CHAPTER FIVE
THE FINALE OF K. 593: “THE WITTIEST THEME”

Absent Performances

This chapter is about a controversy over a single measure of music. What follows will trace various attempts to get to the “truth” about the disputed meanings of a single gesture, the so-called “variant versions” of the finale of Mozart’s String Quintet in D major, K. 593. My inquiry takes for granted the notion that the idealized musical work is at best a useful heuristic tool and at worst an untenable ideological position. My goal is therefore not the replacement of one “authentic” version with another. Instead, materials usually used for the construction of scholarly editions, like primary musical and documentary sources, will be projected against reports of early performances and the work’s scholarly reception. Each of these are fragments of a larger complex: the combined discourses of “text-criticism,” “performance,” and “reception.”

If we consider these fragmentary discourses carefully, and in tandem with one another, we might be able to discern in them the reflection of past musical practice. This practice is, as Annette Richards and Mark Franko have recently argued, “conspicuous by its absence.”

1 See the discussion of the “work concept” in chapter two, above.
These absent performances, just beyond our ability to apprehend them directly, are, as Richards and Franko write, “characterized by movement between present and past…in which archive and act, fragment and body, text and sounding, subject and practice work in provocative interaction.”

**History**

In early December 1790, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart added an entry to his “Verzeichnüß aller meiner Werke,” the catalogue of his compositions he had been keeping since February 1784. It was a viola quintet in D Major, his fourth original work in the genre, and the first new one in more than two years. By entering the work in his catalogue, he was acknowledging, to himself at least, that the new piece was ready for a new stage in its life as his creation. Before setting the autograph aside, perhaps he flipped through its pages. Maybe his eye came to rest on the finale, an allegro in six-eight, beginning in the first violin with an unaccompanied chromatic figure. He could not have realized at the time that this chromatic idea would, some two centuries later, spark considerable controversy. Indeed, these seemingly innocuous eighth

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notes would become the subjects of a dispute about the identity of the composer himself.

The entry in the catalogue is Mozart’s last authentically documented contact with the quintet. Mozart wrote his chamber music for a music-making public, in Vienna and elsewhere, who bought his music in engraved or hand-copied editions. He played his own chamber works often before their “official” publication, in the company of friends and colleagues and occasionally in concert. So it seems reasonable to assume that around the time he felt ready to enter this new quintet into his Verzeichnung he would have arranged to have a set of parts copied from his autograph.

Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that the composer played this work soon after he entered it in his catalogue: Abbé Maximilian


Stadler told the English travelers Vincent and Mary Novello almost forty years later that he had played the piece with Mozart and Joseph Haydn. The Novellos report: “Mozart and Haydn frequently played together with Stadler in Mozart’s Quintettos; [Stadler] particularly mentioned the 5th in D Major, singing the Bass part.”6 Later in this chapter we will return to this performance and Stadler’s own commentary on the quintet’s finale.

Haydn left Vienna for his first trip to London on 15 December 1790. He returned only after Mozart’s death. If Stadler is to be believed and assuming that Mozart would have been ready to play the piece only after entering it in his catalogue then this performance must have taken place in a period of at the most two weeks.7 In the middle of a letter to Constanze written from Frankfurt in the fall of 1790 describing rather complex financial transactions, Mozart wrote that he planned a series of private chamber music concerts for paying subscribers in the Christmas season: “Then I will be able to pay back the 1000 fl. – so there will only be 600 fl. left – anyway, during Advent I am going to give small quartet

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6 Vincent Novello wrote in his notes on this conversation: “Quintets of Mozart – 1st Violin Schmidt, 2nd Stock, 1st Viola either Haydn or Mozart in turn, 2nd Viola Abbé Stadler – Bass he could not recollect.” From Rosemary Hughes, ed., *A Mozart Pilgrimage: being the Travel Diaries of Vincent and Mary Novello in the Year 1829* (London: Novello, 1955), 170 and footnote 123 to 170.

concerts for subscribers – and I’ll take some students...”

Could this have been such an occasion?

Sources

Artaria published the quintet in May 1793 in an engraved edition, a year and a half after Mozart’s death. In this edition the chromatic figure at the opening of the finale has been changed into a “zig-zag.” And not just this opening gesture: throughout the entire movement, this thematically important downward figure and its upward inversion have been converted into a more diatonic form (figure 5.1).


11 The literature on K. 593 persistently labels the transformed idea “diatonic” – a misnomer, since the g-sharp on the downbeat of m. 1 is not diatonic to D major. I am grateful to James Webster for this observation.
To adopt the terminology of one of the work’s twentieth-century textual critics, it has been “de-chromaticized.” This new version was transmitted through many nineteenth-century editions to succeeding generations of musicians and scholars as the authoritative text of this movement. Until the mid-twentieth century, that is: by then, like many of Mozart’s mature works, K. 593 had come in for considerable editorial scrutiny. Alfred Einstein was the first to note that the autograph score of the finale had been changed, from the chromatic to the “zig-zag” form. Einstein, assuming the change to be in Mozart’s hand, found the alteration felicitous. “The Rondo,” he wrote, “is of the richest maturity, with its playful theme, its fugati in which ‘learnedness’ takes on wit and charm without forfeiting any of its earnestness. The beginning of the theme,
originally a chromatically descending fifth, gains grace and character by means of a single stroke.”

