

H/w

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Mozart's piano sonata in A major was written in an attempt to win wide popular appeal in Paris. How does it differ in form from his other sonatas? What features of form and style might have proved particularly attractive to the audience in 1778?

The recognised style in the classical period in which this was written was to write sonatas in Sonata form- the concept of a recapitulation, development and exposition. Indeed, the majority of Mozart's other sonatas were written like this. However, this sonata has a different but very distinct form. The first movement is a theme and a set of six variations. Each variation as well as the theme comprises of four four bar phrases, as illustrated below. This form allowed Mozart to keep simple, recurring themes throughout the movement and so gave the listener a more immediate experience compared to the complexities of counterpoint of sonata form.

Within this first movement Mozart uses several musical techniques to 'popularise' the music; attempts to embellish the notes and provide an extremely melodious and pleasurable end product. The music is decorated with semi-tonal appoggiaturas in the right hand and acciaccaturas in the left, livening up the melody. As Mozart had just discovered the complex textural variation a piano could give, the piece is littered with sforzando markings, e.g. in the last beat of bar 28.

Each variation has features that are unique to themselves or are only hinted at at different parts of the piece, e.g. the Alberti bass in fifth movement to emphasise the pace of the piece of the offbeat chromatic quavers, driving the movement forward in the last (sixth) movement. All these features serve to bring the audience in to the music, in the same way the stuffing operates in a succulent turkey.

The second movement consists of a minuet and trio. These are entirely different in form to the first movement and operate in Ternary form (ABA). The minuet is traditionally a dance which is very unusual at this point in a piece and makes the sonata stand out even more to its audience. This movement is all about dynamics with lots of 'sfp' and a smattering of dissonant notes, an example being in the second beat of the eighth bar when a G natural in the right hand conflicts with an F sharp in the left. However, this is quickly resolved and the music slips down after this mini-climax to piano. This movement is heavily decorated with runs which excite the listener, e.g. the descending B major scale in bar 12.

The Rondo alla Turca that makes up the last movement is a deliberate and obvious pandering by Mozart to the whims of his audience- 'Alla Turca' means 'in the Turkish Style' and this meant the inclusion of a new 'Turkish percussion' comprising a bass drum, cymbal and triangle. Audiences would have been delighted by this as Turkish style was very much the Vogue of the time, what with the janissaries invading Austria only a century before Mozart wrote his sonata.

So, on close inspection, it is clear that Mozart's form and style stand out from the usual norms of the time and that he has used many techniques to make his music even more original and appealing to the audiences of the time.

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- normally sonata form
- minuet and trio different so stand out
- galant
- dance- binary
- \turkish influence