

A note of introduction: *Mozart Anniversary years traditionally are the occasion for bringing up to date the never-ending task of relating the Mozart of the 18th century to contemporary understanding. In 1991, the German music- and art-historian, Dr. Volkmar Braunbehrens, was invited to give a talk at the Staatsoper in Vienna on just such an occasion; it can be found in the website under its title, Mozart in Vienna: The Myth of "The Best Place in the World."*

On 27 January 2006, Dr. Braunbehrens once again was asked to provide an Anniversary talk, this time at the Mozart 250th birthday ceremonies held in Schwetzingen. The text follows below; the INDEX begins at page 14.

Volkmar Braunbehrens

Mozart – The conservative Revolutionary

In these days, lots of champagne will be downed in honor of Mozart's birthday. Hard stuff too, 100 proof. And this mega-media affair coming at us through all the radio and TV channels, the newspapers and magazines, with all the announced performances and events, is just beginning. Printing presses have been working overtime and we've already encountered their output in store windows and on newspapers stands. It's the same with music products such as CDs in all their various formats. They blare their advertising messages at us from every radio station, often non-stop, twenty four hours a day. I say "blare," because they are just being used as background music, are being misused as something to follow us through the duties of the day.

We are so familiar with the music of well-known arias – take, for example, "*Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön*" – that as soon as we hear the words, we hear the melody too. We've heard it too often – not necessarily from the opera stage, of course – but in the radio, on CDs and the like. There is a downside to this: we become content with treating the melody as a catchy tune, nothing more. In other words: we are on the way to forgetting how really to listen to music, how to grasp all the details, how to relate them to one another and thus perceive and appreciate the richness of the music.

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We do not know Mozart, we only know him as he has come down to us through history. Everything that we know of him is reception, is received knowledge. And that means it's a reflection of the historical process. When we read his letters, the documents of his life, we interpret them, that is, we make them understandable for us today. It is knowledge acquired through a hermeneutic process of dealing with something that we – today, in our situation, with our way of listening, and with our questioning (also with regard to Mozart's biography) – believe remains relevant and meaningful for us. But the historical distance (one might even say the alienation) is always there. We talk constantly about "our" Mozart – the Mozart of today.

Even the compositions of Mozart, his music, are something we know only as reception. Let me illustrate this with an example. Today "Così fan tutte," an opera regarded with disdain and suspicion throughout the 19th century, can be found on every opera program and in every record store. Every interested person can readily obtain the score, with all the music and all the text of the libretto. In 1991, I heard the opera performed under the direction of Nikolaus Harnoncourt in Vienna. In the famous farewell trio of the first act, when the two ladies are sending their fiancés off to war and waving them goodbye as the boat rapidly disappears, they pray for gentle winds and placid waters. "That is our wish" ("nostri desir") – at this point the all-enveloping, transparent sonority of the orchestra is like unto fragile, easily broken glass. Analyzed as such, this seven-note chord is one of the most dissonant Mozart ever composed. Harnoncourt allowed this complex constellation of sound to hang in the air for a long moment, savoring it to the full and letting it become more and more radical, so to speak.

And all at once it was clear to me that at this very point – and this was the reason for such a dissonance with a tonal structure embodying something extremely delicate and fragile but at the same time not yet broken – Mozart has begun the drama. Up to then everything was mere exposition. Now the drama can begin in earnest, the "point of no return" has been reached: with the fiancés supposedly going off to war, the game with their faithfulness (of which all four are fully convinced, of course) may well and truly begin. This orchestral dissonance calls the fidelity of the lovers into question, and the orchestra already knows – not for the only time in this opera, by the way – more than the protagonists know. And if it doesn't have "long ears," the audience can hear it too. In this sound, the whole drama has already been evoked. That is Mozart, the music dramatist, who does not tell a story in the sense of program music but rather uses the music itself as dramatic language.

To understand this requires not only the interpretive intelligence of an Harnoncourt, it also calls for a responsive spark from his audience. Only then, when a good performer doesn't obscure what lies in the notes and the listeners can decipher it for themselves, only then does the music arrive at its goal.