K. 593 was one of the first works of chamber music to be published by the NMA, at first in a miniature score prepared by one of the edition’s founding editors-in-chief, Ernst Fritz Schmid. His edition gives both the chromatic and “zig-zag” versions. Schmid died in 1960, before the complete volume of string quintets was ready for publication (it appeared in 1967), the work on this edition was assumed by his colleague Ernst Hess. Hess’s new version was a minor sensation: arguing that additions to the autograph score are not in Mozart’s hand and therefore not authentic, he discarded the “zig-zag” version entirely. We will return to his arguments below.

In the years since, however, some new sources have come to light. These include various manuscript parts and scores and a variety of

13 Mozart, Sämtliche Streichquintette ed. Ernst Fritz Schmid (=Bärenreiter-Taschenpartitur 11), Kassel 1956.
14 W.A. Mozart, Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1956- ), VII/19/1 ed. Ernst Fritz Schmid and Ernst Hess. (Hereafter NMA)
15 Hess’s argument seems convincing, although alterations to Mozart’s autographs in foreign hands are rare but not unheard-of. In the “Haydn Quartets,” for instance, there are added dynamics, in rötel, in seven separate instances in four of the quartets. See Seiffert, “Mozarts Haydn-Quartette,” 385-386.
engraved editions. Let us now review the known major sources for K. 593, beginning with the autograph. As can be seen in figures 5.2a and 5.2b, the opening has been altered significantly. The original chromatic descent has been replaced by the more diatonic “zig-zag” version (figure 5.2a). This chromatic descent is altered frequently throughout the movement, in all voices. In the autograph, however, the figure is not altered in its ascending inverted form (figure 5.2b).

Figure 5.2a:

K. 593/iv mm. 1-3: Autograph
Figure 5.3a is from Artaria’s 1793 first edition. Unlike the altered autograph, in Artaria’s edition and subsequent editions before 1800, all instances, descending and ascending, of the chromatic theme are converted to a “zig-zag.”
Figure 5.3a:

K. 593/iv mm. 1-11: Artaria 1793, violin 1

Figure 5.3b, from Pleyel’s 1799 edition,\(^\text{18}\) shows an “upward zig-zag” not found in the autograph (measure 270, compare with figure 5.2b).\(^\text{19}\)

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\(^\text{18}\) US Ic ++M551 .M93 1799.
Another source is a set of manuscript parts, in a Viennese hand,\textsuperscript{20} marked on its title page with the year “1792,” preserved today in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.\textsuperscript{21} An excerpt from this version is figure 5.4. Here, some chromatic figures have been crossed out and replaced by the “zig-zag.” Not all have been altered, however: as in the autograph, only the descending chromatic figures have been re-written. Two other manuscript part sources are worthy of mention: an early cello part in the archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna,\textsuperscript{22} and a set of parts in the Austrian National Library with the date “1793” on their title page, which both transmit the “zig-zag” version in both its ascending and descending forms.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{20} Dexter Edge, personal communication.
\textsuperscript{21} D B K.H. 3101.
\textsuperscript{22} A Wgm IX 67249P. I am indebted to Otto Biba for drawing my attention to this curious source; although each instance of the “zig-zag” figure seems to have been altered, close inspection of the manuscript reveals that the original version was the “zig-zag” as well. In two instances I was able to make out, the “zig-zag” in the erased lower layer had been misplaced a major third upwards. Does this indicate the Vorlage itself had been altered and was difficult to read?
\textsuperscript{23} A Wn Suppl. Mus. 11470. These parts, marked with the initials “N.H.” are from the so-called “Kaisersammlung” a collection of chamber music from the Hapsburg Emperor’s personal library. For further information see Edge, \textit{Mozart’s Viennese Copyists}, 736 and especially 2091-2093.
\end{flushright}
Yet another source (figures 5.5a and 5.5b) is a set of scores from the Mozarteum in Salzburg. As can be seen in figure 5.5a, this source presents the chromatic text as it is found in the older layer of the autograph. Figure 5.5b, taken from an arrangement for flute and strings, gives the “zig-zag” reading. Dexter Edge has identified these two as the music-dealer Johann Traeg’s master copies. The hand is Edge’s “Traeg 1,” who, as Edge has shown, appears as a copyist in sources close to

24 A Sm Rara 361/2.
Mozart in the 1780s and 90s. Both versions were offered for sale in Traeg’s 1799 catalogue.

Figure 5.5a:

K. 593/iv, mm 1-8: Johann Traeg master copy (before 1799), violin version

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25 Edge lists this discusses this copy in *Mozart’s Viennese Copyists* on page 958, see also the list of copies on page 965. For an exhaustive study of this copyist see chapter 7 “Johann Traeg,” 745-998.

