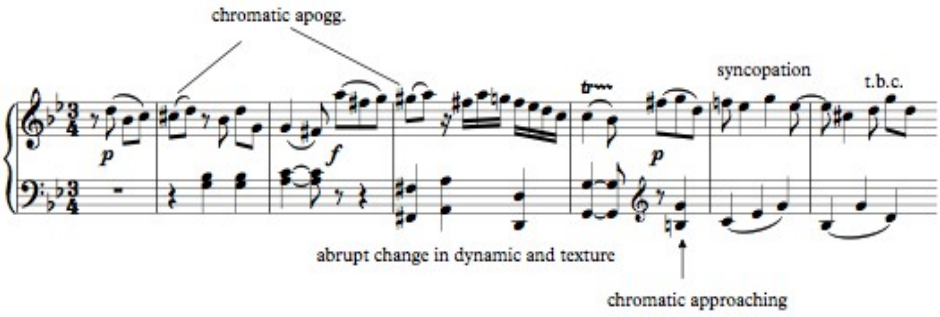
Ex. 109 Piano Sonata in G major K. 283, I.



It might be turned into minor like this (the harmonies are the same, except the secondary dominant in bar 5):

[51] For further reading about the topic, see P. Williams, "Some thoughts on Mozart´s use of the chromatic fourth" in R Larry Todd. and Peter Williams. *Perspectives on Mozart performance* (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Ex. 110 Transformation into minor mode.

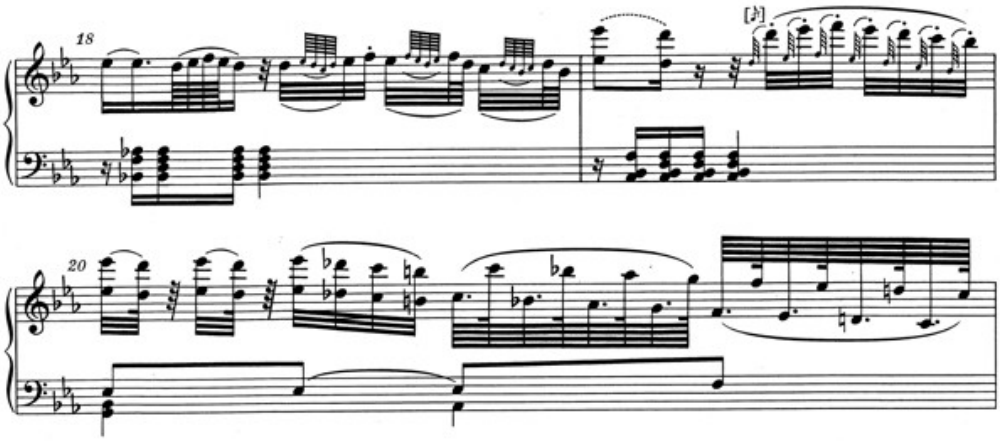


9.3. Adagio variations.

Thirteen of the fourteen completed cycles have an adagio variation placed in the second half. This variation creates a moment of lyric contemplation, making the coming *Finale* more powerful. There is something operatic in this procedure, ending always with a sense of reconciliation between the different sides and shadows of the theme. But the influence from the opera is also evident in the instrumental vocality of the adagios themselves, profusely ornamented.

In the light of the testimonies about the mastery of Mozart´s playing in the adagios, his comand be appreciated from his painstaking detail in fragments like this:

Ex. 111 K. 354, mm- 18-20.

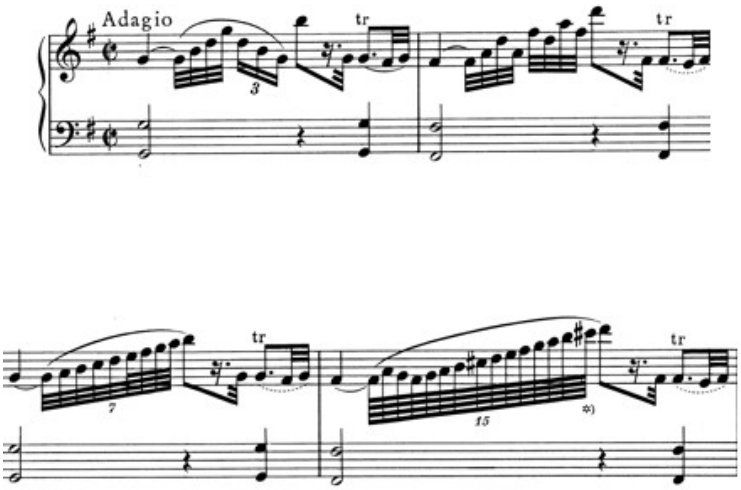


As happened with the minor variations, the adagios are dealing more with character and usually they don´t show systematic procedures. Having generous room for any kind of ornamentation, they tend to condense the typical procedures but with greater amount of freedom, resembling true improvisations. In some cases they have written out repeats, so it might be assumed

that when having repeat signs they can be embellished.[52]

In the Adagio of the K. 455, for instance, Mozart replaces the arpeggios with runs in the written out repeat:

Ex. 112 K. 455, IX, mm. 1-2, 9-10.

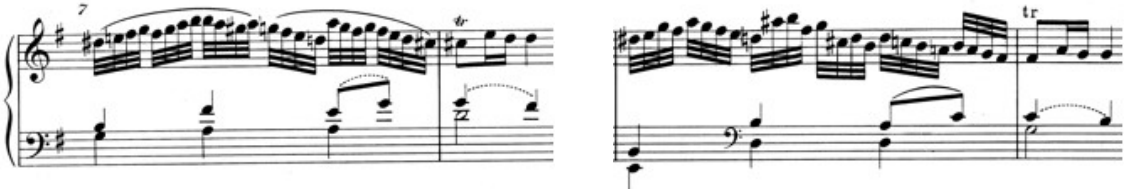


Another eloquent instance of written down repeats is the Adagio of the K. 264.