Against this background, one readily grasps why it was that Mozart always wanted to appear as the interpreter of his own works – the Vienna performances of "Così" he directed himself. Moreover, we see too why Mozart kept some of his piano concertos solely for his own use and didn't publish them. He had experienced reproach from many of his contemporaries: his music was too complicated, too full of surprises, too many things seemed to be going on at once that were difficult if not impossible to understand, it was "too highly seasoned." When he himself appeared, however, when he presented his music in person and in direct contact with his audience, this problem of comprehension did not arise. We never hear of it in a single word of criticism in any of the reports that have come down to us. When we try to visualize Mozart on the podium, I believe it must be as one not sunk solely in contemplation of his instrument, utterly focussed on the piano keys before him, but rather as one constantly with an eye to his listeners, taking careful account of whether what he was doing was coming through, in other words, as someone who for this very reason eagerly sought contact with his audience to see if the response was there.

In view of the importance Mozart attached to being his own interpreter (and with good reason), we can wonder why he gave so little care and attention to the music that he did publish. And this raises questions about his life. One wonders why other things, such as his own concertizing, were more important. One reflects on the contrary example of Joseph Haydn, who apart from the remote court in Esterhazy never performed in the public (in Vienna, say) at all, and whose international reputation rested solely on the wide dissemination of his compositions, especially by the Paris publishing houses with their trans-European influence. Haydn's trips to England, involving his first public appearances, came at a time when the composer, then almost sixty years old, had already reached the zenith of his exemplary innovative influence: they were little more than confirmation of his already not inconsiderable fame.

On the other hand, Mozart's music has survived to a degree hardly reached by any other composer – and this, even after he had died and was no longer there to be its interpreter. Not only has it achieved a place in other musical realms, such as pop-music or jazz, but it has come to be understood and accepted in parts of the world with totally different cultural traditions. The "globalisation" of Mozart's music began long before we ever heard of the word. The phenomenon is undisputed, and yet it is still hard to say what makes this more possible with his music than with that of others, Haydn, for example.

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When Wolfgang Mozart was born in 1756, 250 years ago, there was only one question: will he live? Five brothers and sisters before him had already died in ages from a few weeks to a few months; the sole child to survive infancy was his sister Maria Anna, now five years old. Reason enough, then, to proceed directly to baptism: it took place in the Salzburg cathedral the next morning. The child received the names Johannes Wolfgang Gottlieb. In the baptismal register, of course, the names were inscribed in Latin and "Johannes" was assigned a particular one of the many saints with this name. Thus the inscription reads "Joannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus." (There was no hint of "Amadeus"; that is something that emerged only after his death.)

As Leopold Mozart, around 1760, began to perceive the extraordinary musical aptitude of this youngster, as it became increasingly more evident and astonishing in the years to follow, the father came to call it a God-given miracle. That was not mere sanctimony on his part, but rather something that comported readily with the outlook of a man who, though devoted to the Enlightenment, felt no reason thereby to renounce his religious beliefs. The 18th century, the Age of Enlightenment, was very adept at this balancing act between intellectual independence and theology. Indeed, it was an aspect of the Age that is still with us: for all that man cannot otherwise explain, God is responsible.

Leopold Mozart undertook to deal with his son's miraculous talent in a way worthy of a philosopher of the Enlightenment. In light of all we know – and there is no five- to ten-year old child of the 18th century we know more about than Wolfgang Mozart, for this was a family that wrote letters virtually to excess, even though it was an exceptionally expensive form of pleasure in those days – to repeat, given all that we know, Leopold Mozart sought a way for which there was no precedent, one utterly contrary to the teaching methods of the time. In short, he would put his confidence in the child's self-development.

This evidently was Leopold's thinking: given that the dimensions of this talent and the directions it would take were utterly unpredictable, it was his obligation to observe the child carefully and support him in his demands. To his astonishment, the father had noted that the four-year old Wolfgang – probably in imitation of his older sister – was already able to learn little minuets after half an hour at the keyboard. This apparently did not lead Leopold, however, to decide to train and prepare the child to be a pianist as soon as possible. Certainly, since he was five years old, his affinity for music had been so pronounced that no outside pressure was needed; and the speed with which he learned things was so great that he needed no prompting at all. But Leopold must also have quickly sensed that Wolfgang's musical development was not limited solely to his skill at the piano, that it was a wide-ranging, constantly expanding interest. And so it was that the six-year old was introduced to the organ and the violin and began to make his first little efforts at composing.

