THE CHACONNE BASS AS A MUSICAL TOPOS
IN MOZART'S FANTASIA MUSIC

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

By

Mark Stuart Spicer, B.M.
Denton, Texas
August, 1990

This thesis provides evidence that a particular "topos" from the high Baroque's exalted style, the so-called chaconne bass, made a profound impact on a considerable body of Mozart's compositions from the last ten years of his life in Vienna. After identifying the topos in the first chapter, a detailed study in chapter two shows how Mozart's faith in the extraordinary emotional power carried by this topos was enough for him to work it into all of the completed keyboard fantasias. Chapter three illustrates that an understanding of the chaconne bass and its unmistakable association with the fantasia style can shed new light on three of Mozart's most enigmatic compositions from his final period, K. 465, K. 491, and K. 527.
Copyright by
Mark Stuart Spicer
1990
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to my advisor and friend Kevin Korsyn, not only for his expert advice and editorial suggestions as this thesis progressed, but whose remarkable musicianship has been a constant source of inspiration to me throughout my undergraduate and graduate careers at the University of North Texas. Thanks also to Deanna Bush, whose enlightening doctoral seminar on Mozart opera in the Spring of 1989 sparked my initial interest in this investigation. I also wish to acknowledge various members of the theory and composition faculty at U.N.T. who have influenced my musical thinking over the years, most notably Gene Cho, Paul Dworak, Joán Groom-Thornton, Cindy McTee, and Phil Winsor.

To all my students during my two years as a teaching fellow in the U.N.T. College of Music, thank you for being attentive as I tried out my new ideas, and for helping me learn how to effectively bring to life the often-dull topics of undergraduate music theory classes. Last, but by no means least, to my wife Clarissa, without whose love and support, not to mention her word-processing abilities, this thesis would have never materialized.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. IDENTIFYING THE TOPOS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE KEYBOARD FANTASIAS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. STYLISTIC DIFFUSION</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-1. The &quot;chaconne bass.&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3. Changes in the bass ostinato in Bach's &quot;D Minor Chaconne&quot; (ca. 1720)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4. Chromatic chaconne basses.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5. Handel, <em>Samson</em>: No. 2, Recitative - &quot;This day, a solemn feast&quot; (1742)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1. Realizations of selected signatures for descending stepwise basses by C.P.E. Bach</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2. Mozart, <em>Fantasy and Fugue for Piano in C major</em>, K. 394 (1782), mm. 28-36 (metric reduction)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3. Mozart, <em>Fantasy and Fugue in C major</em>, K. 394, m. 46</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4. Beethoven, <em>Piano Sonata in C-sharp minor</em> (&quot;Moonlight&quot;), Op. 27 No. 2 (ca. 1802), first movement, mm. 34-35</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5. Mozart, <em>Fantasy in C minor</em>, K. 396 (1782), mm. 7-10 (metric reduction)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-6. Mozart, <em>Fantasy in C minor</em>, K. 396, mm. 11-14 (metric reduction)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-7. Mozart, <em>Fantasy in D minor</em>, K. 397 (1782), mm. 1-11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-8. Mozart, <em>Fantasy in D minor</em>, K. 397, mm. 16-19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-9. Mozart, <em>Fantasy in D minor</em>, K. 397, mm. 20-22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-10. Mozart, <em>Fantasy in D minor</em>, K. 397, mm. 35-39.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-11. Mozart, K. 475 (opening motive).</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-12. Baroque fugue subjects spanning the range of a diminished seventh.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-13. Mozart, <em>Fantasia in C minor</em>, K. 475 (1785), mm. 1-18.</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-14. Mozart's expanding symmetrical tonal organization in K. 475.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-15. Expected resolutions of dominant-seventh chords.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-16. Enharmonic resolutions of dominant-seventh chords as German augmented sixths.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-17. Mozart’s doubly-ambiguous resolutions.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-19. The background-level arpeggiation of the dominant harmony in mm. 18-26 of Mozart’s K. 475.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-20. Mozart, K. 475, m. 68 (turn figure).</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-22. Descending stepwise organization of the middleground tonalities in mm. 70-83 of Mozart’s K. 475.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Musical Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-24.</td>
<td>Mozart, <em>Adagio and Allegro for Mechanical Organ</em>, K. 594 (1790), mm. 1-6 (voice leading reduction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-25.</td>
<td>Mozart, <em>Fantasia in F minor for Mechanical Organ</em>, K. 608 (1791), mm. 1-5 (voice leading reduction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1.</td>
<td>Mozart, <em>String Quartet in C major</em> (&quot;Dissonant&quot;), K. 465 (1785), mm. 1-22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3.</td>
<td>The underlying chaconne bass in the opening of Mozart's <em>Piano Concerto in C minor</em>, K. 491.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4.</td>
<td>Mozart, <em>Don Giovanni</em>, K. 527 (1787), Act II: No. 24 (Finale), mm. 436-43.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-1.</td>
<td>Beethoven, <em>Piano Sonata in C-sharp minor</em> (&quot;Moonlight&quot;), Op. 27 No. 2 (ca. 1802), mm. 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-2.</td>
<td>Schubert, <em>Fantasia in C minor for Piano</em>, D. 993 (ca. 1813), mm. 1-3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Great events in music history sometimes depend upon accidents,"¹ as Alfred Einstein stated. In this case, he was referring to certain events that happened in Vienna during 1781-82 which, it can be argued, was the most influential period in Mozart's development as a composer; it was during this time that Mozart became well-acquainted with, and subsequently captivated by, the music of the high Baroque, most notably that of its two giants, J. S. Bach and Handel.