A final source is Johann André’s 1800 edition: like the Berlin parts and the altered autograph, it contains a mixture of the chromatic and “zig-zag” readings. That is, the chromatic figure is not re-written in every possible case. But despite its publisher’s claim that it was “faite après le partition en manuscript,” the André edition departs from the autograph. In mm. 95, 99, 105, and 109 of the first violin part, as in the autograph, the ascending chromatic line is left unaltered. In mm. 238, 242, and 274 in the first violin part, and in mm. 117 and 121 in the first viola part, however, the ascending chromatic line appears as a “zig-zag” – unlike in autograph, where all ascending chromatic lines are left intact (see figures 5.6a and 5.6b, comparing the latter with figure 5.2b).

27 US R Sibley Rare M554.M939
Table 1 is a summary of all of these sources. As we can see, only one of them, Traeg’s score of the string quintet version, transmits the chromatic version without *some* emendation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autograph</td>
<td>CH Bod</td>
<td>December 1790</td>
<td>Text of some chromatic passages finale altered to “zig-zag.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Parts</td>
<td>D B K.H. 3101</td>
<td>“1792” (?)</td>
<td>Original version corrected to “zig-zag.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. parts (cello only)</td>
<td>A Wgm IX 67249P</td>
<td></td>
<td>All instances in “zig-zag” form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Parts</td>
<td>A Wn Mus. Suppl 11470</td>
<td>“1793” (?)</td>
<td>All instances in “zig-zag” form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. score, violin version</td>
<td>A Sm Rara 361/2</td>
<td>Before 1799</td>
<td>Original chromatic version.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. score, flute version</td>
<td>A Sm Rara 361/2</td>
<td>Before 1799</td>
<td>All instances in “zig-zag” form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engraved Edition (André PN, 1486)</td>
<td>US R Sibley Rare M554.M939</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Mixed reading between chromatic and “zig-zag”; not the same changes as autograph.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The evidence paints a complicated picture. Apparently, the finale to K. 593 circulated in at least two versions between 1790 and 1800 (not counting the flute arrangement, to which I will return): the unaltered chromatic version found in the first layer of the autograph and the first layers of some of the manuscript copies, and the fully altered “zig-zag” version shared by the 1793 Artaria first engraved edition and the “Kaisersammlung” manuscript copy. The changes to the autograph, to the manuscript copies, and the strange mixture of readings in the André engraving make situation even more obscure. When were the changes made? Who made them? Why change only the downward version of the chromatic figure?

The evidence at hand does not offer simple answers to first two questions, although the partial appearance of the autograph readings in the André engraving, whose publishers claimed it was made from the autograph, suggests that the changes might have been made before delivery of the autograph to the André firm.\(^2^8\) To the last question, however, we might offer a new solution. It is possible that the change in the autograph and at least some of the various disseminated versions do not necessarily stand in a cause-and-effect relation. It could be, therefore, that the autograph was altered, perhaps by someone in a hurry, in response to the dissemination of the “zig-zag” version, and that this version, “half-

\(^{28}\) For more on the André firm and Mozart’s estate see Britta Constapel, Der Musikverlag Johann André in Offenbach am Main: Studien zur Verlagstätigkeit von Johann Anton André und Verzeichnis der Musikalien von 1800 bis 1840 (Tutzing: Schneider-Verlag), 1998.
altered,” became the new “master” text.\textsuperscript{29} That is to say: readings from a later source, considered perhaps authentic by the copyist but followed incompletely, were copied back into the autograph.\textsuperscript{30}

An important missing link here is the source behind the 1793 Artaria edition. As is the case with the “Haydn” quartets, as Wolf-Dieter Seiffert has shown, it is likely that such engraved editions were based on manuscript parts prepared from the autograph.\textsuperscript{31} In this case, such copies are unknown to us. In their absence we can only speculate as to the origin of any textual changes.

Excursus: The Salzburg Flute Arrangement

The Salzburg flute arrangement might offer a solution to the problem of the origin of the “zig-zag” version. Despite the claims of one

\textsuperscript{29} Alfred Einstein suggests that something similar might have happened to the autographs of the six “Haydn Quartets,” see W.A. Mozart: The Ten Celebrated String Quartets, First Authentic Edition in Score Based on Autographs in the British Museum and on Early Prints (=Publications of the Paul Hirsch Music Library (Cambridge), Volume 12), (London: Novello, 1945), x. Wolf-Dieter Seiffert does not agree; see “Mozarts Haydn-Quartette,” 386.

\textsuperscript{30} Although it is not the purpose of this chapter to propose a new edition of K. 593, a few words about editorial technique might be helpful. A common approach to such a complicated source situation would be the construction of a “stemma” using the principles of filiation first outlined by Karl Lachmann in the early nineteenth century. Such a filiation would in this case, however, be of little help, since the purpose of filiation is to construct a lost archetype. Here we already have, potentially, two: the autograph itself and, perhaps, the Traeg master score. In addition, the variants I have been describing here are examples of scribal conjecture or even intervention. Such variants are quite useless for the construction of stemmata. See chapter two of this dissertation, “Text Criticism and Performance Studies.”