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Leopold Mozart must have been struck by another important observation. He realized that music was not simply a playtime activity for young Wolfgang, but that the lad was discovering and exploring a whole little world of sound, something that naturally would be recognized and admired in a musician's household. His son was using music to call attention to himself; he was using music to communicate with those about him and to express himself; music was a private language used to relate to others. Leopold realized that, for the lad, music was not some introverted refuge into which he retreated, but rather through music, he addressed himself to everyone else in an out-going way and invited them to join him in this form of communication.

Fifteen years on, in a letter of congratulations to his father on his name day, Mozart confessed to "speaking" through music: *"I can't write poetry; I'm not a poet. I can't arrange sayings with such art that they produce light and shadow; I'm not a painter. I can't express my views and ideas even with poses and pantomime; I'm not a dancer. But I can do it through music; I am a musician. And so tomorrow I'll play an entire message of congratulations for your name day as well as your birthday on the piano at the Cannabichs."* (8 November 1777)

When you consider that the adult Mozart was indeed an enthusiastic dancer, that he sometimes wrote rhymes, especially as jokes, that he even began to write two comedies and once had chosen to appear at the Vienna Redoutensaal in a pantomime, then there was more intended in the letter to his father than just a passing reference to a particularly favored talent. It had to do with expressing views and ideas, and not just with the realm of art in general. For Mozart, music was a valid intellectual way of making others understand him. Music was his way of "arranging sayings with such art that they produce light and shadow."

From childhood on, this speaking through music was directed at the people around him – his family, of course, but also at the small, receptive groups of persons for whom he performed. He wanted these audiences to understand him and to take him seriously. And this is why, in the course of the Great European Journey of 1763-66, Mozart enjoyed his appearances (which were not all that frequent, by the way). We know of no reluctant or disinterested performance.

And the presentations were generally in the form of house concerts that took place before audiences of thirty to fifty persons. The impression of Leopold Mozart as the “dreadful father,” driven by irresponsible ambition, who cheated Wolfgang Mozart out of his childhood by rushing him throughout Europe from one appearance to the next, solely intent on enriching himself through his children – this impression is false, for it simply fails to comprehend the unique nature of the child Mozart.

The child’s extreme energy, his need constantly to be on the move, was ever present, even during the intellectually demanding act of composing. Not surprisingly, this hyperactivity is a personal characteristic evident in his music. Today, the young Mozart’s hyperactivity might be considered cause for alarm and his condition treated with medications. Fortunately, Mozart was spared such treatment. Apparently, the family, Leopold included, managed to get along with it quite well, for there is never a critical (or “exasperated”) word about it. Early on, the creative potential in the boy’s psychomotor activities was recognized and supported. Moments of energetic excess – when, for example, Mozart on first meeting Empress Maria Theresa “jumped in her lap, put his arms around her neck, and really kissed her” (Leopold’s letter of 16 October 1762) – met with no discipline nor were they regretted as inappropriate behaviour.

I’m convinced that much in the way of Mozart’s formation of highly irregular and yet artfully conceived phrases and themes, his inimitable feel for forward motion, for acceleration and deceleration (that reaches far into the realm of harmony), is grounded in Mozart’s physical make-up. In the last analysis, Mozart experienced his psychomotor drive not as a disorder but as part of being quick-witted with an unusual capacity for learning. He used his energy, his enormous memory, and his spontaneity to creative ends. In this regard, it is worth asking a corollary question: to what extent is the composer Mozart’s marked desire for stability of form and tonal clarity in the larger formal structures a felt counter to the hyperactive and highly charged complexity of Mozart’s inner self?

The kinetic nature of Mozart’s music – even in the greatest tumult of counterpoint or in the enormous diversity of orchestral voices – is musical “sign language”: ceaselessly in motion, every detail experienced as gesture, movement, pulsation. We feel it in our bodies and are drawn along with it. (This, by the way, stands in sharp contrast to Haydn and is a sure sign of the difference between these two composers.)