Not long after leaving Salzburg and arriving in Vienna in the spring of 1781 (where he was to reside for the last ten years of his life), the twenty-five year old Mozart, on the sheer strength of his musical muscle, managed to work his way into the most elite Viennese musical circle of the time. Baron Gottfried van Swieten, who was then the Director of the Imperial Court Library, had taken to inviting Vienna's most distinguished musicians (including Joseph Haydn) into his home on Sunday afternoons for private

concerts. These meetings were devoted primarily to reading masterworks of the high Baroque from van Swieten's substantial personal library—music cast in a language which, while only a few decades old, had been almost forgotten throughout Europe in favor of the "galant" or "concertante" style.²

It is well-known now that Mozart's intimate weekly encounters at van Swieten's with the music of the great Baroque masters had a daunting effect on the young composer's self-confidence. To Mozart the musician, the intense fusion of harmonic and polyphonic thinking represented in the works of Bach and Handel did not seem, contrary to the prevailing opinion of the time, "archaic," but a refreshing new source of musical inspiration from which he had been sheltered, to a certain extent, in Salzburg. What was more important to Mozart the perfectionist, though, was that the style manifested in true Bachian counterpoint was one that he had yet to conquer, and his struggle to do just that was a long and arduous one that profoundly affected the remainder of his compositional career.³

²Ibid., 144-48.
³There has already been a great deal of discussion concerning Mozart's "discovery" of the music of J.S. Bach in 1782, with the notion also that, from this point on, he truly began to think "contrapuntally." For an exhaustive study along these lines, see Isabelle Putnam Emerson, "The Role of Counterpoint in the Formation of Mozart's Late
The obsession that Mozart developed with the study of Bach’s and Handel’s music was to influence him far more deeply, however, than in just his attitude towards counterpoint. By immersing himself in this music so completely, Mozart could not avoid absorbing into his own musical language certain gestures that had been commonplace in the high Baroque, but that had for the most part been ignored, or at least severely diluted, in contemporary Viennese music. According to Wye Jamison Allanbrook, though, the distinctive rhythmic and motivic gestures that Mozart borrowed from the Baroque into his own compositions would have been immediately recognizable to the majority of his audience in Vienna; she refers to these special musical devices (herself borrowing a term from rhetoric) as “topoi.”

The idea of a musical "topos" can be better understood if we consider this hypothetical illustration. When Bach and Handel set out to write a particular type of piece--a sarabande as a dance movement to be used in a keyboard suite, for example--they would usually choose to follow a specific musical formula in order to achieve the aural effect of that particular genre. Baroque convention


dictated that a sarabande be of a slow, simple triple meter, without anacrusis, and with an agogic accent on the second beat of the measure. Any deviation from this prescription would have been considered, in the spirit of the high Baroque's "Doctrine of the Affections," entirely inappropriate.

Suppose then that Mozart had chosen to employ the peculiar rhythmic characteristics of the sarabande when setting a certain text to music for use in an opera buffa. Most of the Viennese opera-going regulars would have been familiar with the conventions of social dance that were still alive from the Baroque. Consequently, they would probably have been able to identify Mozart's setting as being "sarabande-like," which in turn was bound to have had a considerable effect upon their very attitude towards the music itself. We can see from this example that if a musical "topos" is distinctive enough, it is able to retain its unique identity and be easily recognized even when divorced from its original milieu. It seems also that an ability to spot those "topoi" as Mozart used them is a

---


6Allanbrook, Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart, p. 375. Allanbrook suggests that Guglielmo and Dorabella's duet from Cosi Fan Tutte (II, 23) is an example of a sarabande, even though the first bar is preceded by an upbeat.
crucial element in thoroughly understanding the music of his late style.

Perhaps the least understood, and, hence, the most inconsistently discussed, works in the entirety of Mozart's output are the keyboard fantasias. Certainly these pieces, with their abrupt shifts of mood and tonality, and apparent lack of any traditional form, seem incongruous coming from a composer renowned for writing "absolute" music in the Classical sense--music clear in its formal design and direct in its harmonic intent. It would be easy to assume that seeming formlessness and extreme chromaticism are the only traits shared by these works. Closer examination, however, will reveal that there is indeed a common thread that binds this music together, a particular melodic topos from the high Baroque that Mozart consciously worked into all of these compositions: namely, the so-called "chaconne bass."

A descending bass line pointing from the tonic to the dominant scale degrees occupied a special place in Baroque music. It was most often used as an ostinato or "ground" set in triple meter over which a series of variations could be written, resulting in a form designated by some Baroque composers as a "chaconne" and by others as a "passacaglia." The idea of writing a set of variations over an ostinato bass had its origins in late sixteenth-century Spanish guitar music. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, the
practice had migrated throughout Europe and came to be known in Italy as the "ciaccona" and later in France as the "passacaille." The main distinction that can be drawn between the two is that the "ciaccona" tended to be in major while the "passacaille" was usually found in minor.7

It was these forms, then, that ultimately evolved into the chaconne and passacaglia of the high Baroque. Donald Grout rightfully observed that, especially after 1700, composers seemed to use these formal designations interchangeably, regardless of whether or not a particular piece was set in the major or the minor mode.8 In addition, the ostinato bass formula favored more often than any other in these pieces was the descending tetrachord connecting the tonic note to the dominant. So distinctive is this topos, in fact, that it has come to be known affectionately as the "chaconne bass" (Example 1-1).9


9I will be using the designation "chaconne bass" to refer to this topos, which is preferred also by Manfred Bukofzer in Music in the Baroque Era (New York: W.W. Norton, 1947), pp. 41-43, and by Allanbrook (Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart, p. 298). However, other writers, including Grout (A History of Western Music, p. 316), are equally justified in their identification of it as the "passacaglia bass."
Example 1-1. The "chaconne bass."

There are many passacaglias and chaconnes from the Baroque that adhere strictly to a simple "diatonic" formula of the ground (as indicated in the above example) for their entire duration. Very often, though, composers will vary or embellish the basic chaconne bass in order to give it a certain individual character from one piece to another. Example 1-2 shows the ostinato bass from Henry Purcell's "Evening Hymn." Here the descending tetrachord has been truly "composed out" in Schenkerian terms, since each step of the descent has in itself been enlivened with its own falling third.


It was also common, particularly in rather lengthy works, for the basic formula to undergo considerable changes as the piece progressed. The most famous example of this phenomenon has to be Bach's towering monument to the high Baroque spirit, the "Chaconne" from the Partita No. 2 in D Minor for Violin Solo, BWV 1004 (Example 1-3).

Example 1-3. Changes in the bass ostinato in Bach's "D Minor Chaconne" (ca. 1720).

We can see clearly in the example above that Bach markedly alters the ground as it appears in m. 129 when compared to its initial statement in m. 1. Just four bars later, in m. 133, Bach achieves even further contrast when he shifts to the major mode.