These adagios, and especially the later ones, are challenging for our methodology because they are in fact so individual and freely constructed that is hard to take hold of any general element to set up practice. Let´s start with something that can be considered in a way conventional: the cadential processes.

The complete cadential process (II^6/IV-V($^{6/4}$)-V-I), l, are one of the typical spaces in which ornamentation is more concentred:

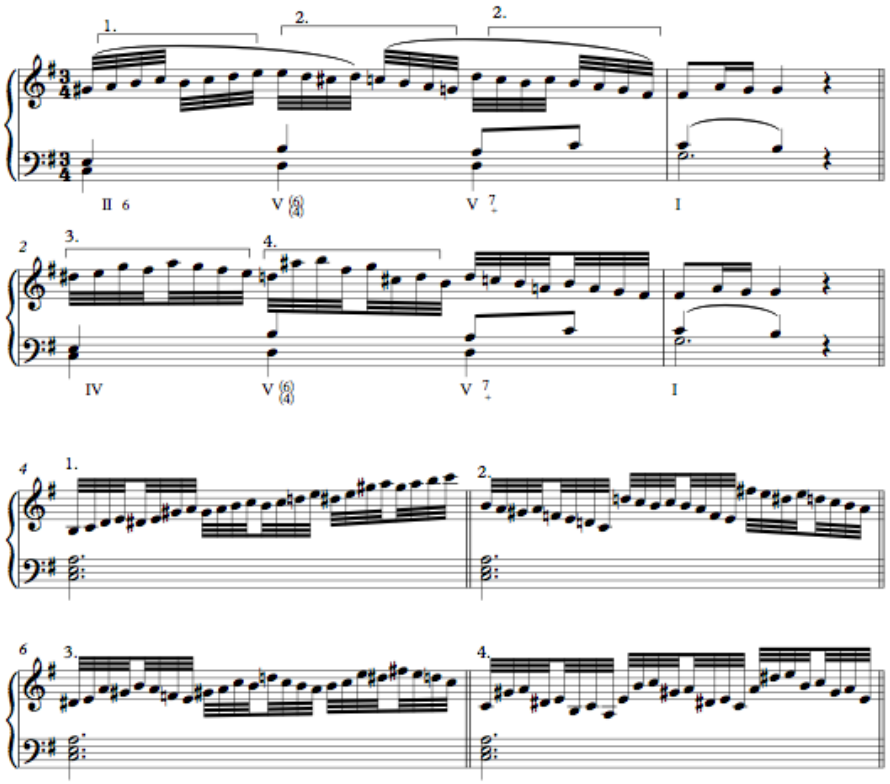
Ex. 113 K. 180, V, mm.7-8; 15-16.



The turn figures mixed with short runs are the bricks of these passages, with frequent apoggiaturas and expressive leaps. As usual, the level change plays an important role. In the following exercise I take the two variants, both transported in G major and I propose working in levels on every chord with the analyzed figures, marked with numbers. These melodic elements can be combined in different ways with good musical results. For additional models see also the candential process in K. 264 and 613.

[52] Here I would like to remind that varying repeats , especially in pieces already ornamented, should not mean always addition, as discussed in chapter three.

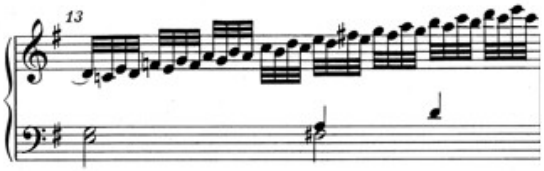
Ex. 114 Cadential formulas in Adagio.



The ornamented runs, with apoggiaturas, broken thirds and chromatized are also typical, usually as connecting elements and as a vehicle for virtuoso display.

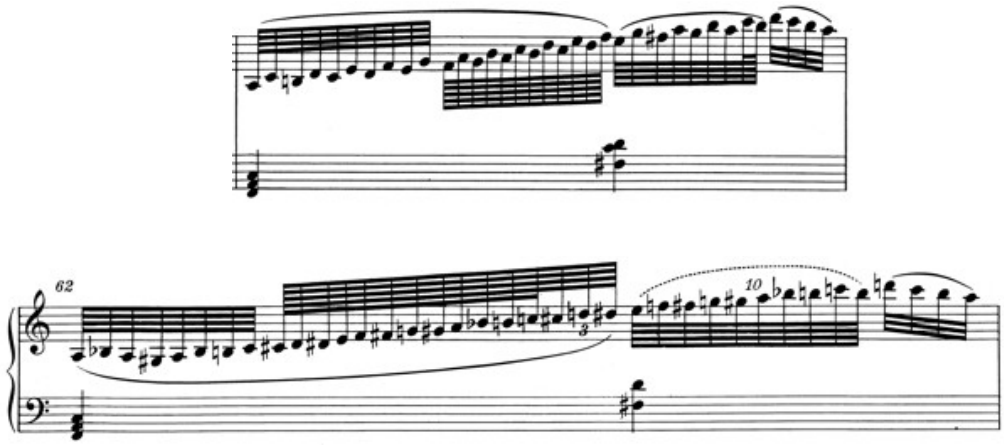
Runs ornamented with apoggiaturas:

Ex. 115 K. 455, IX, m.13.



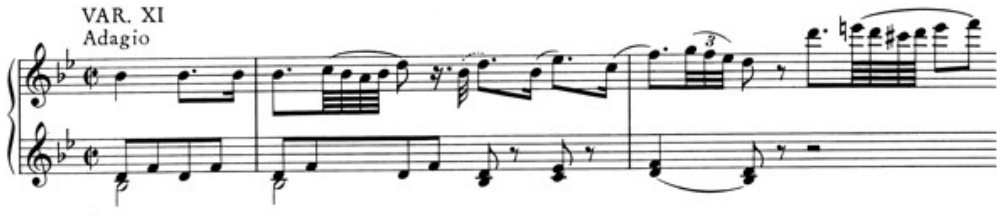
Ex 116 K. 265, XI, mm. 13-14 (this, based on the sigh figure, is quite conventional, even among the Romantics):

Ex. 117 K. 264, VII, m. 38, 62 for broken thirds and chromatic scales.



