

An autograph manuscript of a vocal composition by Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Recitative and Aria for Soprano, “Ergo interest” and “Quare superna,” K. 143 (73a). Salzburg, 1773. 13 inches x 17 inches (330 x 432 mm), 10 pages.

From his earliest years as a child prodigy touring the courts of Europe to his death and burial at the age of 35, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a legendary figure. He was one of the most striking examples of artistic genius in human history. The composer’s extraordinary musical gifts, expertly cultivated by his musician father, achieved an unparalleled fullness of expression in works that combine depth and fluidity with a seemingly effortless grace.

Printed scores, however faithful to the original, are stripped of the personality of the composer and immediacy with the moment of creation that characterize an autograph manuscript. To reach the wellsprings of Mozart’s genius, one must turn to his musical manuscripts. Their assured, almost calligraphic appearance, reflecting the fact that the music was apparently composed mentally before Mozart put pen to paper, enables the reader to follow the score with ease. The manuscript is made of the oblong-format paper (*querformat*) characteristic of Mozart and other composers of the period. The paper was mechanically ruled with ten staves, as is typical of manuscripts from Mozart’s Salzburg years.

Mozart composed this vocal work G major for a soprano voice accompanied by organ and strings. The piece is andante in tempo and is suggestive of the kinship of sacred and operatic music. Appropriately, available recordings of K. 143 are typically paired with Mozart’s devotional music (masses, vespers, litanies, and the like).

This unbound manuscript was once the property of Gisela Selden Goth (1884–1975), the Hungarian pianist, composer, and musicologist, a pupil of Bela Bartok and Ferruccio Busoni. Her celebrated collection of musical autographs contained at least one notable example of the work of every great composer, from Johann Sebastian Bach to Arnold Schoenberg. She gave all

but a few of these to the Library of Congress in 1940.

Octavo code: moamoz