\textsuperscript{31} See Seiffert, “Mozarts Haydn-Quartette.”
of K. 593’s modern editors, discussed below, chromatic passages on
stringed instruments were not considered to be particularly difficult in the
late-eighteenth century.\footnote{Johann Joachim Quantz, for example, wrote in his 1751 \textit{Versuch} that violinists find little difficulty in performing chromatic scales, while flutists do. Johann Joachim Quantz, \textit{Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen} (1750), (repr. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1983), 285.} \textsuperscript{32} There is one instrument, however, upon which such extended chromatic passages are quite difficult: the late eighteenth-century flute. The “zig-zag” version, then, in an arrangement for flute, is a practical solution to the problem of playing the chromatic passage and an obvious solution for anyone who wants to arrange this work for that instrument. Although Traeg’s flute arrangement is not identical to the Artaria first edition – certain passages have been transposed to accommodate the instrument’s range, for instance – it is at least conceivable that this transcription for flute might have served as a model for the new “zig-zag” version.\footnote{Evidence on the exact time of arrival in Vienna of the multi-keyed flute is scarce. For what information is available, see Ardall Powell’s introduction to his translation of Tromlitz’s flute treatise. Johann George Tromlitz, \textit{The Keyed Flute}, trans. and ed. with an introduction by Ardal Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 36-39.} Dexter Edge surmises that his copyist (“Traeg 1”) is also the author of the arrangement.\footnote{Edge, \textit{Copyists}, 958.} Perhaps this copyist was involved in the preparation of the \textit{Vorlagen} for Artaria’s first engraving.\footnote{The watermark evidence reported by Dexter Edge for the Traeg flute score could allow for this possibility. The Artaria edition was first advertised in May 1793; this watermark is found in Viennese sources as early as 1792, see Edge, 956. The flute arrangement may even have been sold by Traeg’s firm as early as 1792. On 11 August 1792 Traeg advertised a large assortment of Mozart’s music, including “verschiedene Quart. und Trios für die Violin als Flöte arrang” As there are so many arrangements for flute \textit{quintet} listed in Traeg’s 1799 catalogue, and in the absence of any further advertisements in succeeding issues of the Wiener Zeitung, one wonders if flute quintet arrangements couldn’t be meant here as well. I thank Cliff Eisen for}
On the other hand, perhaps Mozart had something to do with the changes himself. Although nothing of the sort can be proven, one could consider the following hypotheses: that Mozart decided to alter the chromatic line himself after playing through K. 593 with colleagues. Or perhaps the change was made as part of an arrangement of the work for flute. In 1790 and 1791, Mozart crossed paths twice with perhaps the most famous flute-virtuoso of his age, the blind sensation Friedrich Ludwig Dülon. Their first meeting was in Frankfurt at Emperor Leopold’s coronation, their second during Dülon’s visit to Vienna in the spring of 1791, when Dülon gave concerts at Schikaneder’s Theater auf der Wieden. John A. Rice has speculated that Dülon was the inspiration for Schikaneder and Mozart’s Tamino in *The Magic Flute*.\footnote{See John A. Rice, “The Blind Dülon and his Magic Flute,” *Music and Letters* 71/1 (February 1990), 25-51.} It is tempting to imagine that Mozart and Dülon might have made music together.\footnote{It is commonly thought that Mozart disliked writing for the flute and for flutists. This seems, however, to be untrue. See Jane Bowers, “Mozart and the Flute,” *Early Music* 20/1 (February 1992), 31-42.} Could such a meeting have given birth to two competing readings?

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drawing my attention to the August 1792 announcement. All of Traeg’s Wiener Zeitung announcements are listed in Weinmann, *Verlagsverzeichnis Johann Traeg (und Sohn)*.

\footnote{See John A. Rice, “The Blind Dülon and his Magic Flute,” *Music and Letters* 71/1 (February 1990), 25-51.}
Trivial/Difficult

Despite the publication of a new scholarly edition of K. 593 by Manfred Hermann Schmid in 2001, Ernst Hess’s 1967 edition, as the text of the NMA, remains today a primary point of reference for scholars and performers. Let us summarize Hess’s argument for his version briefly. He claims that the changes to the autograph are not in Mozart’s hand, contrary to the assumption of many previous editors, including Einstein. Uninterested in or unaware of other manuscript sources, he dismisses the first edition. He does not address at any length the discrepancies between the autograph and the first edition, except as evidence that readings in the first edition are not to be taken seriously.

Hess then moves from source-evaluation to the “inner evidence.” The movement is “harmless,” “non-committal,” and even “trivial” in its “de-chromaticized” form. Here Hess uses analytical categories – insights into the design of the movement – to advance claims about the

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38 By doing so he follows the NMA’s policy: “Bei der Bewertung von Erst- und Frühdrucken ist allgemein Skepsis angebracht, vor allen Dingen auch dort, wo derartige Druckausgaben Abweichungen vom Autograph aufweisen.” Bernhard Appel and Joachim Veit eds., Editionsrichtlinien Musik (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000), 260.
39 The separation of editing into “lower” (mechanical) and “higher” (hermeneutic) activities has been standard if controversial in much traditional philology since the nineteenth-century. On music, see Georg Feder, Musikphilologie: eine Einführung in die musikalische Textkritik, Hermeneutik und Editionstechnik, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987). For a detailed discussion of the implications of this separation see James Grier, The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method and Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), particularly chapter one, “Introduction: The Task of the Editor,” 1-28.
relative veracity of sources. He argues, for instance, that the chromaticism of the opening is related to the chromatic dotted-quarter-note passages later in the movement. To change one without changing the other is to disturb the work’s organic unity, a quality, which he claims, is a common trait of the works of “great masters.”