---

11The chaconne ultimately returns to D minor in m. 209, resulting in an overall MINOR-MAJOR-MINOR, or ternary, design.
Perhaps the most significant alteration of the basic ostinato formula, however, is the exclusively chromatic descent. The extraordinary emotional power carried by a descending chromatic bass line is often exploited in vocal compositions of the high Baroque, where it can add an extra special degree of pathos to an already expressive text. Two famous examples of this are shown in Example 1-4.

Example 1-4. Chromatic chaconne basses.


Purcell, *Dido and Aeneas*: "Dido's Lament" (1689).

The choir's description of the death of Christ in Bach's "Crucifixus" gains even more meaning when accompanied by the chromatic chaconne bass. Similarly, the depth of emotion in "Dido's Lament" is strengthened even further by
the underlying topos.\textsuperscript{12} Note also in the Purcell example that the chromatic bass has been extended so as to approach the dominant from below as well as from above.

The influence of the topos can be recognized in high Baroque music even when it is divorced from its usual triple meter and the constraints of an ostinato form. It was especially important when used to enhance a particularly solemn declamation in accompanied recitative. Example 1-5 shows how Handel adds to the solemnity of Samson's first words in the oratorio by setting them over a chaconne bass.\textsuperscript{13}

Example 1-5. Handel, Samson: No. 2, Recitative - "This day, a solemn feast" (1742).

\textsuperscript{12}Indeed, the special poetic weight of the chromatic chaconne bass made it a favorite formula among Baroque composers to use as the foundation for a "lament" in opera seria.

\textsuperscript{13}It is worth mentioning also that Samson is blind and chained in front of the prison in Gaza in this opening scene.
There is no other gesture, be it rhythmic or melodic, more capable of evoking the very essence of the exalted style of the high Baroque; hence, it is safe to assume that the unique effect of the chaconne bass would have been encountered by Mozart as he delved into this music during his first months in Vienna. 14 This thesis will demonstrate how this topos profoundly affected a substantial body of Mozart's compositions from 1782 up until his death in 1791. Now that the topos has been clearly identified, then, I think we are ready to examine in detail how Mozart works the chaconne bass into the composition of his fantasia music.

14 Of the works from which the examples of chaconne basses in this chapter were taken, we can be confident that Mozart would have been familiar with Handel's Samson, since a copy was in van Swieten's library (Einstein, Mozart: His Character, His Work, p. 148), and Bach's B Minor Mass, since his friend Haydn owned a copy (Emerson, The Role of Counterpoint in the Formation of Mozart's Late Style, p. 8).
CHAPTER II

THE KEYBOARD FANTASIAS

Before undertaking an investigation into Mozart's keyboard fantasias, it is necessary to comment on the state of the so-called "fantasia style" as it would have been understood in the Vienna of 1782. Leonard Ratner describes a "fantasia" in the classical sense as being "recognized by one or more of the following features—elaborate figuration, shifting harmonies, chromatic conjunct bass lines, sudden contrasts, full textures or disembodied melodic figures—in short, a sense of improvisation and loose structural links between figures and phrases."\(^1\) Certainly most of these remarks can be applied well to Mozart’s fantasias; however, Ratner's description seems to fit more precisely the ideals of a fantasia style as proposed by J.S. Bach's most illustrious son, Carl Philipp Emanuel.

Up until 1780, copies of C.P.E. Bach's monumental *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* were few and relatively difficult to obtain in most of Europe. In this year, though, C.P.E. Bach is reported to have given the

Leipzig publisher Schwickert unlimited license to reprint
and distribute the work as the musical public demanded. The resultant influences that the Essay had on both composers and performers of keyboard music in the late-eighteenth century are unmistakable, and Mozart is no exception. Regarding C.P.E. Bach and the Essay, Mozart is known to have said that "he is the father, we are the children. Those of us who do anything right learned it from him." It is in chapter seven of the Essay, entitled "Improvisation," that C.P.E. Bach describes in detail a systemic approach towards improvising a "free," or unmeasured, fantasia at the keyboard. "A free fantasia," he says, "consists of varied harmonic progressions which can be expressed in all manner of figuration and motives. A key in which to begin and end must be established. Although no bar lines are employed ... it is usually assumed that such fantasias are in a four-four meter." Later, he recommends that "the briefest and most natural means of which a keyboardist may avail himself in extemporizing . . . [are

\footnote{C.P.E. Bach, Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen (Berlin: 1753 and 1762), translated and edited by William Mitchell as Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments (New York: W.W. Norton, 1949), 2-3.}

\footnote{Ibid., 4.}

\footnote{Ibid., 430.}
when he fashions his bass out of the ascending and descending scale of the prescribed key, with a variety of figured bass signatures."\(^5\)

So then, it seems that we must hold C.P.E. Bach at least partially responsible for convincing Mozart that the chaconne bass was a particularly appropriate foundation for use in the fantasia style.\(^6\) Example 2-1 shows a selection of C.P.E. Bach's signatures for descending stepwise basses, with keyboard realizations provided. Of course, it is the initial portion of each descent, connecting the tonic to the dominant, that corresponds to the topos.

Mozart's first completed attempt at writing a keyboard piece in this style was the *Fantasy and Fugue for Piano in C major*, K. 394, composed in Vienna in April 1782 during the early stages of his close association with the music of the

\(^5\)Ibid., 431.

\(^6\)Indeed, it appears also that the extensive figured bass pedagogy proposed by C.P.E. Bach in the *Essay* had a great deal of influence on Mozart's attitude towards teaching composition from the bass upwards. Strong similarities can be found between the figured basses in the *Essay* and Mozart's figured bass exercises composed for his student Thomas Attwood in 1785. For example, at the end of chapter seven C.P.E. Bach illustrates various ways of modulating to a remote key via a series of figured bass exercises beginning in each case with a C major triad. Mozart's figured basses in the "Attwood Studies" grow progressively more adventurous in their modulations, and each also begins with a C major harmony. See Rosalie Athol Schellhous, "Voice Leading in Mozart's Figured Basses for Thomas Attwood," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* II/2 (Fall 1988), 187-223.
Example 2-1. Realizations of selected signatures for descending stepwise basses by C.P.E. Bach.\(^7\)

**Major:**

![Musical notation for major signature]

**Minor:**

![Musical notation for minor signature]

**Chromatic:**

![Musical notation for chromatic signature]

---

\(^7\)C.P.E. Bach, *Essay*, 432-33. The realizations and harmonic analyses are my own.
The piece seems to have been written as a gift to be sent to his beloved sister Nannerl. Mozart's comments in the accompanying letter to his sister, dated April 20, 1782, provide some enlightening information as to how this work was composed:

I send you herewith a prelude and a three-part fugue. The reason why I did not reply to your letter at once was that on account of the wearisome labor of writing these small notes, I could not finish the composition any sooner. And, even so, it is awkwardly done, for the prelude ought to come first and the fugue to follow. But I composed the fugue first and wrote it down while I was thinking out the prelude. I only hope that you will be able to read it, for it is written so very small; and I hope further that you will like it. Another time I shall send you something better for the clavier.