The textures are always rich and varied in a broader extent than in other variation types, with a logical tendency towards less rhythmic activity. Although some Alberti basses are used, they do not remain for a long time and are usually written with tenutos in order to achieve a warmer effect:

Ex. 118 K. 500, XI, mm. 1-3.



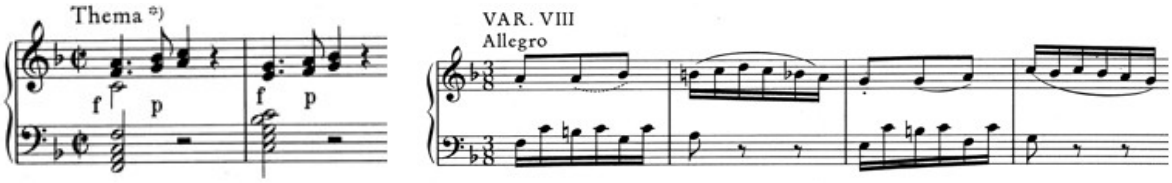
The reader can try some phrases in the Adagio style, going from four-bar to eight-bar models. In the latter, the last four bars should be intended as long cadential processes with an especial emphasis on the six-four chord, which can be reached after a long run (in fact all the long scales in the given Mozart examples reach that chord). In general terms, using a chord per measure is better.

9.4. Metrical varations.

When the theme is in a binary meter (that happens in eight of the fourteen sets), in six instances Mozart places a ternary variation. The reverse situation is also true in most cases. These

metrical variations are frequently placed at the end of the set:

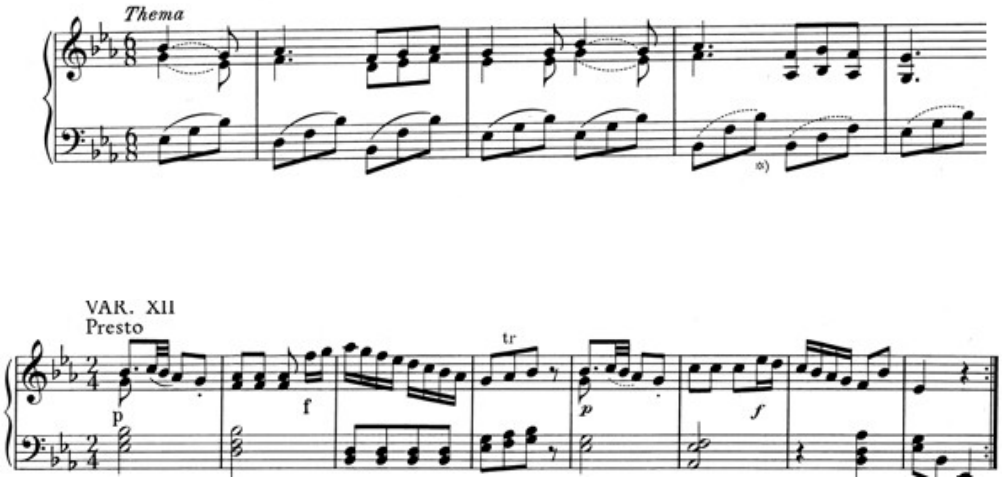
Ex. 119 K. 352, theme and VIII , mm. 1-2, 1-4.



This practice matches the habit of ternary and fast movements ending sonatas, perhaps as an echo of the old Giga at the end of the suite. Their lighter and even humorous character is remarkable when compared with the theme.

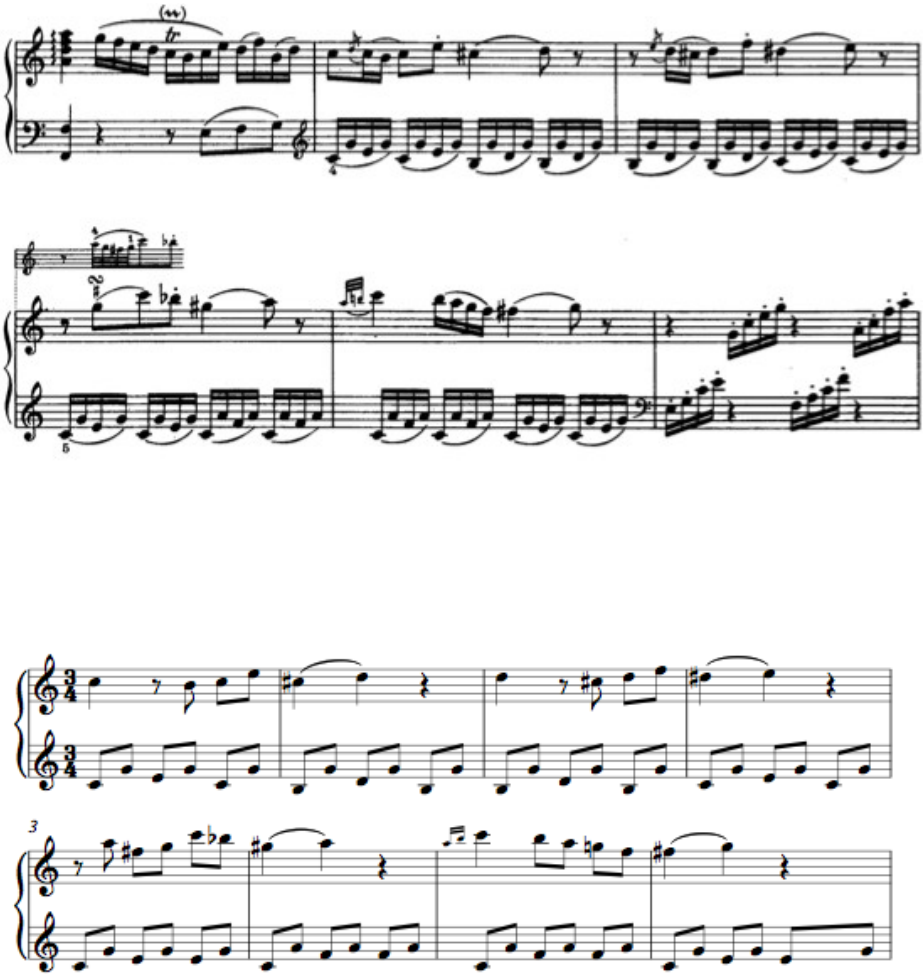
The metrical transformation may extend or reduce the original number of beats. In the fragment above, we have the first case. In the K. 264 we have the reverse situation. That is common in all those variations is the strong rythmic character and the limited presence of ornamentation. Similar things can be said about the change from ternary to binary. Here the pleasant character of the theme is turned into something nervous, in spite of having an extra beat:

Ex. 120 K. 353, theme and XII, mm. 1-4.



For practicing this aspect one can choose phrases and try the two transformations, depending on the original meter. First, the harmonic structure with the required adaptations should be practiced, then the acompaniment pattern and lastly the melody. In the first steps the changes may be reduced to a minimum. I give a proposal:

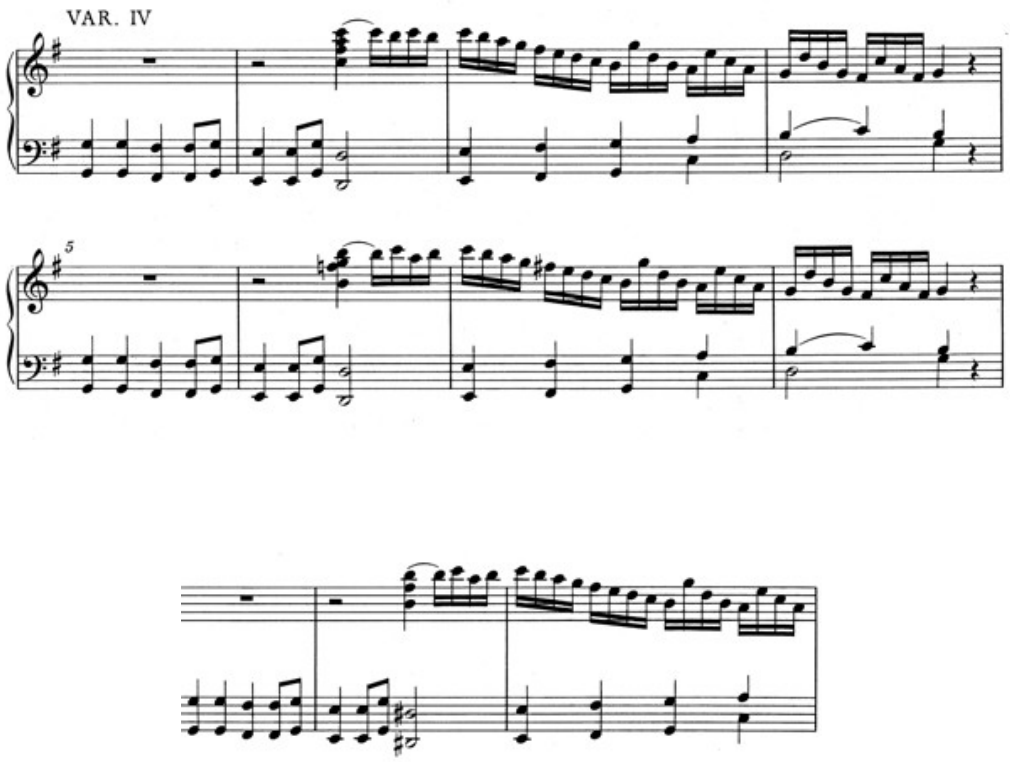
Ex. 121 Piano sonata K. 273 in C major, I and its ternary transformation.



9.5. Unconventional variations.

Some variations seem to be simply unclassifiable in the usual categories. One of the most striking instance is in the K. 455. Here, the fourth variation reharmonices in four different ways the half cadence of the second bar, but always ending the phrase in tonic with a conventional passage:

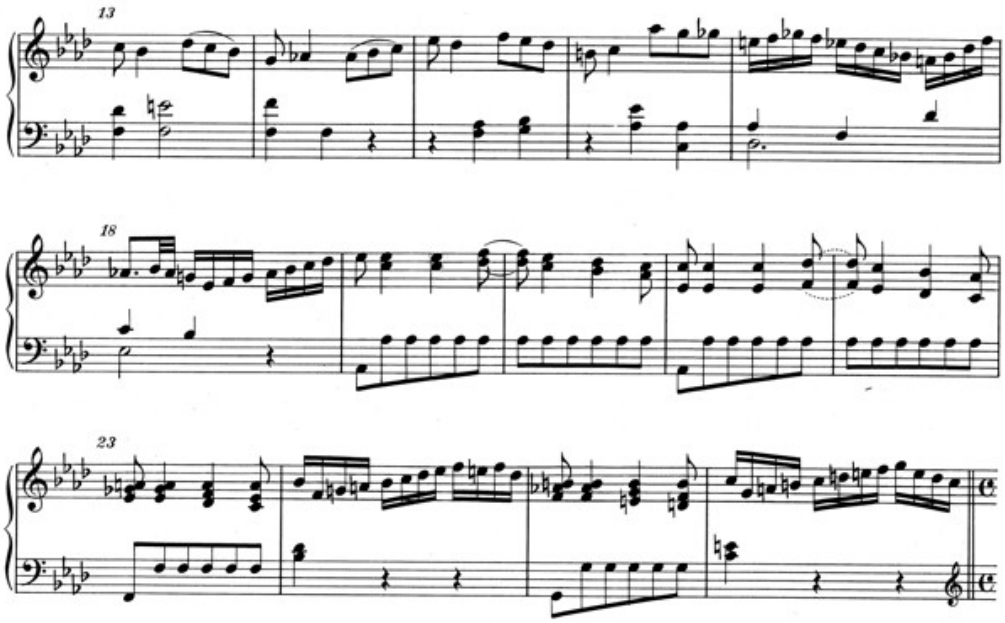
Ex. 122 K. 455, IV (mm. 1-8, 13-15).



