Mozart: *Concerto in G Major for Flute and Orchestra*

Accompaniment arranged and recorded for a single flute,

to be played as a duet with the solo flute

by Christine Bailey Davis, Principal Flutist of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

Mozart’s two *Concertos for Flute and Orchestra* are among the most difficult works in the flute repertoire. For the flutist with professional aspirations, there simply is no avoiding them. They are required repertoire at every college and professional audition. Over the many years that I have worked on these concertos, as a student, as a professional, and as a teacher, I have been especially frustrated by the rhythmic and stylistic challenges these works pose.

Recently, almost every student in my studio was working on one of the two concertos, either for college or professional auditions, and their struggles were universal: Maintaining rhythmic integrity, especially not rushing through difficult sixteenth-note passages in the first movements of each concerto, as well as making the classical style sound authentic and natural throughout proved extremely difficult.

I began to notice that despite dedicated metronome practice, even my most advanced students could not seem to successfully address rhythmic inconsistencies. While the metronome was on, their rhythm was stable, but as soon as the metronome was off, they could not maintain the evenness of the concertos’ basically unyielding tempos.

Mozart’s music is truly stunning when it sounds effortless. Jeanne Baxtresser once told me if I wanted something to sound spontaneous, I would have to have a plan. The same principle applies here: It takes a great deal of effort to make something sound effortless. The questions in my studio were what kind of effort was needed? What kind of nuance was needed where, and how was it executed?

Over the course of that year, we tried many different approaches to answering the questions and approaching the challenges. Some were more effective than others, but in the end, nothing was good enough. Problem spots improved, but not enough. Style got closer, but not close enough. “Almost” does not win an audition.

One day, I had the piano reduction on my stand while a student was playing one of the concertos for me. On a whim, I began playing a line of the orchestral accompaniment as a duet with the solo part. This was the solution we had been looking for. At first, I wasn’t sure why it helped as much as it did. Over time, as I played it with them more and more, I came to several conclusions.

All of the themes played by the solo flute are played first by the orchestra in its tutti passages. Hearing them being played by another flute translated directly, whereas listening to recordings, where the themes are played predominantly by violins and oboes, or rehearsing with a pianist, did not. It was so much easier to hear and understand the nuances from another flute.

I often encourage my students to play along with recordings when they are working on concertos or orchestral excerpts. Playing along with a recording really helps one to hear his or her part in context. It also helps with pacing and gauging breaths and dynamics. It did help my students with their Mozart *Concertos*, but in the case of establishing a rhythmic backdrop, it was not as effective as playing along with another flute. I came to the same conclusion as I did with the stylistic successes: Hearing the accompaniment, especially the rhythmic figures that accompany the solo in its sixteenth-note passages, played by another flute just seemed to stick better. And because we worked on these week after week they were able to get the repetition and familiarity they needed.

It is my hope that this edition will be used different ways, depending on each student’s specific needs. Students can play this duet with each other (Working on the accompaniment is helpful too!), play it with their teachers, or put head phones in and play along with me.