

John Rosselli

*A note of introduction: When the late John Rosselli (1927-2001) came to write about Mozart, he already had had a long lifetime of deep interest and investigation into the major European literatures and cultures, and a profound knowledge of music. His book on Mozart, coming late in life (1998), is probably best seen as a summing-up of thoughts and insights gained over the years. He was not concerned with the minutiae of Mozart biography, but rather with the music and what it tells us of the man Mozart was and his place in the culture of his times – and ours.*

*But before turning to **the chapter on "Mozart and God"**, which follows, here first are excerpts from Rosselli's **Introduction** to his book. He finds that "Mozart's life as much as his art shows him on the cusp of change from the old world to the new", and this is important to keep in mind.*

Introduction: on the cusp; Chapter 5: Mozart and God

ON 26 JANUARY 1790 A NEW OPERA HAD ITS FIRST PERFORMANCE at the chief Vienna theatre. Its title, hit upon at the last moment, might be rendered as *Girls Will Play*; more literally, as *Women All Behave Like That*. Its subtitle, *The School for Lovers*, showed that it belonged to a long-standing popular genre, Italian comic opera. This dealt, in sung exchanges as a rule light, graceful, speedy, with the more obvious foibles of humankind: just now, with the absurdity of expecting faithfulness in women – shown in a tale of two men each of whom, farcically disguised, wins over the other's 'inconsolable' lover within twenty-four hours of having – it seems – left for the front. Musicians and librettists had churned out such works for the previous half-century; *Così fan tutte* drew for its situations on many of them, though with flourishes from more august literary sources – as, in the cinema, a Western draws on familiar skies and conflicts though from a new, would-be serious angle.

The new work did well enough – not as well as some by proper Italian composers (one of whom had turned down the libretto after sketching out a scene or two), but respectably. The monarch, the Emperor Joseph II, was too ill to attend; his death on 20 February would interrupt the run after ten performances. Another operagoer, a nobleman who kept a diary, noted that the subject was 'rather amusing'; 'the music by Mozart is charming ... '

Emperor and nobleman – and Mozart – had reason to think of events far beyond the opera, the theatre, or Vienna itself. In France, where Joseph II's sister Marie-Antoinette was queen, the Bastille had fallen on 14 July 1789, six and a half months before the first performance of *Così fan*

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*tutte*. Then had come the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the renunciation of feudal privileges; in October the mob had forced the king and queen from Versailles back into Paris. The dissolution of monastic orders was to come within the next few months, as was that of nobility itself. But although the most drastic changes still lay a short way ahead, in Vienna as in other European cities educated people knew that the French Revolution was transforming the order of things.

An 'enlightened', reforming sovereign like Joseph might have welcomed some of the changes; he could not welcome the popular agitation – running into violence – that had brought them about. His deliberately plain clothes and manner did not mean that he would wish to see aristocracy done away with and the 'middling' people (or Third Estate) set up as master. To the jobbing composer Wolfgang Amadé Mozart, on the other hand (himself apt to feel he must have a 'beautiful red coat' to set off some mother-of-pearl and topaz buttons), the rise of the Third Estate answered a long-frustrated wish. He had suffered through the hauteur and thoughtlessness of those he sometimes caricatured as 'Duchess Smackbottom' or 'Princess Dunghill'; a count in the service of a prince-archbishop had once literally kicked him out, foot landed square on his behind. 'It is the heart', Mozart once wrote, 'that ennobles man' – a commonplace at the time among the forward-looking, but he meant it. The French Revolution from the start raised the cry 'the career open to talent', wonderful to the ears of the unprivileged young. Mozart – just thirty-four at the time of *Così fan tutte* – knew he could compose better than any of his rivals, Haydn alone excepted; yet he had again and again seen others land an established post while he was left unbeneficed. For him the 'opening to talent' could not come too soon.

*Così fan tutte* might look like just another Italian comic opera. It was in fact a token of a world on the cusp of change. Mozart's most perfect dramatic work enshrines a society where men and women need concern themselves only with delectable follies, and where reconciliation mends all in the name of sense. Music of ideal beauty lifts the ironies of the tale onto a plane of grace – but that grace, as Scott Burnham has written, is 'fugitive, transitory ... a glimpse of a paradise now discerned as an illusory realm forever beyond the pale of mundane reality yet somehow still true'. The ambience of *Così fan tutte* is what the ex-revolutionary Talleyrand meant when, in old age, he remarked that only those who had grown up before 1789 could know the sweetness of life. Afterwards came struggle and earnestness. *Così fan tutte* is the fine flower of the old regime at its point of dissolution.

