

# Mozart

## Clarinet Concerto In A



**Bridget Mermikides** takes a look at a piece by a true titan of classical music - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart...

### ABILITY RATING



**Moderate/Advanced**

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
<b>KEY:</b> D	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fingertstyle technique
<b>TEMPO:</b> 50 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fretting hand stamina
<b>CD:</b> TRACKS 8-9	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accompaniment/melody

WOLFGANG AMADEUS Mozart is rightly famous for his operas - The Marriage Of Figaro, Don Giovanni, The Magic Flute etc. But his symphonies (in particular numbers 40 and 41) and serenades such as Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, his horn, flute and piano concertos are also highly regarded and regularly performed.


Mozart (1756-1791) wrote his Clarinet Concerto (K.622), just weeks before he died. Written for his friend Anton Stadler, a great clarinetist of his day, it is considered of huge importance being Mozart's last surviving instrumental composition. This month I have arranged the haunting 2nd movement of this piece, with its highly developed command of harmony masked by what seems on the surface to be an almost child like simplicity. Mozart never wrote for the guitar (mandolin is the closest he came), and because his music often involves an active accompaniment, melody and counterpoint, solo guitar arrangements are tricky, and not very common. There are some exceptions, see for example my arrangement of

**“Mozart was a child prodigy, composing music and playing piano and violin at age five”**

Rondo Alla Turka in GT171. Historically, Fernando Sor (1778-1839) is the most notable champion of Mozart's music for the classical guitar, with his famous theme and variations based on a melody from The Magic Flute.

The Clarinet Concerto in A Major is in three movements, with the typical fast-slow-fast format. The slow middle movement is well loved and had a resurgence of popularity when it was used in soundtracks to movies American Gigolo (1980) and Out Of Africa (1985). It is in ABA Binary form (a middle section surrounded by similar outer sections) and in D major. Using drop D tuning, the original key is maintained, which allows you to play along to an orchestral recording if you feel compelled to do so. However, if you're struggling with the stretchiness of the fretting hand, playing the piece with a capo at the 2nd or 3rd fret (transposing it to E or F) can really help.

This arrangement condenses the orchestral accompaniment and solo clarinet part to one guitar and requires some patience and careful practice in order to play it with the sense of easy flow and effortlessness that this beautiful piece needs. Take your time with it and, as ever, enjoy the process of learning as much as the goal of performance.

One of the greatest composers who ever lived, Mozart grew up as a child prodigy in Salzburg, Austria, composing music and playing the piano and violin from the age of five. He became a court musician in Salzburg during his teens and moved to Vienna in 1781. The story of his life and competition with a fellow composer Antonio Salieri was the subject of Milos Forman's acclaimed film Amadeus (1984). Despite his considerable success as a composer he was buried in a pauper's grave. 



Mozart: music genius who died a pauper..

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### TECHNIQUE FOCUS

#### FREE STROKE, REST STROKE

Two common picking techniques in classical guitar are free stroke and rest stroke. With rest stroke the picking finger plucks a string and then comes to rest against the adjacent one. With the thumb this is the next string down (towards the floor) and with fingers it's the next string up (towards the face). With free stroke the finger doesn't rest on an adjacent string after plucking, but floats free until it's required to pick again. Rest stroke is often favoured for single note playing, while free stroke is for polyphonic playing (chords and arpeggios).



**TRACK RECORD:** There are a number of great versions of Mozart's clarinet concerto in A available from various different classical labels. You might also want to check out Romantic Music for Flute & Guitar by Gian Luca Petrucci. If there are any pieces you'd like to see transcribed in this series, please write to Guitar Techniques with your suggestions and we'll see what we can do.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 9

**[Opening section]** The 'A' section begins with the clarinet theme accompanied by eighth notes that mimic the strings of the orchestra. Keep the volume of the lower parts softer than the melody so that the tune is clearly audible and stands

out. This eight-bar melody ends with descending 3rds (bar 8), leading into the tune for a second time. This time it would be marked 'tutti' in the orchestra parts meaning 'everybody' so here the low D adds body to the sound.

The guitar tablature is organized into five systems, each corresponding to a measure of the music. The treble staff shows the melody with notes and rests. The guitar staff shows the fret numbers and fingerings for each note. Chord symbols are placed above the treble staff to indicate the harmony. The score is marked with measure numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, and 17.

**System 1 (Measures 1-4):** Chords: D, A7/C#, D, A/C#, D. Measure 1 starts with a low D on the open string.

**System 2 (Measures 5-8):** Chords: A/C#, D, A/C#, G/D, A/E, E, A. Measure 8 ends with a descending 3rd (A to G).

**System 3 (Measures 9-12):** Chords: D, A7/C#, D, A/C#, D, A/C#, D, G/D, A/E, E, A. Measure 12 ends with a descending 3rd (A to G).

**System 4 (Measures 13-16):** Chords: D, A7/C#, D, A/C#, D, A/C#, D, G/D, A/E, E, A. Measure 16 ends with a descending 3rd (A to G).

**System 5 (Measures 17-20):** Chords: D, G, Em, A. Measure 20 ends with a descending 3rd (A to G).



## PLAYING TIPS

## CD TRACK 9

**[Bar 17]** At bar 17 a descending clarinet melody is introduced, immediately answered by the strings on the second half-beat in the next bar. There is an overlap of two melody lines made possible on the guitar by taking the first B note (clarinet) as an open string and the second B note (orchestra) on the third string.

The same thematic material occurs again in the next two bars a tone higher. A half barre is needed at the start of bar 21 and this section resolves with the same descending 3rds at bar 24 when the whole eight bars repeats, this time with a slightly altered accompaniment.

Chords: F#m G6 A6 A7 G/B A/C# D Em/G D/A A D

21

Chords: G Em E7 F#m G A6 Adim

25

Chords: G/B A/C# D Em/G D/A A A7 D A

30

Chords: E7 E A A/C# D

35

Chords: A7 D/F# E/G#

39

# PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 9

[Bar 32 previous page] At bar 32 the 'B' part of the binary form begins. This features the solo part with more flamboyancy; there are arpeggios, embellishments, chromatic scales, sextuplets, scale runs etc, all requiring careful precision, which lead us to the paused A7 chord at bar 59. This is the point

where the orchestra stops and the clarinetist has to improvise a cadenza; an unaccompanied solo where in this particular piece there is no written part in the score. However, this mini-solo will invariably be worked out and not made up on the spot. This lyrical couple of bars leads us back to the 'A' section.

42

A D6 A/E E7 Gdim F#m A/C

46

Bm/D A/E A7/E D/F# E7

50

A D Esus4 tr

54

A E7/A

57

E7/B A7 Rubato

## PLAYING TIPS

## CD TRACK 9

[Bar 69] This time the first theme only occurs once, leading straight into the call and response overlapping melodies at bar 69. There is a re-harmonisation in the

second rendition of this section at bar 82 with the Gm/Bb and A dim, which is a moment of Mozart's pure genius and this leads to the ending section at 84.



60

65

70

75

80



# PLAYING TIPS

## CD TRACK 9

[Bars 92-94] There is a recurring one-bar theme interspersed with a final few embellishments - arpeggio, chromatic scale - leading to an interrupted cadence

(V7 to VIIm - A7 - Bm) at bar 94. After this false ending the piece finally dies away with repeated D major chords.

85

A7/G D/A A7/G D/A Em/G D/A A

88

D A7/G D/A A7/C# D Em D/F# Em

92

Asus4 A A7 Bm G

95

D/A Ddim/A A#dim Bm Em/G D/A A7/G D

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