Mozart’s use of the body’s impulses played a role in his music from the beginning, from the time of his earliest compositions. Let me illustrate this with the example of an early violin sonata by Mozart. The first movement of this B-flat major sonata is headed *Andante maestoso* and what happens in the piano is a boasting, thrice-sequenced motive in sharply accentuated chords that culminates in a sudden questioning chord, which the violin in response leaves unanswered. This all takes place in the first two measures: in measure 1 such a prodigious, majestic (*maestoso*) figure occurs that, if it isn’t to be mere repetition, it must inevitably be called into question in measure 2. The second period (measures 3 and 4), a kind of after-phrase to this colossal opening, is given more to the piano and brings a bit of calm but no really satisfactory answer. This declaration is tried five times, each time ending in a chord of increasing hopelessness. After the fifth time – separated by a hold – the after-

phrase is developed and repeated and ends in six concluding measures that bring no resolution, only a kind of restless stasis. Everything about this first movement, each musical detail, can be attributed to the body's impulses and their resulting motion.

We don't need to discuss the rest of this first movement and the significance of the second movement, *Allegro grazioso*, as a counterbalance after so many open questions. Here it suffices to emphasize the composition's energized, spirited, and, yes, theatrical character. Hear it for yourself in the Sonata in B-flat, K. 15, written in London in 1764. Mozart was eight years old.

Musical example: Sonata in B-flat, K.15

In connection with the sonata we've just heard, there are two things of particular note. The first is simply that Mozart at eight years of age was able to conceive and compose it at all. Concerning the technical, formal, and harmonic aspects, there is little to say; they tell us no more about the basic knowledge Mozart already possessed at this age than about its extent. But the concept behind this first movement, a series of questions with evasive answers, was certainly something that wasn't part of the teaching curriculum. And he wouldn't have kept to a curriculum anyways. He had something he wanted to say and if in the process there were problems of formulation, then he sought to solve the specific problem and get the help he needed.

The second striking aspect is this: Leopold Mozart promptly had this sonata (along with five others) engraved and in doing so made public something that was neither perfect nor done according to the rules but could nevertheless pass as evidence of exceptional talent.

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The Great Journey of the two *Wunderkinder* was one of discovery and learning. It was one of great importance because it came at the very beginning of their musical development. Wolfgang Mozart's eager, lively disposition connoted an equally lively curiosity together with a phenomenal capacity to absorb new impressions. And these travels brought him directly into contact with musical experiences that he would have missed entirely staying in Salzburg. To name but two composers who made enduring impressions on the young Mozart, I would mention Johann Schobert in Paris and Johann Christian Bach in London.

Schobert meant encouragement to intensify, to break free of vapid regularity; it meant exciting and passionate outbursts, surprising excursions into the minor, bold turns of harmony, but also "oddly bitter" chromatic passages (as Hermann Abert put it), as well as rough and vigorous measures in unison. Such flames and fires show up frequently in the expositions of Schobert's chamber music, paired with a new kind of piano virtuosity, particularly as it affects the left hand. One can't say that Mozart might have taken Schobert as his model or simply imitated him; as an apostle of greater freedom of expression, of passions and feelings unrestrained, however, he had a large and lasting influence on Mozart.

The meeting with Johann Christian Bach in London, on the other hand, confronted Mozart with a highly elegant style that united diverse elements into a sophisticated metropolitan form of expression, one no longer confined to court music and its short-winded limitations. Nothing like this was to be found in narrow-minded, out-of-the-way Salzburg. And along with it came Bach's "singing Allegro," that opposed the somewhat antiquated traditions with a more relaxed geniality. This too was something that Mozart couldn't simply adopt and imitate but it became an abiding ideal.

Such are some of the impressions that Mozart would get a sniff of in the course of his travels, impressions that were so meaningful because they impacted on a highly receptive nature and stirred his need for musical expression. They had nothing to do with the basic elements of music, which Mozart was still acquiring, but rather with that deeper layer of his speaking and expressing himself in music. They were important spurs to his finding his own voice.

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There was something else besides that obviously played a big role once he had begun to compose. Music as drama. We can detect that in the violin sonata we just heard; its dramatic character can almost be understood as a small theatrical scene. In his instrumental music, especially in the piano concertos, we will constantly encounter a dramatic way of speaking that is the language of the stage. Mozart's thoughts and feelings were theatrical. The progress in Mozart's musical line of thought, the connections and transitions, the introduction of new ideas, the inner logic of speaking in music is one of theatrical action and conceived in theatrical terms. And that is, in Mozart, something quite new and personal. It does not mean, however, that the formal structures have been cast overboard. With Mozart, the rules governing form are stable, extremely so, and almost never called into question by the overall harmonic scheme. Mozart's musical forms in their broadest sense are seldom innovative and normally hew to the tried and true.