(In an aside, he observes that such things are “not always obvious to performers.”) He observes that the dissonant downbeat slurred to the next eighth-note in the first measure of the “zig-zag” version disturbs the metric flow, one accent every two bars, of the chromatic version (I will return to this observation below). Finally, taking aim at Einstein, who, we will remember, found that the transformation of the motive made it more charming and graceful, he writes: “perhaps Mozart was interested in other things besides charm and grace.”

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Hess proposes that the “zig-zag” was introduced by Artaria, the publishers of the first edition. In his view, Mozart’s contemporaries, like his later editors, were not equipped to appreciate the depths of Mozart’s style. He imagines that these contemporaries found the chromatic passage simply too difficult, to play and to understand. Acting in this spirit, someone at Artaria, after Mozart’s death, would have altered the text of the movement in order to render it more palatable. His verdict is not subtle: the “zig-zag” version, he writes, “ought to be consigned to oblivion.”

I would like to suggest that Hess’s critical project is tied to a familiar strand of early twentieth-century Mozart reception. This is the desire to redeem the composer from his nineteenth-century reputation as a romantic, idealized, or “Apollonian” figure. Mozart scholarship, especially in Germany and Austria just before the First World War, offered a new “Mozart-Bild” as an alternative, the main feature of which was his “demonic” or even “Dionysian” quality. Many critics associated the older view with the writings of Otto Jahn, who is the subject of a large part of chapter one of this dissertation. As I argued there, early-twentieth century Mozart scholarship often used rejection of “Jahn’s Mozart” as a basis for their own approach to the composer, and to the sources of his life and works.

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Indeed, Hess’s critical language is laden with references to this perspective: phrases like “harmless,” “non-committal,” and “trivial” all refer to the Mozart he and many of his contemporaries wished to remove, it seems, from the narrative of music history. His motives for doing this were certainly honorable, but they cannot justify the assertion of unimpeachable authenticity for the chromatic version he preferred. The evidence outlined above shows that the sources tell a more complicated story than the one Hess proposes. Hess’s reliance on the simple binary opposition “trivial/difficult” to frame philological evidence is as good an example as any of the limits of text-based inquiry that purports to be objective and then believes its own claims. Hess verdict on K. 593 is a telling example of the how one facet of “historicism,” the quest to give history a narrative meaning, can overwhelm another, the respect for the factual detail of the historical record.45

**Friendly/Ghostly**

Manfred Hermann Schmid, Ernst Fritz Schmid’s son, writes less polemically in the introduction to his 2001 edition of K. 593, part of a new Bärenreiter edition of the complete viola quintets, and he forgoes Hess’s organicist approach. The reading he provides, however, is the same one as in the NMA, although he does give the “zig-zag” version in

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45 For more on “historicism” see chapters one and two, above.
an appendix. He too argues that the changes to the autograph are in a hand other than Mozart’s. He contends that the alterations must have been made by a “skilled musician,” perhaps someone in Constanze’s circle. He lists more sources: in the Berlin parts and the Traeg violin score, which both transmit the chromatic version, he sees evidence that this form must have circulated for a short time after Mozart’s death.

The point of departure for Schmid’s sophisticated argument on behalf of the chromatic version, which he rejects on stylistic grounds, is Hess’s observation about the metric nature of the movement’s opening. Drawing on his own research on Italian prosody in Mozart’s music, Schmid posits that the chromatic idea is related to a topic in Italian opera, the *aria di smania*, or madness aria. As a full rehearsal of Schmid’s ideas would lead us too far afield, we will have to do with a short summary. In his reading, the two-measure phrase-rhythm of the chromatic idea, with its emphasis on the second measure, establishes a parallel with several opera arias, including Donna Elvira’s “Ah chi mi dice mai” in *Don Giovanni*. The chromatic figure, serves, then, as a kind of larger-scale upbeat. In the aria, this phrase rhythm overlaps with the prosodic rhythm of the text, in which the emphases fall elsewhere. In Schmid’s reading it is the juxtaposition of the two that gives these arias, and the finale of K. 593 in the chromatic version, a special texture and an “otherworldly” or

46 The movement is marked with an asterisk directing the user to a “later,” “inauthentic” version.
47 Mozart, *Sämtliche Streichquintette* ed. Manfred Hermann Schmid. Kassel, 2001, xxxv-xxxvii. Schmid does not mention the Vienna parts, the Salzburg flute version, or the André edition of 1800. He does not report that the Berlin parts have been altered. See as well the recently-published critical report for K. 593, also edited by M.H. Schmid (*NMA KB VII/19/1, 2004*).
“ghostly” feeling. The zig-zag, with its accent on the downbeat of the
first measure, has a different agogic architecture, one that disturbs this
link; the intertextual reference falls by the wayside.