Mozart's life as much as his art shows him on the cusp of change from the old world to the new. His early career as child prodigy depended on the favour of monarchs, petty princes, and nobles; in adolescence and early youth he had to work for a ruler who seated him just above the cooks; even as an independent concert artist and composer in Vienna he had to play to a limited audience, still heavily aristocratic, apt to get

bored and look elsewhere. Though he sought the dignity of a free artist, he just missed, through early death, the conditions that would give a free artist the chance of a wider public and a less troubled career.

Again, he lived at a time when composers expected to turn out music for everyday use, one piece after another as the need arose – whether a special commission or a regular duty, like J. S. Bach's 199 church cantatas or Haydn's more than one hundred trios for his noble patron to play on the obsolescent baryton, a kind of viola da gamba. Mozart too wrote his share of serenades, masses, or German dances to order; he did not pursue a musical idea beyond a sketched beginning if he saw no likelihood of its being performed. Yet impatience of patronage led him more than once to leave a bespoke series unfinished, and he again and again burst the accustomed bounds of a genre – of comic opera with *Don Giovanni*, of the symphony with his last four, of serenade and chamber music with several works that did not readily fit into the musical life of the time; in his piano concertos he virtually invented a new genre.

Though often called a traditionalist who took the musical language of his day as he found it, he – together with Haydn – changed it so pervasively as to make for a new emotional relationship between music and its audience; as master of delicately calibrated shifts in harmony he made music speak to and for inner feeling with a varied eloquence no one before him had attained. Music had been for use, for community, for religious contemplation, for pleasure, for a connoisseur's interest in minor new departures; after Mozart it was for life, for love, for the shadow of death, for the individual's profoundest experiences.

Most crucially, Mozart lived in a time of transition from a Europe where the community believed unhesitatingly in a spiritual world not theirs to one where the individual would live on his or her own resources; he bridged – we might say – the Christian and post-Christian eras. He himself always wrote straightforwardly that he relied on God and looked forward to meeting the people he loved in a better world; yet some of his last works open out on a secular humanism. In *The Magic Flute*, in the tiny motet 'Ave, verum corpus', truth speaks in human voices without a hint of an overarching power.

In a remarkable passage written between the two world wars of our own century, the theologian Karl Barth claimed Mozart's music as the true Christian's 'food and drink' because Mozart was not a 'self' frantic to express itself but a unique 'ear' open to the music of creation:

he heard the harmony of creation in which the shadow also belongs but in which the shadow is not darkness, deficiency is not defeat, sadness cannot become despair, trouble cannot degenerate into tragedy and infinite melancholy is not ultimately forced to claim undisputed sway. Thus the cheerfulness in this harmony is not without its limits. But the light shines all the more brightly because it breaks forth from the shadow ... Mozart saw this light no more than we do, but he heard the whole world of creation enveloped by this light.

Mozart's music, according to Barth, showed that although creation included a Yes and a No it was not disordered, not cleft between God and nothingness; even in its No, hence as a totality, 'creation praises its Master and is therefore perfect.'

Barth used to listen to some Mozart every day, in effect as to an angel – a messenger of God. Many people, it seems likely, hear as Barth did. Unbelievers though most of them probably are, in this music they glimpse the spirit- 'airs from heaven and blasts from hell', as Bernard Shaw wrote of *Don Giovanni*, reconciled in a work of art that brings peace.

Barth's, however, is not the only Mozart. Writers on the Marxist Left have been at pains to bring out the Mozart who played an active part in the 'enlightened' movements of his time, Freemasonry in particular, and who in his resentment of the aristocracy and upper clergy anticipated the supposedly bourgeois revolution of 1789. Those of more conservative outlook tend to play down Mozart's political engagement and interpret his works accordingly. Vast audiences exposed to Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* – play and film – harbour the image of Mozart as a lout who is also an inspired artist. Biographers involve themselves in Mozart's two chief personal relationships – with his father and his wife; some take sides, at times relying heavily on speculation or on what they think modern psychoanalysis can tell us about eighteenth-century motives.

The present work rests as far as possible on Mozart's own documentation – his letters, together with those of his father – and on the more reliable other documents of the time, set within the context of their society. ...