You never get the impression of Mozart settling for a conventional approach, however, it is much too individualized. Where highly varied figures are introduced, they first are allowed, and then required, to develop and change; they are, in short, complex individuals – not fixed types – with many and varied personal traits. Their psychological make-up is accentuated through both the instrumental and the dramatic design. At the outset, they each receive enough room for themselves, but soon it becomes clear what the connections and relationships – and, of course, the differences – between them are. The interaction of these figures with one another, the potential for conflict between them, even the surprises in their confrontations, all this develops out of their individual personalities. The striking impression is one of action always evolving on its own, in other words, not simply being narrated through musical events but happening autonomously.

To accentuate the point, we could say that Mozart is a dramatist, in contrast to Haydn, for example, who is a teller of epic tales. Naturally there are dramatic moments to be found even in Haydn, but they are presented in epic terms. And every listener can hear this characteristic difference between Haydn and Mozart. It rarely happens that we mistake the music of the two composers, who are both, in their own way, highly original.

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Contrasts: Mozart loved strong contrasts. That was also part and parcel of his dramatic approach. "To produce light and shadow" one after the other and in such a way that the flow was never lost. Mozart's contrasts don't confuse, they clarify. Yet even so, his contemporaries were often confused because their expectations were not met. They expected the music to run through their fingers like silken threads. Of course, the threads were not all the same; there were traditional approaches associated with the different genres and forms and these were usually confirmed by the way a work began. For Mozart, the intent of contrast was not to thwart such expectations, but rather to introduce a deliberate unevenness, a sudden unforeseen shift of accentuation in the music's flow, a sharp change in the lighting, an exotic touch, in brief, something to disturb the usual progression and force closer attention. As the drama unfolds, one waits for more "scarlet threads."

Mozart fully realized the effect. He and his father discussed it constantly. Nothing other than this was intended when Leopold would repeatedly urge his son not to forget "*what is popular*" and Mozart, in defense, would repeatedly assert that his music was not "*for those with long ears*" who were unprepared to give more than superficial attention to his musical argumentation. It was always a question of the happy medium, neither drowning in "*the popular*," nor ascending to compositional heights so complex that only experts and connoisseurs could follow it. Music is permitted to "*make one sweat*" (26 May 1784), he wrote; it should "*never be expressed in a way that becomes offending*," however, but "*must please the listener, must, in a word, still be music*." (26 September 1781).

We should keep in mind that it was only towards the end of the 18th century that public concerts began to be events where the audience was expected to concentrate solely on listening to the music from beginning to end. Before then, at concerts, the music was often mixed in with social conversation, eating and drinking and playing cards, etc. – the noise threatened to drown out the performance altogether. And the music of the time had had to accommodate itself to these kinds of concerts because it was simply part of the social situation's enjoyment. Chamber music for playing in private, on the other hand, was clearly divorced from this; it was music for connoisseurs who could be offered more demanding fare.

Mozart increasingly strived to withdraw from such performance conditions and insisted on being heard without distraction. As the interpreter of his own works, he had a much greater influence in this direction and certainly possessed the necessary charisma.

Intrinsic in Mozart's use of contrast was the deliberate mixing of different styles. His enormous ability to absorb new learning, paired with infallible recall, had given him from childhood on a highly developed sensory apparatus and, with it, a keen interest in all kinds of styles in all their different characteristics, something that greatly facilitated his involvement with the most diverse musical forms. Even as a twelve-year old, he had distinguished himself in the various styles of church music, in the different kinds of music required when composing for the theater, and in many fields of instrumental music of the most varied settings. This was only possible through continuous study of an unusually broad

range of other composers' models and ideas. To have made this possible and in no wise to have oriented Wolfgang solely to his own (i.e., his father's) examples, this was one of Leopold Mozart's best qualities. Despite all his proffered advice, the father always encouraged his son to go his own way.

When Mozart was writing his father from Mannheim, "*As you know, I can pretty well adopt and imitate all kinds and styles of compositions*" (7 February 1778), he was doing more than just expressing pride in having concluded a broad musical education that had equipped him to cope with every field of music. He was also indicating his interest in working with "*all kinds and styles of compositions.*" In Vienna, only a few years later, he was to have the opportunity to immerse himself in the earlier music of Johann Sebastian Bach and especially that of Georg Friedrich Händel.