For Schmid, Mozart’s use of the smania topic in an otherwise light-
hearted, major-mode rondo finale is also subversion of generic
expectation. But as he himself admits, beyond the prosodic rhythm he
claims to uncover, the finale of K. 593 bears little resemblance to the two
models he cites.48 We are asked to perceive an intertextual connection on
the level of phrase structure and musical syntax that is not necessarily
obvious on first hearing. Schmid suggests that the “zig-zag” version
might have been written into the autograph by one of Mozart’s former
students at the behest of an anxious Constanze Mozart, in the hope that a
less-chromatic, less “ghostly” and more “friendly” version might have
been more palatable to publishers. 49

It seems to me that his claim that Mozart’s contemporaries would
have found the chromatic version harder to swallow on these grounds
remains unsubstantiated. Indeed, Schmid seems at times to be retracing
old arguments, employing a tone reminiscent of both Hess and Heuß. In
his monograph on Mozart arias, Schmid writes of K. 593’s finale: “the
movement has, for all of its fascination with motion, elements of

48 Indeed, he admits that the quintet and its operatic models have nothing in common
besides the opening chromatic theme. (“Das Moment der smania kommt thematisch
freilich nur in Mozarts erster chromatischer Idee zur Geltung.”) Mozart, Sämtliche
Streichquintette ed. Manfred Hermann Schmid, xviii. For a more detailed explication
of Schmid’s theoretical approach to phrasing, rhythm and syntax in Mozart, see his
Italienischer Vers und musikalische Syntax in Mozarts Opern (=Mozart Studien IV)
(Tutzing: Schneider, 1994), particularly 181-205 and, on
K. 593, 239-243.
49“Gespenstisch” and “freundlich,” Schmid Quintette, xix.
obsessiveness [*Besessenheit*] – it is a demonic movement. The ruthlessly consistent downward chromatic line [*rücksichtslos konsequente Abwärtschromatik*] reflects this on a motivic level.”\(^{50}\) This claim, delivered almost as an aside, reveals much. In the end, Schmid’s interpretive exercise, based on Italian prosody (via a complex argument about intertextualities involving the *smania* topic) reproduces a Mozartbild eerily similar to the one propounded by the anti-roccoco agitators of the early twentieth century. “Konsequent,” “rücksichtslos,” and, above all “dämonisch”: this is the (Nietzschean) Mozart with whom we are supposed to be confronted in this rondo finale. It is not my place to pass judgment on the truth of this interpretation; I would, however, like to ask if such judgments, which depend on a shared “understanding” of Mozart’s “nature,” are enough to help consign the “zig-zag” version to reception history’s cabinet of curiosities.

Lectio difficilior

Hess and Schmid’s claims for the chromatic version are reminiscent of the editorial concept of *lectio difficilior*, although neither invokes the principle expressly. *Lectio difficilior* is the notion that when confronted with two variants, one “trivial” and the other “difficult,” the textual critic is to favor the more difficult one.\(^{51}\) The rationale for this rule of editing –

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\(^{51}\) “Since the normal tendency is to simplify, to trivialize, to eliminate the unfamiliar word or construction, the rule is *prestat difficilior lectio.*” Martin L. West, *Textual*
that copyists tend to err on the side of “trivial” readings – cannot be explored here in great detail. One important component of the theory, however, is that the case for the distinction between “easy” and “difficult” must be made by the editor. Whoever invokes *lectio difficilior* therefore owes us a convincing explanation of what is “simple” and what is not. Hess does nothing of the sort, and although Schmid’s argument is well theorized it is not, as I have just argued, necessarily completely convincing. Both editors return to the assertion that the chromatic version somehow challenged its first recipients, who then replaced it with an alternate reading on the basis of their own aesthetic judgment. The philological concept itself, however, depends on a more-or-less automatic transmission by the scribe, who, when faced with a reading he or she does not understand, simply replaces it with one that makes more sense. In a “learned tradition,” as Paul Maas remarks, this cannot be the case.\(^{52}\) Only Hess’s scenario, in which an engraver at Artaria authored the change – which is, of course, likely false, since it was not Mozart’s practice to allow engravings to be made directly from his autographs – comes close to such automatic copying.\(^{53}\) While Schmid’s scenario, in which a member of Constanze Mozart’s circle proposed the change to make the movement more palatable for publishers, captures some of the spirit behind the principle of *lectio difficilior*, it fails to fulfill all of its technical

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requirements, which in this case would include that a member of her
circle had actually copied the manuscript without having thought critically
about what they were doing.