The composer himself admits then that the fantasia introduction of K. 394 was hastily composed as an afterthought, the majority of his effort having been spent on wrestling with the Bachian counterpoint of the fugue.

---

8Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amadé Mozarts, 6th ed., edited by Franz Giegling, Alexander Weinmann, and Gerd Sievers (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1964), 402. The dates and places of composition of all the Mozart works discussed in this thesis have been confirmed by consulting this most recent edition.


10Einstein, Mozart: His Character, His Work, 152. Concerning the fugue of K. 394, Einstein contends that, while it is contrapuntally "correct," it lacks the unique spark that makes a Bachian fugue so appealing and that Mozart was struggling so hard to emulate.
Yet oddly enough, of all the Mozart fantasias that were actually completed it is this first one that appears to follow most closely C.P.E. Bach's ideals of a free fantasia style, relying more than any of the others on virtuosic passagework rather than truly memorable Mozartean themes. True to C.P.E. Bach's prescription also is that the majority of these improvisatory flights are controlled by an underlying stepwise descending bass. Example 2-2 presents a metric reduction\textsuperscript{11} of mm. 28-36, which shows clearly how Mozart uses an extended chaconne bass to govern the voice leading of a considerable amount of "improvised" music in the prelude of K. 394.

On examining the harmonic analysis of this example, we can see that the secondary tonal levels explored by Mozart in these measures are more closely related to C minor than to the C major of the opening (and which is confirmed also in the ensuing fugue). A descending chromatic bass such as this lends itself especially well to a harmonization involving shifts of mode between a major key and its parallel minor (echoing perhaps the "Crucifixus" from J.S. Bach's Mass in B minor). Indeed, it will be shown that free modal fluctuation becomes an increasingly important

\textsuperscript{11}A "metric reduction" in the Schenkerian sense strips a musical passage of its non-harmonic tones and verticalizes any elaborate figuration in order to reveal its essential voice leading structure. See Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert, Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 10.

The fully-diminished seventh harmony was particularly useful in the fantasia style due to the open-ended possibilities of its resolution. This chord can be respelled enharmonically so that any one of its four members can act as a leading tone, making it possible to resolve it equally smoothly to four different "tonics." As a result, when several of these chords are sounded one after the other any feeling of tonal center comes close to being abolished.

---

12 C.P.E. Bach, *Essay*, 436-37. C.P.E. Bach's figured basses on these pages illustrate a variety of possible ways of modulating to remote keys using the enharmonic reinterpretation of a fully-diminished seventh chord as a pivot.
Mozart makes use of this phenomenon in the rhythmically-free m. 46 of K. 394, where he arpeggiates rapidly through several fully-diminished seventh chords a semitone apart from one another. What heightens the effectiveness of this gesture, however, is that embedded within its underlying bass structure is a summary of the descending chromatic bass of mm. 28-30 at exactly the same pitch level. This is illustrated in Example 2-3.

Example 2-3. Mozart, Fantasy and Fugue in C major, K. 394, m. 46.

It seems that harmonically ambiguous passages such as this one become almost clichéd in fantasia music of the early-nineteenth century, as in this famous excerpt from the first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, Op. 27 No. 2 (aptly subtitled "Sonata quasi una Fantasia"). Here Beethoven juxtaposes two fully-diminished seventh chords a semitone apart over a dominant pedal (Example 2-4).
Example 2-4. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C-sharp minor ("Moonlight"), Op. 27 No. 2 (ca. 1802), first movement, mm. 34-35.

Mozart composed two sonatas for violin and piano during August and September 1782, K. 396 and K. 402, both of which were left unfinished. Only the initial adagio section of K. 396 was completed, and furthermore, the violin part was only sparsely sketched in by Mozart in the autograph. The Austrian keyboardist and composer Abbé Maximilian Stadler (who was musical advisor to the widowed Constanze Mozart after moving to Vienna in 1796) reworked the piece, absorbing the violin line into the piano part to create the version known today. Since the work was unmistakably cast in the fantasia style, it is only appropriate that it has been retitled as the Fantasy in C minor, K. 396.\(^{13}\)

Again, in true C.P.E. Bachian fashion, Mozart employs an extended chaconne bass in this piece to hold together large sections of elaborate figuration. This is revealed in the following metric reduction of mm. 7-10 (Example 2-5).

\(^{13}\)Köchel, Mozart Verzeichnis, 420-21.
Example 2-5. Mozart, *Fantasy in C minor*, K. 396 (1782), mm. 7-10 (metric reduction).

This formula is repeated immediately an octave lower with a slightly altered ending, as shown in Example 2-6. Note also that Mozart freely writes six beats of music in m. 13 without changing the time signature.\(^{14}\)

Example 2-6. Mozart, *Fantasy in C minor*, K. 396, mm. 11-14 (metric reduction).

\(^{14}\)The entire passage from mm. 7-14 is then recapitulated in mm. 52-59.
Although a descending stepwise bass is certainly a prominent compositional feature, then, in K. 394 and K. 396, it could be argued that, since the basses we have examined in these pieces extend well beyond the normal tonic-dominant range expected of a chaconne bass, the distinctive character of the topos is not entirely achieved. However, in the Fantasy in D minor, K. 397, the last of the keyboard fantasias written in 1782, Mozart established a precedent that he was to follow faithfully in all of his remaining fantasia music: namely, the use of a true chaconne bass to govern the entire introductory section of the piece. The complete andante introduction of K. 397 is quoted in Example 2-7 along with a voice leading reduction.