There is a strong rhetorical component; in every case the four-measure question acquires a different meaning by changing the chord after the unisons. Then, the answer seems to "understand" the question, but redirecting always at the same place. One can imagine a improviser who is trying to find the right chord to produce a good phrase and after some frustrated trials he finds the best at the fourth. He is already a bit angry, but solving his troubles at the end.

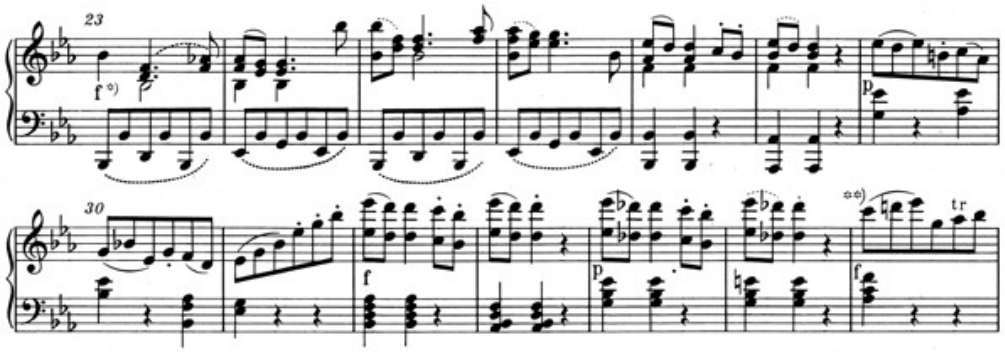
Most variations share with the theme the same bar number and basic phrasing. But going further into the mature cycles the amount of freedom increases, especially close to the end of the sets. The last variation is often extended, with short developments or codas, apart from improvisatory passages as leads-in or even some at *cadenze* (K. 398 ans 455 are good instances). But in the minor variation of K: 398 Mozart goes away from the theme structure from bar 14, suddenly changing the harmony in order to modulate into the relative major (A flat major), staying there for some measures trying a sort of provisory restatement. Here the habit of searching for stability in the relative major from the minor key is stronger than the theme structure, turning the variation into a kind of fantasia based on the theme, almost in a Romantic way. After a lead-in passage, the next variation comes.

Ex. 123 K. 398, IV, mm. 13-26.



A similar procedure can be noted in K. 354, in which the seventh variation extends the second half of the theme eighteen (!) extra measures, going into a *Caprice* pasage as well. This variation is exceptional in another sense: it is marked *Tempo di Menueto,*[53] but being a sort of caricature because of the sonorous and thick textures, contrary to the usual dance features.[54] The extended measures are basically a development of the mm. 13-16 of the theme.

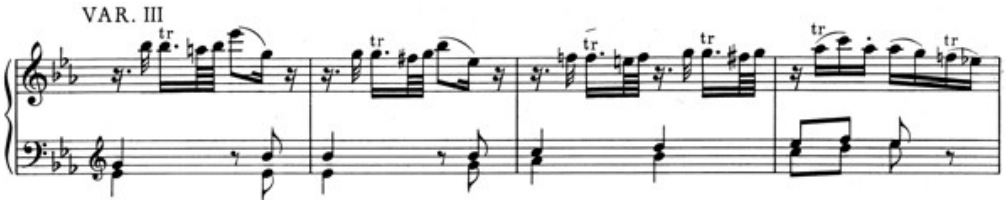
Ex. 124 K. 354, VIII, mm. 23-34.



The studied ornamental procedures are not complete without taking into account what makes this music so exceptional: the composer´s ability to make everything serve the creation of character portraits. It is often stated that Mozart had a unusual gift for drama, so evident in his operas and piano concertos. In some variations, apart from the technical procedures and texture tretaments, there is something elee, hard to analyze, that creates a strong sense of unity and singularity. Among these kind of variations, I would like to outline a couple of instances.

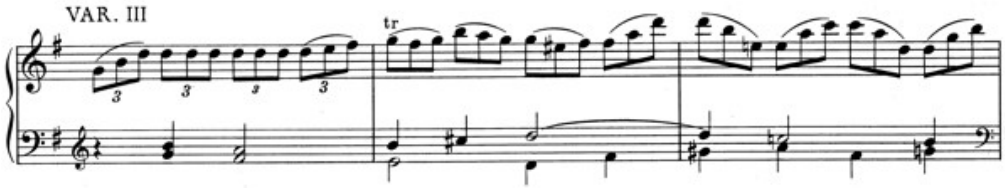
[53] As the theme is in 2/4, the variation is also a metrical one.
[54] The characteristic upbeat of the dance in the classical style is also missing

Ex. 125 K. 354 , III, mm. 1-4.



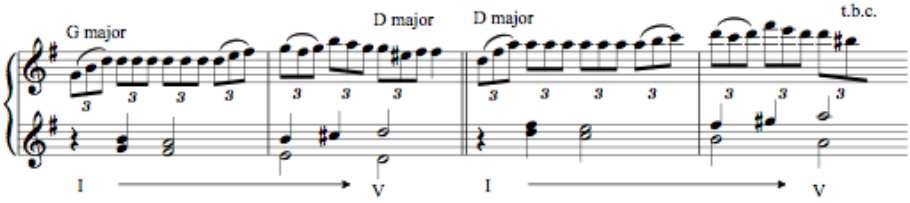
More than an ornamented version of the theme, it seems a new piece inspired on birdsongs. The thin texture helps for the delicacy of the effect. The silvery quality of the fortepiano treble has much to do with it. This taste for fragile textures has another good instance in K. 455:

Ex. 126 K. 455, III, mm. 1-4.