Hess and Schmid are appealing to something deeper. Their
definitions of “simple” and “difficult,” I believe, are predicated on the
notion that Mozart as a rule did not write simple music, and that his
tendency to write “difficult” music was one of the reasons why his
contemporaries had trouble understanding his work, especially at the end
of his life. By concentrating on transgression, on Mozart’s violation of
stylistic norms, both editors place themselves in a current of Mozart
reception that has been flowing since the composer’s lifetime. As I will
argue in the next section of this essay, there is much truth to the notion
that there is something unexpected about the chromatic version; of course
the same could be argued for the “zig-zag” as well. This quality of
surprise is part of what the movement says – and said. The violation of
stylistic norms, which brings with it an increased attention to the author’s
role in the work, is part of the work, and meant to be received as such.
Arguments like those we have been considering, however, appeal to the
idea that whatever it was that Mozart composed, it was incomprehensible
to those around him.\(^54\)

\(^{54}\) For an introduction to the contours of early Mozart reception see DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius*, 11-18. For an interesting broader treatment of this topic, see Dieter Demuth, *Das idealistische Mozart-Bild 1785-1860* (Tutzing: Schneider, 1997). A recent strand of Mozart reception, articulated most prominently by Susan McClary and Joseph Kerman, argues that Mozart became “alienated” from his audience in the late 1780s. For further discussion see my “Mozarts KV 475: Fantasie als Utopie?” *Acta Mozartiana* 50/1 (June 2003), 37-49 and chapter four, “Utopia Performed,” of this dissertation.
It is a familiar story. The (supposed) sharp decline in Mozart’s fortunes in the late 1780’s is often ascribed to his public’s lack of understanding for his creative genius, driven by incomprehension of his innovative mixture of forms and genres and a demanding musical idiom. However, as recent biographical studies have argued, this is only part of the picture. Mozart remained in demand as a composer through the late 1780s, and his difficult financial situation was improving in the period directly preceding his death.  

Nonetheless, students of Mozart’s music return often to the theme of the composer’s incongruity, his *Uneigentlichkeit*, as one observer calls it, seeking to explain what seems to us to be unexplainable, the qualities of Mozart’s compositions that somehow set his music apart from all the music around it. What was difficult for his environment to understand becomes for us, perhaps, this very quality of ineffable genius that sets his music apart. In this case the *Uneigentlichkeit* is the chromatic figure. This view of Mozart’s creativity, however, can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Seek and ye shall find: any qualities that separate Mozart from his contemporaries – in our case, a tendency in some late works towards a richly chromatic harmonic and melodic vocabulary – run the danger of becoming themselves inseparable from Mozart’s genius.

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For many of the textual critics of K. 593, the chromatic version must be the original version, for chromaticism is the talisman of “true” Mozart. For Hess, the chromatic version points to the “organic” nature of Mozart’s compositions, to the interweaving between surface and depth. For Schmid, it is a sign of Mozart’s ingenious manipulation of convention within a broader intertextual context. For both, an entire critical perspective – Mozart the difficult/incongruous/alienated composer – could collapse if the “zig-zag” were to be linked convincingly with Mozart. Plausible explanations for the replacement of the chromatic version can therefore find no place in their construction of K. 593’s text.

*Das launigste Thema*

The only direct witness we have of a performance of K. 593 involving the composer, Abbé Maximilian Stadler, apparently had his own opinion about Mozart’s tendency towards “difficulty.” In a history of music in Austria written later in his life, Stadler observes:

Mozart revealed how much he was at ease in counterpoint, how strict canons cost him so little effort, and how he was able to subordinate them to a pleasant and beautiful effect. Here he distinguishes himself from that great master Sebastian Bach, who composed for art and connoisseurs alone rather than for music lovers. One need listen only to the last movement in the
Quintet in D [K. 593], *where after the most whimsical theme* he begins two others and combined all three together.\(^{57}\)

In the German of Stadler’s day, the word *launig* was laden with meaning. Let us begin with the general: in Jacob Christoph Adelung’s 1796 *Grammatisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, for example, we find the following definition for the adjective: “being of a good, pleasant, or witty disposition, [for example] a witty writer. Witty ideas. The most witty tone, Less[ing].”\(^ {58}\) Adelung’s definition of the noun *Laune* reveals the word’s rich connotations:

...That particular state of mind and imaginative powers, in which one attempts to give things an appearance of novelty through the reversal of normal concepts; for example, when one

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gives the impression that virtue is laughable or sin pleasant. This sense has been taken up particularly by the newer category of wit that is expressed by the English “humour.”

A world of literary allusion opens behind the conventional expression “angenehme Laune habend.” *Laune* – in the guise of humor or *Witz* – denotes deception, inversion, and surprise, in particular a specifically British quality that reached German-speaking Europe with the novels of Lawrence Sterne, the Shakespeare revival, the translations of Lessing, and the craze for the English landscape garden. In fact, the complex discourses of humor, wit, *Witz*, and *Laune* were central preoccupations in late eighteenth-century aesthetics, not just in music.

*Launig* may be best translated as “humorous,” but *Laune* is not “humor” in the sense in which the word is used today. *Laune*, wrote Johann Georg Sulzer in his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, was “a state of mind, in which an unclear sensation, pleasant or unpleasant, is so dominant, that all of the soul’s expression and imagination is carried


away with it.”

Thus Laune can be both pleasant or unpleasant; its dominant quality is of disruption, or even “annihilation” of the recipient’s expectations, as Mark Evan Bonds has argued, drawing a term from Jean Paul’s Vorschule der Ästhetik. Jean Paul compared Haydn’s music with Sterne’s novels, sensing “etwas der Keckheit des vernichtenden Humors” (“something of the impertinence of annihilating humor”) in both. As Bonds writes, “within the dynamics of the temporal arts...it is the reader’s or listener’s anticipation of what is to follow that is annihilated.”