---

15 The exact date of composition of this piece is unknown.
Perhaps a more important observation concerning K. 397, though, is that not only does the chaconne bass provide an undercurrent for the introduction, but it holds its own identity as a full-fledged theme that Mozart "composes out" during the rest of the piece. In this excerpt from the first adagio (Example 2-8), we can see how Mozart embellishes the simple melodic structure of m. 16 in the following measure, and in doing so craftily works into the right-hand part a descending chromatic line from the tonic note d³ that makes a clear reference to the chaconne bass of the opening.
In the previous example, note that the right-hand melody continues to descend chromatically from a\textsuperscript{2} to e\textsuperscript{2} in m. 18. This serves to foreshadow the music that follows immediately in m. 20, where a modulation to the dominant minor is strengthened by its own chromatic chaconne bass (Example 2-9).


Rather unpredictably, the thematic material of m. 20 returns in the key of the subdominant minor at m. 35, a step below its initial statement (which could be construed as a
large scale composing-out of the descending whole steps in
the opening chaconne bass). Mozart's intentions for this
modulation are quite clear, however, for not only do we get
a further manifestation of the topos in G minor in
mm. 35-37, but, as the music progresses, the continuing
descent in the bass makes yet another reference to the
chaconne bass of the introduction at its original pitch
level (Example 2-10).

Example 2-10. Mozart, Fantasy in D minor, K. 397,
mm. 35-39.

Charming as K. 397 may be, many writers, including
Einstein, have criticized the ending as being too abrupt
for the piece to stand alone as an effective musical
composition, although it is often performed this way. By
contrast, Mozart's next completed keyboard work in this

\[\text{\cite{Einstein-Mozart:HisCharacter,HisWork,248}}\]

The author comments especially on the "celestially childlike
nature" of the concluding allegretto in the parallel major
at m. 55, "which," he says, "is far too short to really
complete the work."
style, the mammoth Fantasia in C minor, K. 475, is perhaps too much to absorb fully in a single hearing. Composed in May 1785, almost three years after the 1782 fantasias, the K. 475 is arguably not only Mozart's greatest keyboard fantasia but the greatest piece of fantasia music to emerge from the Classical tradition. Einstein remarked that this work "gives us the truest picture of Mozart's mighty power of improvisation—his ability to indulge in the greatest freedom and boldness of imagination, the most extreme contrast of ideas, the most uninhibited variety of lyric and virtuoso elements, while yet preserving structural logic."¹⁷

The foreboding opening motive of K. 475 (Example 2-11), which Mozart writes in triple octaves for added strength, embodies within it three ideas that are in turn manifested on a variety of structural levels throughout the piece: firstly, the upward arpeggiation, with embellishment, of the tonic harmony (although C minor is not confirmed as the tonal center of the piece until the concluding adagio);

¹⁷Ibid., 247-48.
secondly, the double chromatic neighboring figure surrounding the dominant \((F\# - G - A^b)\); and thirdly, the melodic interval of an augmented second \((E^b - F\#)\) which, when inverted to become a diminished seventh, gives us the range of the motive \((B^b - A^b)\). The fact that Mozart chooses to exploit the highly ambiguous diminished-seventh interval between the leading tone and the flatted submediant gives this opening motive a decidedly Baroque flavor, since this particular melodic ambitus was a favorite among Baroque composers for their fugue subjects in minor mode, as shown in Example 2-12.

Example 2-12. Baroque fugue subjects spanning the range of a diminished seventh.


\[\text{Example 2-12 image of Bach's music.}\]

Handel, *The Messiah*: No. 25, Chorus - "And With His Stripes We are Healed" (1742).\(^{18}\)

\[\text{Example 2-12 image of Handel's music.}\]

\(^{18}\)Mozart newly orchestrated *The Messiah* for Baron van Swieten in 1789, and then used a virtually identical subject to this one for the double fugue of the "Kyrie" in his *Requiem*, K. 626 (1791).
Despite its richly expressive qualities, this gesture is far too brief to stand alone as a full-fledged theme. However, its fragmentary nature allows Mozart to manipulate it from measure to measure throughout the extraordinarily chromatic opening section; and, as we might expect, he uses a chromatic chaconne bass to give coherence to this harmonic instability. The opening adagio of K. 475 is quoted in Example 2-13, followed by a voice leading reduction.

Although my analysis of these eighteen measures is considerably different, I must acknowledge a certain debt to the alternative graphs presented by Felix Salzer in Structural Hearing, Vol. 2 (New York: Dover, 1962), 308-11, and more recently by Roger Kamien in "Subtle Enharmonic Relationships in Mozart's Music," Journal of Music Theory XXX/2 (Fall 1986), 178.
Before I commence a discussion of this voice leading graph, it should be noted that any "functional" harmonic analysis of the initial section of K. 475 must be approached with caution, for it seems quite clear that Mozart was not thinking "vertically" when he composed this music. The measure by measure harmonic rhythm is achieved via an intricate web of linear voice connections almost exclusively by common tone or by step. As a result, the majority of Mozart's harmonies here can be best explained linearly rather than functionally.

However, a functional harmonic analysis does reveal some striking peculiarities in these opening measures. We can see in Example 2-13 that Mozart boldly explores the unusually remote tonal regions on the Neapolitan and on the leading tone. Yet the precedent for these drastic modulations is found in the opening motive, where Mozart writes the double chromatic neighboring figure surrounding
the dominant. This appears to motivate his subsequent tonicizations of the Neapolitan (a semitone above the initial tonic) and of the leading tone (a semitone below the initial tonic). In addition, Mozart expands upon this symmetrical organization of tonal levels around the tonic C by setting the second large-scale division of the work (from mm. 26-41) in D major, a step above it, and the balancing fourth large-scale division (from mm. 91-129) in B-flat major, a step below it (Example 2-14).

Example 2-14. Mozart's expanding symmetrical tonal organization in K. 475.