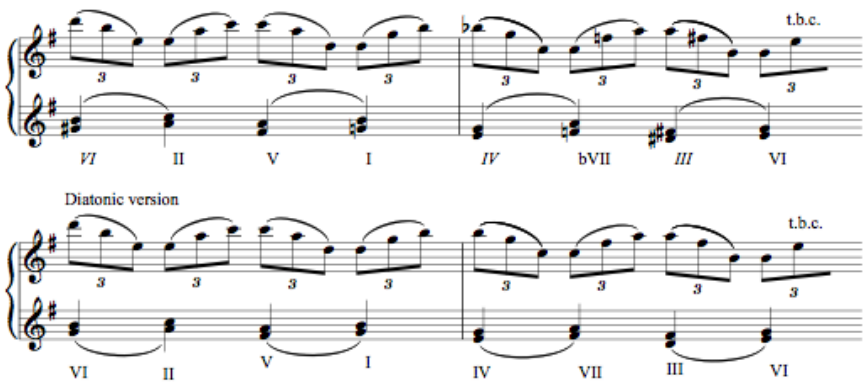
This last example offers some suggestions for practice. The first two measures are in themselves a formula for going from I to V. We can make a chain of keys like this:

Ex. 127 I to V formula.



Then, a pleasing descending progression. The diatonic version below is easier:

Ex. 128 Progressions based on K. 455.



10. Final steps in practice.

10.1. Guided practice and pedagogical issues.

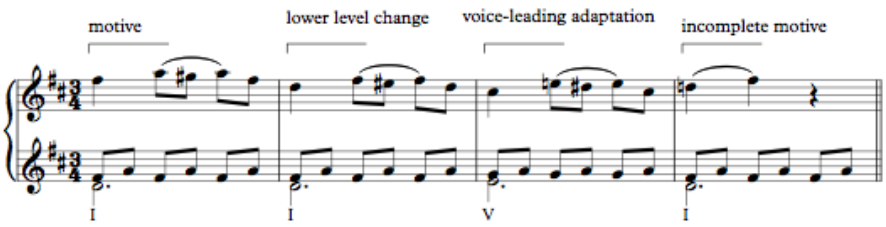
I will give some remarks about how to work with the given material in the precedent pages. Firstly, it should be considered that the suggested exercises show some possibilities for working but they can certainly be replaced by others that are equally valid if they achieve similar results. It is not the exercise in itself that is important, but rather the technique that enables one to derive it from the music. At a certain point of training, it is even better that the student creates such exercises independently. According to that, I showed as many Mozart´s examples and as many derived exercises as possible within the limits of practical handling.

I have tried also to show different strategies for developing exercises (on a single chord, on a four bar scheme, on a complete phrase, over the fifths circle, in progressions, etc.). I am convinced by experience that plenty of models need to be analyzed in order to get used with the textures and to experience a more comprehensive idea of the style. It is of course not compulsory to do all exercises in order to have some results. The work can be organized in several ways, for example one can choose some issues and practise them during a certain period. That couldn't be possible when only a few options are given. The process of learning through improvisation needs to combine systematism with moments of freedom.

Most patterns studied here may be defined as chords translated into melody and texture. But a rapid vision of the whole can give the impression of an atomized panorama, with lots of separate units but missing how to create something substantive with them. This chapter has the task of putting the material into perspective, giving some instructions for a profitable practice and making sense for all the precedent work.

First of all, some strategies for creating larger units from single chord patterns. I suggest designing four-bar structures with only two different chords (I-V or I-IV are good for making logical combinations) using change level and with voice-leading adaptation in the melody. It would be good to leave some rest at the end for good phrasing:

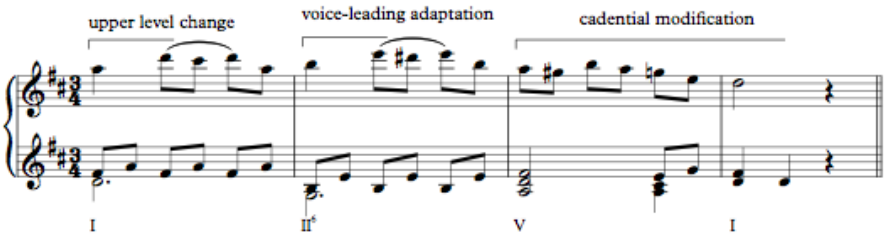
Ex. 129 First half-phrase.



Here we get something similar to a typical half-phrase. The same can be done with other four-chord structures, trying now to have a perfect cadence at the end. The last two bars must have different material that from now will be called "cadential modification"(later c.m.) to clarify the

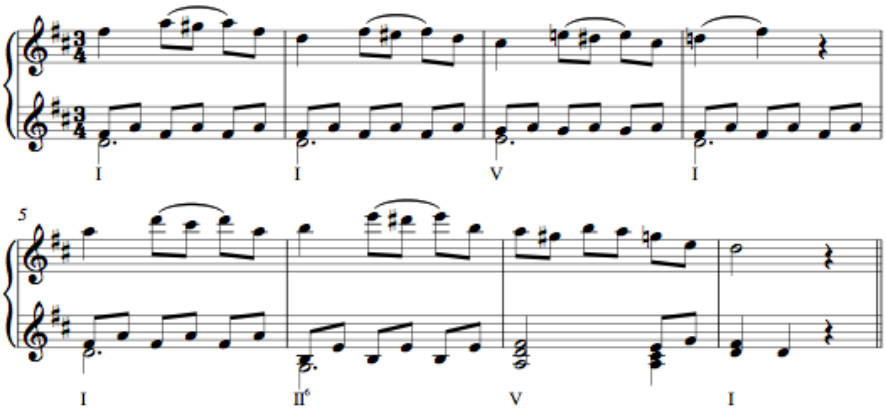
ending:

Ex. 130 Second half-phrase.