More fundamentally, what matters to us in this fellow human being is his music. The present study takes the work as no less central to its inquiry than the life; indeed it assumes that the chief events in that life, one or two apart, were musical. ...

At the core of what Mozart says to us lies something that cannot be taken to bits and explained. After repeated hearings, its mystery endures. That is why we go on listening to it. Having listened, we must in the end leave some questions open.

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## Mozart and God

MOZART'S INNERMOST FEELINGS ABOUT LIFE, DEATH, AND THE UNIVERSE are to be found not in his church music but here and there in his secular works: so we now tend to think. We may be wrong.

Since the French Revolution and the Romantic movement – that is, since shortly before Mozart's death – Christian faith has, among educated Europeans, been problematic. By many dismissed or ridiculed, it has, for those who still hold to it, become an earnest, even tormented experience. 'If God does not exist, everything is permitted': the thought that obsesses Ivan Karamazov in Dostoevsky's novel emerged when, for intellectuals like Ivan, God indeed looked like disappearing. Faith must come to terms with the dread of emptiness and the persistence of evil, or take to irrational enthusiasm.

In the eighteenth century, men and women could still hold without question to straightforward Christian belief and be cheerful about it. The Emperor Joseph II thought monks and nuns in enclosed orders who gave themselves over to contemplative prayer were wasting their own and society's resources: clergy should work in the parishes, help the needy, guide the people in right living, and educate the young. That did not make Joseph II other than a sincere Catholic. His faith, like that of many contemporaries, was intent on doing good in this world; it may have opened the way to a generalised theism, or to an ethic that would do without God altogether, but he did not himself question a supernatural reality or the account of it given by Christian doctrine. Such faith could be equable.

So could Mozart's, as he stated it. What he had to say comes mostly in letters to his parents, and may show him on best behaviour. 'God's will is always best': this comment on the expected death of a family friend, addressed to his mother when he was fourteen, sums it up. He said it again eight years later in 1778 when his mother died in Paris, adding, to his father and sister: 'we shall see her again ... we shall live together far more happily and blissfully than ever in this world ... When God wills it, I am ready.' As the danger to his mother's life became clear – Wolfgang had already written to a close Salzburg friend who was to break the news to Leopold – he had prayed 'for two things only – a happy death for her, and strength and courage for myself; and God in his goodness heard my prayer...'

Mozart needed that strength and courage in April 1787 when he learned that his father in turn was seriously ill (he died just over six weeks later, on 28 May). To Leopold he wrote that he was used to preparing for the worst; the parenthesis 'you know what I mean' may hint at Masonic

teaching, but it could just as well, or better, refer to the experience he had gone through in Paris at the time of his mother's death:

As death, when we consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence, I have formed during the last few years such close relations with this best and truest friend of mankind that his image is not only no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling! And I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity (you know what I mean) of learning that death is the key which unlocks the door to our true happiness. I never lie down at night without reflecting that – young as I am – I may not live to see another day. Yet no one of all my acquaintances could say that in company I am grumpy or sorrowful.

Much of this came from a contemporary philosophical work. In quarrying it Wolfgang was most likely sincere: people often need books to speak their feelings for them.

Not that we need depend on what Mozart told his family. The sincerity of his Christian faith shows plainly in words he wrote for himself alone. Three months or so after Leopold, Sigmund Barisani died – Wolfgang's Salzburg contemporary, close friend, and doctor. Under Barisani's entry in his album Mozart recorded the loss of this 'dearest, best of friends': 'He is at rest! – but I, we, all that knew him well – we shall *never* be at rest again – until we have the felicity of seeing him again – in a better world – and *never more to part*'.

Death provokes such statements. Like most eighteenth-century men and women, Wolfgang was expert in it. Though only thirty when he wrote his farewell to Barisani, he had heard of the deaths of friends, relatives, colleagues, his own children as often as most of us do in our sixties. Eighteenth-century men and women none the less had to go on playing their part in what was called the divine plan. The few clues we have suggest that Mozart lived in unshowy acceptance of that plan, and took part in the ritual and sacraments of his arm of the Christian church, anyhow at vital moments. He was so far committed to that arm as to write, from Paris in 1778, that he would take a post only in a Catholic country. Both he and Leopold mocked individual clergy, not to mention their ruling archbishop; their allegiance was to the faith and the church, whatever its officers.