There was hardly any other composer in his day who so obviously employed the mixture of styles to dramatize music. What this meant for Mozart's performing in concerts, where he often improvised, comes clear in something he wrote his father from Vienna: ". . . *first played a fugue – and then the variations on 'je suis lindor,' – where every time I've done this in public I've gotten great applause – because one contrasts so well with the other, and there is something for everyone*" (24 March 1781). And one can well imagine that Mozart must have played these greatly different pieces one after the other with no substantial break in between.

How a mixture of styles within the narrow confines of a short piece can look is shown by the Fantasy in D-minor for piano (K.397). The influence of Carl Philip Emanuel Bach can readily be heard. Whether the piece really should have ended in D-major is highly questionable. It came down to us as a fragment and the conclusion was added later by an unknown hand. The D-minor Fantasy dates from Mozart's early years in Vienna. We follow it with a single movement in G-minor (K.590d) composed in 1790, in other words, towards the end of the Vienna years, and showing a number of resemblances. The autograph breaks off at the end of the development. On the same sheet of paper an unknown person has completed it to the reprise; Mozart probably would not have arranged the reprise in so routine a manner.

Music examples: Fantasy in D-minor (K.397)
Sonata movement in G-minor (K.590 d)

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Opera was Mozart's greatest interest. On 11 October 1777, Mozart sitting in Munich writes his father in Salzburg, "*I only have to hear people talking about an opera, I only have to be in the theater, listening to the orchestra tuning up – o, then I'm totally beside myself.*" Time and again he spoke of his "*indescribable craving*" for opera, his true "*passion,*" and so on. As a twelve year old, he had composed the Singspiel "Bastien und Bastienne" (K.50) and from then on, for the rest of his life, he devoted himself to opera of all types and kinds, at intervals of three or four years at most. The musical-dramatic nature of the works varied greatly from one to the other. Generally speaking, no two types were exactly alike, even though one encounters the term "opera buffa" five times (but "opera seria" only three times) among his twenty works for the stage.

Most striking is the psychological development in each situation. Of course, in the 18th century the realm of psychology was little known and in that respect, the term is somewhat misleading. With Mozart, it is easy to notice how the generally static presentation of emotions (most characteristically in the arias of opera seria) is transformed into variable and fully realized actions and reactions. Mozart grasps every detail, every word, every movement, interprets it and reinforces it musically. This degree of clarity and consequence was something completely new and shows Mozart to be a music-dramatist *sui generis*: the music makes visible and audible what is happening on the stage.

Mozart gave this matter of musical-dramatic process much thought. In letters written when he was working on "Idomeneo" and, later, on "Die Entführung aus dem Serail," he had an exchange of views over details with his father. For example, he wrote: *"Now for Belmont's aria in A-major. O wie ängstlich, o wie feurig, do you know how I put it – even showed the throbbing, loving heart – with 2 violins in octaves. – this is the favorite aria of all who have heard it – of mine too. – and is perfectly written for Adamberger's voice. you see how he trembles – wavers – you see how his chest swells – which is expressed through a crescendo – you hear whispering and sighing – which is expressed by the first violins with mutes in unison with a solo flute. –"* (26 September 1781)

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Another striking aspect of Mozart as an opera composer is the increasing involvement of his subject matter and texts in social conflict and the contemporary political agenda. This is not yet so evident in "Die Entführung aus dem Serail," written originally for a visit of the crown prince (and later czar) of Russia, Grand Duke Paul, to Vienna to see Joseph II, and first performed in 1782. "Figaro," on the other hand, was an eminently political topic, as Mozart was fully aware. When you reflect that, at virtually the same moment that the Emperor (on the day before its premiere) was forbidding its performance as a theater piece, Mozart was proposing it as an opera for the Nationaloper in Vienna, then its potential for provoking conflict comes clear.

In France, the text of Beaumarchais's play would come to be called the "harbinger of revolution." In Vienna, on the other hand, ground was being prepared for quite a different political development: in framing the centerpiece of his domestic political reforms, Joseph II had drawn up plans to eliminate aristocratic privilege and institute judicial equality for all subjects, nobility included. And Mozart's "Figaro" (premiere 1 May 1786) fitted perfectly for use as propaganda for the Emperor's policies. (In this connection, a petty detail: the Emperor once chose this opera for presentation as part of the festivities connected with the marriage of an archduchess.) In any event, the nobility was by and large "not amused" by "Figaro" and, realistically speaking, Mozart could hardly have expected otherwise.