Some powerful references to the opening motive can be found also in the underlying chaconne bass of this first section. Notice in Example 2-13 that the structural bass notes change once per measure, with the exception of mm. 5-7, where A♭ is prolonged, and mm. 15-17, where F♯ (G♭)

---

20 Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 93. Rosen alludes to this symmetrical tonal organization by describing the D major of Section II as the "dominant of the dominant," and the B-flat major of Section IV as the "subdominant of the subdominant."
is prolonged. By placing even further emphasis on these particular pitches, this could be construed as yet another composing-out of the chromatic neighboring figure in the opening motive. Note also that the chaconne bass makes an entirely predictable chromatic descent until m. 5. Then, after prolonging $A_b$ for three measures, the bass begins to ascend rather abnormally until it reaches again in m. 10 the $B^4$ heard in m. 2. This might seem very uncharacteristic and haphazard when compared to the exclusively descending chaconne basses of Mozart's earlier fantasias. Yet there is no gesture in Mozart's music that lacks definite motivation; in making this ascent, he cleverly summarizes the range of an augmented second from $A_b$ to $B^4$, which, when inverted, comprises exactly the ambitus of the opening motive.

Mozart's resolutions of the harmonies in m. 12 and m. 14 are perhaps the most difficult to explain in functional terms. By spelling these chords as dominant sevenths, we would certainly expect him to have resolved them as in Example 2-15, yet this would have interrupted the

chromatic descent of the chaconne bass. In order to preserve the continuity of the topos, he seems instead to be exploiting the possibility of enharmonically reinterpreting these dominant sevenths as German augmented-sixth chords. The expected resolutions of these harmonies, involving a characteristic descending semitone in the bass, are illustrated in Example 2-16. Mozart's voice leading is doubly ambiguous, however, since these chords, even when reinterpreted as German augmented sixths, defeat the normal

Example 2-16. Enharmonic resolutions of dominant-seventh chords as German augmented sixths.

\[ \text{Example 2-16. Enharmonic resolutions of dominant-seventh chords as German augmented sixths.} \]

Although it should be noted that actual musical practice generally precedes any theoretical writings about that practice, I am not aware of a precedent for this particular harmonic phenomenon in any of the compositional treatises that were available to Mozart in 1785. It is not discussed specifically by C.P.E. Bach in the Essay, nor is it found in The Art of Strict Musical Composition (1771-79) by J.S. Bach's student Johann Philipp Kirnberger, which Mozart would probably have been familiar with through van Swieten. Richard Nelson suggests that the enharmonic capabilities of the dominant-seventh chord as a German augmented sixth were first realized in writing by Johann Christian Bertram Kessel in his Unterricht im Generalbass (1791), published of course in the year of Mozart's death. See Richard Bruce Nelson, "Theories of Harmonic Modulation in Selected German Treatises of the Eighteenth Century," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1983), 158.
expectations of their resolution by moving in each case to a minor mediant harmony in first inversion (Example 2-17).

Example 2-17. Mozart’s doubly-ambiguous resolutions.

From a harmonic standpoint, then, the initial adagio of K. 475 is perhaps the most forward-looking in all of Mozart, paving the way for the chromatic linear harmonies of Romantic music. On comparing Mozart’s voice leading in these measures to this passage from Chopin (Example 2-18), written almost sixty years later, the similarities are quite striking. Notice that embedded within this Chopin excerpt is an underlying chaconne bass, and Mozart’s doubly-ambiguous resolution of an A dominant-seventh chord to an F minor chord in first inversion.

Rosen suggests that when the chaconne bass of the opening finally arrives on the dominant in m. 18 "it has become a remote foreign key." Certainly, in light of the extreme chromaticism that precedes it, the aural effect of this new theme in G major as a full-fledged dominant with respect to the opening tonic has been severely weakened. Mozart appears to leave the dominant key behind rather abruptly by continuing this new thematic material in B minor (mm. 21-25) before arriving at the second large section of the work in D major (m. 26). Yet in doing so, he serves to strengthen the dominant harmony in true Schenkerian fashion via a background-level arpeggiation (Example 2-19). These modulations also compose-out the upward arpeggiation of the tonic harmony inherent in the opening motive.

Example 2-19. The background-level arpeggiation of the dominant harmony in mm. 18-26 of Mozart's K. 475.

The next section of music to be entirely governed by a descending bass appears in m. 70. It is preceded by a

---

charming little Mozartean tune in F major (m. 64), which is then repeated in the parallel F minor (m. 68). A wonderful motivic detail occurs in the turn figure of m. 68. I have completely written out this turn in Example 2-20 to show that, by surrounding c² with its chromatic neighboring notes d⁵ and b², Mozart subtilely recalls at the exact pitch level the symmetrical tonal organization around the tonic note that had been so important in the opening adagio.²⁴

Example 2-20. Mozart, K. 475, m. 68 (turn figure).

After seeming to pick up from where the initial chaconne bass had left off (its lowest range had been F⁹), the bass from m. 70 embarks upon a descent spanning two octaves and eighteen measures before arriving on an F dominant-seventh chord in m. 88 (in preparation for the large B-flat major andantino section at m. 91). A metric reduction of these measures is presented in Example 2-21.

²³This abrupt shift of mode was foreshadowed in m. 17 of the opening adagio, where Mozart rapidly moves from B major to B minor in order to ease the transition into the dominant in m. 18.

²⁴Mozart also works this exact turn figure into the concluding adagio in m. 168.
An examination of the functional analysis in this example reveals that, beginning in m. 74, Mozart writes a harmonic sequence which tonicizes respectively $[e^b]$, $[d^b]$, $[b(c^b)]$, $[a]$, $[g]$, $[f]$, $[e]$, $[d]$, and $[c]$. This indicates a special relationship between the middleground and the foreground in these measures, since Mozart's tonal scheme is in itself governed by an extended chaconne bass (Example 2-22).
Example 2-22. Descending stepwise organization of the middleground tonalities in mm. 70-83 of Mozart’s K. 475.

True to the spirit of Classical sonata form, the opening motive is recapitulated exactly in m. 166, heralding the onset of the concluding adagio section. The chaconne bass of the opening also returns, yet what had originally been an eighteen bar descent is condensed here to just eight measures (Example 2-23). The leap of an augmented second in the bass from mm. 167-68 might seem rather jagged; however, it serves to sum up yet again the range of the opening motive (B\textsuperscript{b} – A\textsuperscript{b}) at its exact pitch level. Notice also that the chromatic neighboring figure surrounding the dominant, which Mozart had not worked literally into the initial chaconne bass, is manifested in the bass of mm. 171-72.