Putting both together we have achieved a classical phrase that perhaps is a bit conventional, but logical and fitting in the classical style:

Ex. 131 Complete phrase.



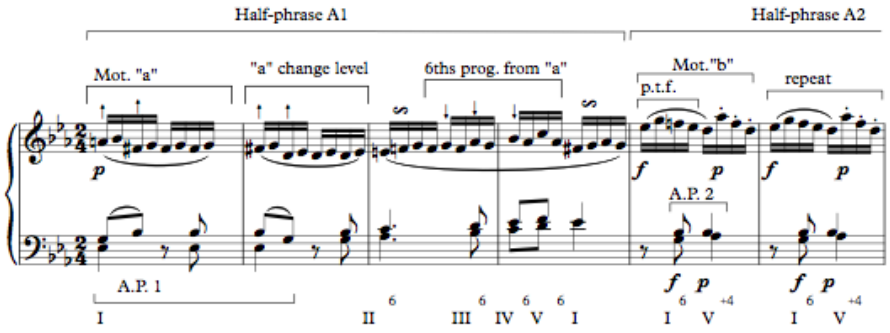
This phrase can gain some flexibility if introduced some variants in the material. For doing that we have a lot of information in the pages above.

Models for classical phrase are almost endeless. Here I chose a typical one with one chord per measure and based in a single one-bar motive that is easier to manage The first trials have to be done with limited material, only gradually implementing the complexities. All should be played with a sense of control and even ease, always making the instrument sound well. One´s own musical satisfaction is essential in order to make progress on improvisation. Even in the case that the musical result is quite simple, like in the instance, it should be played as full of beauty. Good phrasing, articulation and fine nuances are part of the task.

Regarding Mozart repertory, phrases with irregularities in harmonic rhythm and abundance of material are frequent and can explain the sense of spontaneity and flexibility that his music transmits But such fragments can also be used as models at a certain point when the student is at the appropirate level. It is only a matter of time and well-guided practice. In improvisation, like in performing from scores, almost everything can be practiced through gradual steps and convenient

techniques. The best way to be stylistically accurate is to take the models directly from the original pieces, always starting with the basic ones. Now I will illustrate the work with a phrase excerpt by Mozart himself, taken from the *"Je suis Lindor"* variations, K. 354, I:

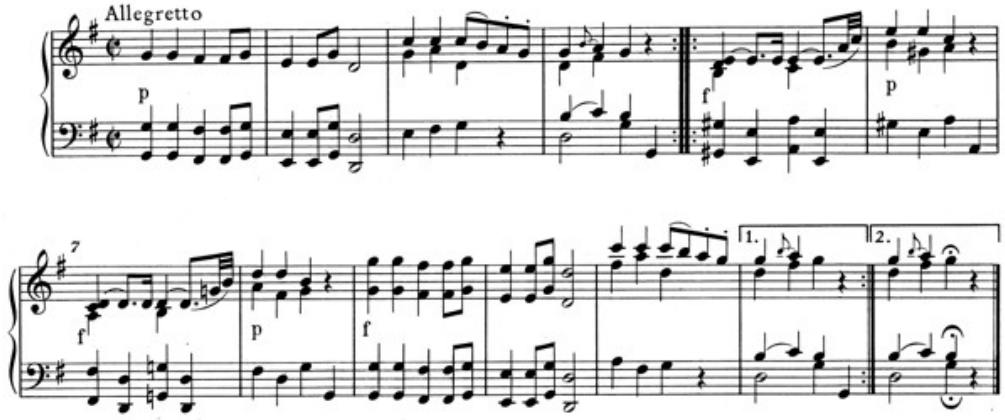
Ex. 132 Analysis proposal.



The used abreviations are: mot. (motive), prog. (progression), p.t.f. (passing tone figure), A.P. (accompaniment pattern) and some symbols such as arrows for the apoggiaturas and the usual turn symbol for the turn figures.

Apart from regular phrases, classical music has connecting sections, usually called bridges. In fact, most variation themes have a short digression after the first double barline, beginning the second half. See the bars 5-8 of this instance:

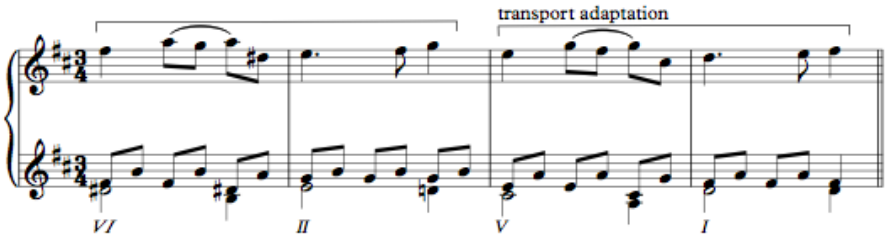
Ex. 133 K. 455, theme.



The bridge is built here on a typical progression in galante music called "fonte" by Gjerdingen. [55]In harmonic terms it can be described as *VI*-II V-I. with every couple repeated. In general, progressions are one of the basic compositional tools for creating dynamism, which is a main feature of bridges, so practicing them will give us resources for those sections. Here it is customary to use a single motive with transport adaptation. Let's use the an extended version (two bars instead of one) of the D major given motive:

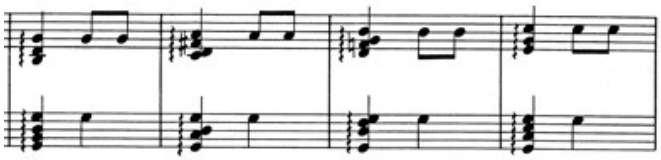
[55] Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the galant style*. (Oxford University Press, 2007), 61.