To be sure, Mozart was to some degree dependent on the goodwill and support of the nobility. After all, it constituted a major part of his audience and was an important source of commissions. One or two years earlier, when the great series of Mozart's concerts in Vienna was running, these performances took place most often in the salons of the nobility. And even in those concerts put on by Mozart himself, members of the nobility predominated in the audience.

Let us not forget, however, that Mozart – despite all the economic difficulties he had had, especially in those first years in Vienna – long before had achieved a confident sense of artistic independence that shielded him against every compromise so far as persons offering commissions were concerned. In essence, he had already achieved this immunity while living in Salzburg and it had helped make life with the hated Archbishop bearable. When you think about it, the source of this sense of independence probably is to be found in the travels of the Wunderkind.

As a matter of self-esteem, Leopold Mozart never allowed the family to be taken for wayward travelers, or itinerant entertainers on the move, or music-making lackeys. That's one of the principal reasons why the Mozart family always travelled "in style," in their own carriage accompanied by a servant, and were extremely choosy about their apparel, always a major consideration with the Mozarts. In Paris, Leopold Mozart once placed an order for an outfit embroidered with gold and silver that cost 59 Louis d'or (roughly the equivalent of 20,000 Euros in today's money). On the return trip, the family went to the trouble of making an extra stop in Lyon just to have new silken clothing made. In what they wore, the Mozarts were as one with the cavaliers and nobility coming before the court. And in Vienna, Mozart would place great stock in having clothing appropriate to the society in which he appeared. The reason, of course, was that he saw himself as artist entitled to full equality with every person of whatever social level. In how he dressed from day to day, the Emperor himself was certainly not "finer" decked out than was Wolfgang Mozart.

On the other hand, don't forget that Mozart had received the Order of the Golden Spur from Pope Clemens XIV and was entitled to call himself Wolfgang von Mozart. It was the identical title that had been bestowed on Willibald Gluck, only Mozart's was a rank higher. Unlike Gluck, however, Mozart never made use of the title, and the medal with its accompanying diploma seems to have been lost in the course of the journey to Paris.

At a palace, Mozart was adamantly unwilling to wait in the antechambers with the servants; he insisted on making his appearance as a proper gentleman should. His letters attest to this over and over again. As a child in his Wunderkind days, he had been on familiar terms with emperors and queens, making small-talk and even eating with them at the table. Now in the fulness of his self-assurance as an artist of exceptional ability, Mozart saw no reason to act differently. Even so, there is no doubt that he saw himself as a member of the bourgeois middle class.

Mozart was certainly not the first musician seeking to find an independent position with no fixed duties. There were others in Vienna who wanted to take the same path: Johann Baptiste Vanhal (1739-1813), for example. But no one before him had stressed the exceptional position of the artist in society as much as Mozart did. A delicate balancing act went with this and I believe Mozart was fully aware of that. For example, while composing "Figaro," he could not have expected anything other than the nobility's reaction of great reserve; at the same time, he loaded it with so many exciting "hits" (as we would say today) that their popularity went beyond the confines of the opera house – into the streets, so to speak – and was virtually guaranteed. The admixture of a certain disrespect with latent rebellion was fully understood when, for example, the

libretto offered: *"If it's dancing you want, my dear little Count, I'll play you a tune on my guitar. . ."* That this had nothing to do with just some kind of frivolous clowning around (even though the opera was announced as an "opera buffo") was obvious from the first measures of the overture, with its tone of ominous unrest and its rebellious accents intimating what's to come.

Even Mozart's next opera, *"Il dissoluto punito ossia il Don Giovanni,"* hinted at a turning away from theater for the court, something that's often overlooked. Mozart saw it as a subject drawn from the popular theater of the suburbs (*die Vorstadttheater*) with clear ties to the world of "comedia dell'arte." For the version presented subsequently in Vienna (the opera had had its premiere in Prague), a version unfortunately no longer played these days, Mozart even accentuated these traditional relationships. Now it really was a matter of an aristocratic lecher's total undoing, as the title (*"Il dissoluto punito..."*) tells us.