Example 2-23. Mozart, Fantasia in C minor, K. 475, mm. 166-73 (metric reduction).
Astonishingly, C minor is truly confirmed for the first time as the tonal center of the work when what had been the "second theme" of the opening section (which appeared in the dominant key in m. 18) is recapitulated in the tonic key in m. 173.\textsuperscript{25} Then, as if to compensate for the extreme chromaticism of the first adagio, the tonic and dominant harmonies are sounded over and over again until the final cadence, concluding what is undoubtedly the richest of all Mozart's compositions in the fantasia style.

It would certainly seem difficult, even for a composer of Mozart's genius, to surpass a work as magnificent as K. 475. Indeed, he appears to have abandoned writing fantasia music for the keyboard until he was commissioned by Count Josef Deym to compose a piece for mechanical clock organ, which was completed in December of 1790.\textsuperscript{26} Mozart's letter to his wife, dated October 8, 1790, reveals that the resultant \textit{Adagio and Allegro for Mechanical Organ}, K. 594, was composed with extreme reluctance:

\begin{quote}
I have now made up my mind to compose at once the Adagio for the clockmaker, and then to slip a few ducats into the hand of my dear little wife. And this I have done; but as it is a kind of composition which I detest, I have unfortunately not been able to finish it. I compose a bit of it every day - but I have to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{25}Mozart clearly felt compelled to adhere to the conventions of a sonata-like recapitulation in the Classical tradition in order to provide a convincing ending for K. 475.

\textsuperscript{26}Köchel, \textit{Mozart Verzeichnis}, 681.
break off now and then, as I get bored. . . . If it were for a large instrument and the work would sound like an organ piece, then I might get some fun out of it. But as it is, the works consist solely of little pipes, which sound too high pitched and too childish for my taste.  

Since Mozart apparently hated writing for this silly instrument, K. 594 and the ensuing Fantasia for Mechanical Organ, K. 608 (completed in March of 1791) would probably have never been composed had he not been given financial motivation. However, these works do provide further evidence that Mozart trusted the chaconne bass as an undercurrent for a fantasia introduction. Voice leading reductions of the openings to K. 594 and K. 608 are given in Examples 2-23 and 2-24.

Example 2-24. Mozart, Adagio and Allegro for Mechanical Organ, K. 594 (1790), mm. 1-6 (voice leading reduction).

---

27 The Letters of Mozart and His Family, 943-44.

28 Einstein, Mozart: His Character, His Work, 153. Einstein gives particular merit to K. 608, contending that Mozart finally conquered the "strict" style of Bachian counterpoint in the fugue of this work.
We have seen in this chapter how the topos of the chaconne bass unmistakably saturates Mozart's keyboard fantasias, and, from K. 397 onwards, how an underlying descending bass becomes his favorite foundation for the opening sections of these works. It seems then that Mozart consciously employs an introductory chaconne bass as a signal to the listener that the music to follow will be cast in the fantasia style. Chapter three will show that this premise extends well beyond the realm of the keyboard fantasias, and can be used to shed new light on three of Mozart's most enigmatic compositions from the height of his career in Vienna.

\[ \text{Example 2-25. Mozart, Fantasia in F minor for Mechanical Organ, K. 608 (1791), mm. 1-5 (voice leading reduction).}^{29} \]

\[ \text{We have seen in this chapter how the topos of the chaconne bass unmistakably saturates Mozart's keyboard fantasias, and, from K. 397 onwards, how an underlying descending bass becomes his favorite foundation for the opening sections of these works. It seems then that Mozart consciously employs an introductory chaconne bass as a signal to the listener that the music to follow will be cast in the fantasia style. Chapter three will show that this premise extends well beyond the realm of the keyboard fantasias, and can be used to shed new light on three of Mozart's most enigmatic compositions from the height of his career in Vienna.} \]

\[^{29}\text{Mozart saves a complete chaconne bass (arriving on the dominant) for the concluding section of K. 608 at m. 159.}\]
On a Saturday evening in Vienna, February 12, 1785, the last three of Mozart’s string quartets dedicated to Joseph Haydn (K. 458, 464, 465) were premiered. Haydn himself was in the audience, and reportedly said to Mozart’s father Leopold after the performance that “before God and as an honest man I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name.”

It would have been interesting to hear Haydn’s specific comments concerning the Quartet in C major, K. 465, which, in light of the extreme chromaticism in its opening adagio, has been nicknamed the “Dissonant” Quartet. Many writers have attempted to explain the enigma posed by the first twenty-two measures of this work, shown completely in Example 3-1. Yet the key to understanding the extraordinary chromaticism of this introduction lies in the cello part, since here we find, once again, Mozart’s trusted undercurrent from his keyboard fantasias: the chaconne bass.

---

1The Letters of Mozart and His Family, 886 (quoted in a letter from Leopold Mozart to his daughter dated February 14-16, 1785).
Example 3-1. Mozart, String Quartet in C major ("Dissonant"), K. 465 (1785), mm. 1-22.

There is no doubt that Mozart's faith in the topos and its unmistakable association with the fantasia style had diffused into the opening adagio of K. 465. Here then is the answer to the enigma, since of course the fantasia style and extreme chromaticism go hand in hand. Indeed, it is almost as if, in writing this fantasia-like introduction of K. 465, Mozart was giving his audience a taste of what was

---

to follow three months later in the grandest of all his fantasia compositions, K. 475.

In my discussion of K. 475 in chapter two, I mentioned that the initial motive of this work is far too brief to stand alone as a full-fledged theme. Mozart appears to compensate for this in the first movement of the Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491, composed some ten months later in March 1786. The remarkable opening theme of K. 491 is given in Example 3-2.

Example 3-2. Mozart, Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491 (1786), opening theme.