Ex. 134 “Fonte” progression.



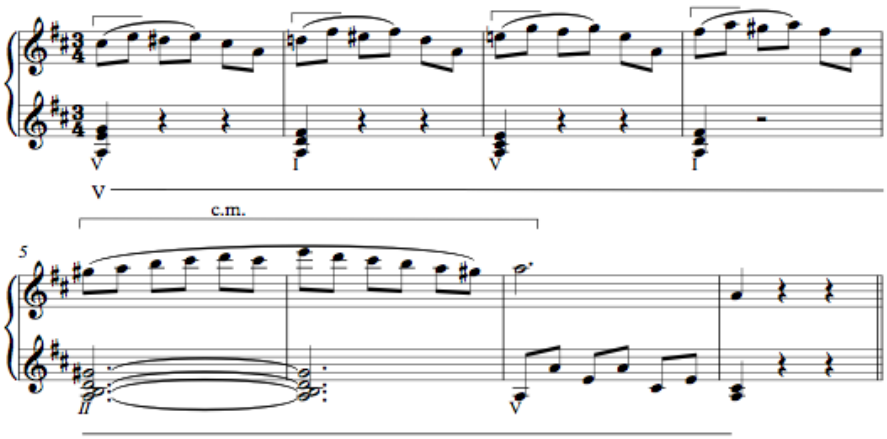
The use of a pedal point is also frequent in short bridges, in most cases on the dominant. Also, keeping the same motive here gives coherence.

Ex. 135 K. 264, theme, mm. 9-12.



The pedal point is usually ornamented with several harmonies above. The most usual ones are in this instance: I, V and *II*. In spite of the apparent chord variety, the pedal point works as an extended dominant, so it is good when we want to stay in basically the same key. Here is a suggestion for practice in several keys, using different motives in voice-leading adaptation:

Ex. 136 Pedal point practice.



After the bridge the main key is reached again, with a restatement of the main idea or with an alternative phrase oriented to a cadential process. The structure of most variation themes is close to the minuet, so the remarks for them are valid equally for the dance, considering its peculiarities.

The same can be said about small forms in general. Creating developments or larger forms is something out of the limits of this research, but much material from here can be used when working on sonata forms.

The following list orders by difficulty some Mozart themes regarding their use as improvisation models:

With three chords and regular harmonic rhythm:

K. 353, K. 179, K. 573

With four chords and irregular harmonic rhythm:

K. 264, K. 500

Four chords or more and elaborated bass lines:

K. 354, K. 180, K. 455

10.2. Conclusions and critical analysis.

Because of the nature of this research, the main results have to be appreciated through practice and after a learning process, so trying to point out some final conclussions now in paper is something provisory and even partial. Nevertheless, the extensive collection of new elaborated material based on Mozart´s variations should be considered as a first phase of results, grounded in the interaction beteween historical evidence, performance practice perspective and the experience of the IEM methodology.

A second level of results constitutes the following remarks for a guided practice:

1. In a first step, the theme should be played more than once without any analysis, only the indispensable matters for being able to perform with a minimum of clarity, in tempo and with no interruptions. The fine details of performance are not needed now, only a whole view for activating aural and intuitive perception

2. Secondly, a basic level of analysis covering the essential phrasing, harmonic framework and textures is needed. Here we can get a first model with the main guidelines of the piece, playing

every section in an harmonic reduction and trying to confirm whether that analysis is not forcing a natural sense of shaping. The harmonic structures will be played first as chords, always taking care of a correct voice-leading and phrasing, and afterwards taking some accompaniment patterns

derived from the piece.

3. Now comes the melodic analysis. This means the use of main motives, connecting elements and the way they are used for developing phrases, such as adaptation techniques, modifications. etc. The more relevant elements will be practiced in several keys. For instance, a two-bar motive based in I-V can be done with its accompaniment using strategies like a four-keys set, making the last dominant chord the tonic in the next key and so on. With this proposal and some level changes, we can fix the shaping of that motive and it can be used as a single element for future practice.

4. After playing again the theme, now taking care of the fine details of performing according to the previous analysis; a more creative part of the work starts, focused on transformations of the material. This will be guided by the variations composed by Mozart himself. This step involves a selection of variations and the analysis of their basic procedures.

5. Taking the more relevant instances, some exercises can be derived following the methods showed in chapters six to nine. It is necessary to use as many different keys as possible, trying to connect them by relations of fourths or in progression in a continuous playing. Afterwards, new variations can be created using the given material differently. They should be as musically good as possible, played with fine performance.

6. At this point, we can be freer, inventing some material and even the harmonic structure, going beyond the theme framework. This is not far from the idea of "imaginary folklore" applied to the music of Bartók and others: when the original material is internalized, we can try to speak the same language with our own words. The final goal is not only to enjoy with this practice, that at some point can be considered artistically irrelevant, or in any case it is not pursued by a lot of musicians. The important thing is the process of learning that all that involves. Nevertheless, there is no reason for denying the possible enjoyment in case we want to try.

A third level of results would be the influence of the research in my own practice, that I will summarize in three points:

1. The classification of some basic melodic patterns linked to their pianistic gesture has enabled me to learn faster some other pieces by Mozart and contemporaries, because I can recognize easily their harmonic roots and their natural shape.
2. The emerged universe of classified pianistic textures from the style has enlarged my resorces as a keyboard improviser, having now increased the possibilities of variety within a more precise sense of style accurateness.
3. The study of a repertory that covers virtually the complete Mozart´s lifetime has contributed in having a clearer picture of his pianistic and compositional personality, guided by the historic facts and the period sources. The finding of some invariant elements at the root of the inmense richness of his production was among the key contributions for my professional activity.

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