No opera composer before him had turned to subjects of such realistic immediacy – matter taken from the newspapers, from the cultural and political events of the day, in all their blatant and contentious aspects. None had such a seismographic feel for the unrest and agitation of the times. None had created such a realistic touch with allusions and links to current events. (And this too, taken in the large, was an aspect of Mozart's use of contrast.) For vague, airy-fairy thoughts on the universal human condition, Mozart had neither time nor interest; he was much too spontaneous, too direct, too immersed in the realities of life. Whether it was Blondchen's "Englising" in *"Die Entführung aus dem Serail,"* or the citations in the ball scene of *"Don Giovanni,"* or the Mesmerism in *"Così fan tutte"* – they were all concrete contemporaneous aspects at the time of the performances. Even the aerial device by which The Three Boys in *"Die Zauberflöte"* float down from heaven was something Mozart had seen three months before when Blanchard had made his hot-air balloon attempts on the outskirts of Vienna.

"Die Zauberflöte," making its appearance (logically enough) in Vienna's popular suburban theater scene, was a fairy-tale spectacle, true, but it was one that, with its unmistakable Freemasonry background, was not so apolitical as persons nowadays presume. Even the figure of Sarastro was portrayed as more critical and inconsistent than is put forward in the bland, one-sided leniency of today's productions. By this time, Freemasonry had long since gotten a bad name and soon was to be banned altogether. Its rather bourgeois-humanitarian motto, "Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood," had suffered a political reinterpretation intolerable in a despotic state increasingly bent on returning to the status quo.

In what respect can Mozart be called a revolutionary, and what about him is conservative? In spite of his feel for politics (in the broadest sense of the word) – and this, by the way, is something he had from Leopold Mozart, herein also a most exceptional man – in spite of this political sensibility, Mozart was much too preoccupied with his art to take an active part in on-going political debates. Nevertheless, he was not only an acute observer but also thoughtful and aware enough not to exercise his proudly defended artistic autonomy solely in some remote realm of art far removed from society, but rather in the dialog swirling about the events of the day as well – nonconformist, not evasive but demanding, in his musical solutions as well as in society. In Mozart, there is more that is radicalism than the casual listener presumes.

In 1791, Europe was poised at the start of far-reaching social, political, and cultural change. The repercussions of the French revolution, its consequences for all Europe, and the prolonged difficulties with Napoleon, together with the advent of industrialisation, were bringing great changes, even though the governing and despotic structures of the regimes appeared to be going unchallenged. Nevertheless, the political, economic and cultural influence of the bourgeoisie was assuming an increasingly commanding role. The dawn of Romanticism in its various aspects showed that the arrival of a new intellectual era was imminent.

We have a tendency to picture Mozart in pigtailed wig, a musician firmly fixed in the good old days. By doing so, however, we fail to see that Mozart himself was fully caught up in the pervasive mood of change. With "Figaro," he showed that he was in tune with the times. With the "Jupiter" symphony, he formulated the beginnings of a new symphonic era; its outside dimensions broke asunder all that the great symphonic innovator, Joseph Haydn, had established. This last symphony of Mozart's, with its tremendous fugue in the final movement, made a bow in the direction of the old masters, but in fact it heralded the advent of a new style, one as sublime as it was battle-ready.

Taken all in all, when we examine Mozart's last years, we see more signs of preparing for new goals than of withdrawal and slowing down. His legacy to us is not the Requiem, as impressive as it is; it was mere chance that caused it to come at the end of his life and only the first movement was completed. Instead, at the very end of his short life stand two works pointing in different directions. The first was "Die Zauberflöte." Both because of its libretto of fairyland and Utopia and especially because of its use of a great variety of musical styles employed to a homogeneous end, the opera can be seen as a work foreshadowing the early Romantic era. This is all the more amazing when you recall that no single composer emerged to represent the music of the early Romantic period. Was Mozart about to take a new way?

The other work is "La clemenza di Tito," an opera written to a commission of the Estates of Bohemia – and not the ruling family – to celebrate the forthcoming coronation in Prague of Leopold II as King of Bohemia. In this opera, a style of Classicism was manifest, one most clearly observed in paintings, which was to become especially virulent. Not long thereafter the Empire style, a variant of Classicism, would be elevated to a symbol of Napoleon's reign. In the early years of the 19th century, this opera enjoyed a particularly broad reception. Could this have been the path Mozart's future compositions might have taken?

We don't know. We'll never know. Mozart died exactly at the moment when a crossroads in his artistic development had appeared.

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