A musical theme that is launig is slippery in meaning. The listener is challenged to guess how it might be continued; if the listener guesses incorrectly the composer wins, drawing attention to himself in the process.

Both of our versions can be experienced as launig. The metric misstep of the zig-zag invokes Haydn’s rhythmic wit, catching the listener off guard, as both Hess and Schmid observed, with two strong downbeats in a row. Yet the tonal dislocation of the downward chromatic line, with its hints of both a familiar topic for grief and the effusions of the free fantasy disrupts as well. Laune is not only in the music; it is a matter of

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64 The two readings could be easily made to stand in for the categories of “Laune in der Musik” outlined by Christian Friedrich Michaelis in his 1807 essay “Ueber das Humoristische oder Launige in der musikalischen Komposition”. For Michaelis launige music can be either “komisch und naiv” or “ernsthaft und erhaben”, displaying the qualities of a “scherzo” or a “capriccio” respectively. Stadler’s contrast of the opening theme with what he heard as allusions to J.S. Bach later in movement parallel
interpretation for player and audience. It is only fitting that the specific audience – both as player and listener – for the first performance of the work, as reported by Stadler and others, was none other than the acknowledged master of musical Laune himself, Joseph Haydn.65

Stadler is not just any witness, for he claims to have played the work with Mozart. For him, the launige version was Mozart’s version. If he played the chromatic version and experienced it as launig, the argument that Mozart’s contemporaries would have regarded the chromatic version to be “too difficult” collapses. Launig does not necessarily denote “easy,” but it in not meant to be impenetrable, except as part of the game. If he played the “zig-zag” in the composer’s presence, which, as we have seen, could have also been plausibly received as launig, then that version becomes editorially viable.

**Echoes**

Past performances (at least those from before the advent of recording) are lost forever. They are absent complements to the signs in the texts on our music stands and in our study scores. But their echoes still sound. In this essay we have seen how documents about sources and a very similar opposition proposed in Michaeli’s text. See C.F. Michaelis, “Über das Humoristische oder Launige in der musikalischen Komposition,” *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 9/46 (12 August 1807), cols. 725-729, and the discussion in Richards, *The Free Fantasy*, 134-136.

65 In this light the notion that Mozart might have written K. 593 for the London market, in other words for the very capital of Laune (see footnote 5 above) takes on a certain new plausibility.
reception – in short, documents of the “work” and the discourses that have accompanied it through its history – can be read in such a way as to allow us to hear these echoes, however faintly. Which version should be performed? However the “zig-zag” version made it into the sources of K. 593, its wide and early dissemination suggests that quite a few of Mozart’s contemporaries did not know the movement any other way. The simple assertion that as “mere” performers and listeners they would have been unable to judge this version on its merits is unjust. Indeed, and this is vitally important, no contemporary performing material survives that transmits the chromatic version without some emendation. If only one thing is clear in the confusion of these competing witnesses, it is that Mozart’s contemporaries were apparently not irritated by the fact that, for a short while at least, K. 593 had two faces. These two faces are symbols of two alternatives. Our decision about which to choose will be informed, in the end, by our own Mozart-Bild, just as the choices of those editors whose work I discussed here were informed by theirs. The choice for the one or the other is a political gesture.

We have seen what the alternatives might have been for the composer’s contemporaries. We might call our political alternatives the “modern” and the “postmodern.” The chromatic alternative, shining from the surface of the work, is, as Hess claimed, a sign of deeper processes. Organicism, after all, is a classic high-modernist utopia, a more perfect world where things fit together and make sense.66 What is more, the organic Mozart is in earnest pursuit of the modern project of being a “real” composer, a model of intellectual rigor. As I have argued,

Schmid’s Mozart, who ingeniously deploys challenges to a shared musical syntax, operates similarly. Both of these Mozarts, following the call of genius and inspiration, disregard “the rules” of genre and convention. They pay a price for it; their music, misunderstood, is rewritten by the anonymous forces of reception. Many have fought with honor to achieve a Mozart like either of these, and many have fought to restore Mozart’s “original” conceptions to their place in his canonical texts. Such motives are not easy to dismiss, nor should they be.

The zig-zag, on the other hand, floats freely on the musical surface, uncoupled from the work of deeper processes. If it is a sign of anything, perhaps it is a sign of itself, of destabilizing wit, drawing attention most of all to the author’s Laune. It is, one could say, what postmodernists call a simulacrum. It is the loose cannon on board that mighty, idealistic man-of-war, the musical work. Could it be that our times demand it? For us it could well be the more authentic choice; a large portion of the historical record suggests that for Mozart’s immediate environment it was as well.

The hand that made the changes to the autograph is not some disembodied historical agent, doing only harm to Mozart’s creation. The role this hand plays is more complex. It is the hand of a living musician, one fallible human being, reading the piece, simultaneously erasing the chromatic text while at the same time drawing our attention to it. But nothing and nobody can erase Mozart’s own handwriting in his autograph, the real material gesture of his hand moving across the page, inscribing

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the chromatic figure with confidence and clarity, before somebody else scratched it out. This is an aporia with which we will have to live.