The similarities between this theme and the initial motive of K. 475 (see Example 2-11) are impossible to ignore. It too is sounded in triple octaves for added strength, and, aside from obviously being in the same key, both contain the characteristic upward arpeggiation of the tonic harmony, the chromatic neighboring figure surrounding the dominant, and the exploitation of the ambiguous interval of a diminished seventh. Yet what had been curtailed after
just one measure in K. 475 is extended here for a full twelve measures, creating what is perhaps the most astonishingly chromatic theme in all of Mozart.\(^3\)

It is almost predictable, then, that Mozart introduces a chaconne bass in m. 13 as a foundation for this extraordinary melody (Example 3-3). One can almost hear

Example 3-3. The underlying chaconne bass in the opening of Mozart's Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491.

\[\text{(First Violins, Bass)}\]

psychologically an underlying chaconne bass even when the theme is first sounded unaccompanied. The descending melodic sequence initiated in m. 3 seems to demand a harmonization involving a descending bass, and, in

\(^3\)All twelve pitches of the chromatic are sounded during this opening theme.
mm. 10-11, the chromatic ascent towards the tonic foreshadows what will become a chromatic descent towards the dominant in the bass at m. 13.

The most striking example of this diffusion of the fantasia style, however, occurs in the "ombra" scene from the Act II finale of Don Giovanni, K. 527, premiered in Prague on October 29, 1787. One can argue that there is no excerpt more dramatically or musically powerful in the entirety of opera history. One can also argue that nowhere else in all of opera has the scene of climax been more skillfully prepared. Mozart presents the audience with his allusion to the full-fledged "ombra" music of the finale in the opening thirty measures of the overture. Having been given just enough to whet its appetite, the audience must wait expectantly for two full acts before the ominous fortissimo fully-diminished seventh chord signals the ghostly entrance of the Commendatore's statue, and the "ombra" music makes its return; the effect is no less than remarkable.

*Don Michael Randel, ed. The New Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986), 561. An "ombra" scene, literally "a scene taking place in Hades or one in which ghosts . . . are conjured up or appear unsummoned," is of course no stranger to the realm of opera. The finale to Don Giovanni had as precedents, among others, Monteverdi's Orfeo (1607), Handel's Alcina (ca. 1735), and Gluck's Alceste (ca. 1767), all of which seem to reach the point of musical and dramatic climax during the "ombra" scene.
It is during the Commendatore's famous (and formidable) announcement in mm. 436-43 that Mozart finally exploits the Baroque ideal of using an underlying chaconne bass to heighten the effect of a particularly solemn text (Example 3-4). As we might expect, he also uses this declaration to

Example 3-4. Mozart, *Don Giovanni*, K. 527 (1787), Act II: No. 24 (Finale), mm. 436-43.

5The Commendatore's chaconne bass had been foreshadowed in mm. 5-11 of the overture. Indeed, a descending tetrachord seems to be a powerful motif throughout the opera, even when it is not found in the bass. See Etyan Agmon, "The Descending Fourth and its Symbolic Significance in Don Giovanni," *Theory and Practice* IV/2 (December 1979), 3-11.
prepare the listener for the extraordinary chromaticism of the fantasia-like "ombra" music to follow, and it is here that Mozart's fantasia style is used most appropriately, in a medium where abrupt shifts of mood and tonality are commonplace: the opera buffa finale. This music is perhaps the most forward-looking in all of Classic opera, paving the way for the intensity of emotion in the Romantic operas of Wagner and Verdi. Yet it is a testament to Mozart's genius that he uses an "archaic" topos to hold together such modern-sounding music, defying the historical conventions of the Classical style.

Allanbrook, Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart, 292-319. Allanbrook provides an excellent and thorough analysis of the entire "ombra" scene, especially noting the effect of the chaconne bass on its composition.

See also James Webster, "To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart," 19th Century Music XI/2 (Fall 1987), 190.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This thesis has provided strong evidence that a particular topos from the exalted style of the high Baroque, the chaconne bass, made a profound impact on Mozart the composer during the last ten years of his life in Vienna. Mozart's faith in the emotional power carried by an underlying descending bass (which he surely would have encountered as he immersed himself in the music of J.S. Bach and Handel in van Swieten's library, and for which he was given a variety of prescriptions in the final chapter of C.P.E. Bach's Essay) was enough for him to work it significantly into all of his compositions for keyboard in the so-called "fantasia" style. From K. 397 onwards, it seems that this topos became his favorite foundation over which to compose the introductory sections of these special pieces. It follows, then, that an opening chaconne bass was consciously employed by Mozart as a signal to the listener that the ensuing music was to be cast in the fantasia style.

In K. 397, however, we saw that the chaconne bass of the initial andante attains a true thematic identity all of its own, becoming a melodic resource that Mozart deliberately composes-out on a variety of structural levels.
later in the piece. This interconnection between foreground motive and middleground bass structure is carried even further in the great K. 475, where Mozart subtly makes several references in the chaconne basses of the opening and closing adagios to distinctive melodic ideas embodied in the formidable opening gesture, thus contributing markedly to the overall unity of this extraordinarily chromatic work.

We also saw in chapter three that, through a process of stylistic diffusion, an understanding of the chaconne bass and its unmistakable association with the fantasia style can shed new light on three of Mozart's most enigmatic compositions from his final period: the "Dissonant" String Quartet in C major, K. 465, the Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491, and Don Giovanni, K. 527.

But did Mozart establish a precedent that was carried forth into the fantasia music of the nineteenth century? Certainly this notion is subject to conjecture. Yet would Beethoven have felt justified in subtitling his Op. 27 No. 2 a "Sonata quasi una Fantasia" had he not opened the first movement with a chaconne bass (Example 4-1), which, in true Mozartean fashion, becomes a descending chromatic bass in the first nine measures of the third movement? Similarly, was Schubert truly paraphrasing Mozart's K. 475, as Jesse
Example 4-1. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C-sharp minor ("Moonlight"), Op. 27 No. 2 (ca. 1802), mm. 1-4.

Parker suggests,¹ in the opening of his Fantasia in C minor for Piano, D. 993, or simply following Mozart's prescription for an initial chaconne bass (Example 4-2)? I shall leave the implications here open for further investigation.

Example 4-2. Schubert, Fantasia in C minor for Piano, D. 993 (ca. 1813), mm. 1-3.

¹Jesse Parker, "The Clavier Fantasy from Mozart to Liszt: A Study in Style and Content" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1974), 23.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Webster, James. "To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart," *19th Century Music* XI/2 (Fall 1987), 175-193.