To a young Catholic composer the church gave ready employment; to Mozart in Salzburg, writing for it was part of his duties. That meant writing some numbers, choral especially, in a 'learned' polyphonic style, though others might be in the 'galant' style used for all sorts of music, comic opera included. The 'learned' style went back, through the recent Salzburg composer Johann Ernst Eberlin, to the Vienna-based J. J. Fux, author of a famous treatise – ultimately to the masters of the renaissance. Not that the young Mozart had much knowledge of renaissance music with its flowing polyphony; when, at nineteen, he sent a 'learned' motet of his to the scholar Padre Martini – the well-wisher who had helped him through the Philharmonic Academy's examination at Bologna – Martini sent back two-edged praise of this 'modern music'. Mozart's encounter, after his move to Vienna, with the work of J. S. Bach

and Handel has been made much of by some, played down by others. He was indeed much struck, adapted five Bach fugues for string quartet, reorchestrated *Messiah* to fit contemporary taste, and directed this and other Handel adaptations in Baron van Swieten's private concerts. Unsurprisingly, he now thought the Eberlin works he had studied as a boy 'far too trivial to deserve a place beside Handel and Bach'; for a time not only he but Constanze too revelled in fugues. Mozart was none the less schooled from childhood in the 'learned' style: counterpoint was all in the day's work.

In his early years the south German choral and orchestral mass flourished. It used not just winds and strings but, often, trumpets and drums – apt for 'making a joyful noise unto the Lord' rather than for introspection. South German churches of the mid eighteenth century used all the arts to revel in a piety of wonder and delight. Rococo virtuosity in their architecture and decoration still puts off the austere; others value them among of the jewels of Europe. The music that went on in them ran afoul of the gothicising nineteenth century. It can still strike some people as too cheerful: faith ought not to have such a good time.

The boy Mozart had occasion to write a few such masses in Vienna and Salzburg, as well as shorter sacred pieces there and elsewhere; the best known is the brilliant motet 'Exsultate, jubilate' (K. 165), written in Milan in 1773 for a castrato to show off in church the powers of ornate singing he was already demonstrating in *Lucio Silla*. With Wolfgang's job at Salzburg in the next few years went more masses – at least until 1776. In that year he complained to Padre Martini that under the new archbishop a mass with all its sections fully orchestrated must not last more than three-quarters of an hour (some were shorter still; Colloredo also wanted audible words, unencumbered with musical display). Mozart clearly hankered after a post with greater opportunities, and hoped Martini would put one in his way. Yet the short Salzburg masses reached more people than any of his other compositions: many churches within a hundred miles or so copied and performed them. They were his nearest approach to popular music.

What Mozart was driving at in these works we can best see from the 'Coronation' Mass in C (K. 317) and the Solemn Vespers 'de Confessore' (K. 339), each written for Salzburg in his last years there, 1779 and 1780. 'Driving' is the word for the short mass, majestic headlong power its characteristic. The Credo keeps up the momentum even when it slows down for a moment of gravitas at the Incarnation, of sorrow at the Crucifixion. So does the traditionally mild Benedictus. Only the Agnus Dei, a gracious, wide-ranging solo, makes a pause in a resounding sonority often filled out with horns, trumpets, trombones, and drums. No wonder the mass was later played at a coronation, and misnamed after it.

In the vespers the contrapuntal passages for chorus and orchestra may be on the solemn, even (in the showily contrapuntal 'Laudate pueri') on

the sombre side of grand; the effect, all the same, is not of depth but of gladness. The work opens in brilliance and finishes in splendour; before the 'Magnificat' that closes it the 'Laudate dominum' unfolds a seamless, gentle melody for soprano, consolatory without being mystical.

In late Salzburg works like these, Mozart – so Alfred Einstein thought – deliberately irked his employer by here and there going against orders and indulging in 'stormy solemnity': he had to utter something the archbishop's rational liturgy could not contain. That may tell us why, in Munich at the time of *Idomeneo* in 1781, he wished to perform one of his sacred works: the Elector Karl Theodor, who for the past three years had denied him a job, might yield to the power of mass and opera combined. If, as seems likely, the Kyrie in D minor (K. 341) was written with this in mind, it shows that here as in *Idomeneo* Mozart worked spiritually at full throttle: scored for utmost splendour, its plea for mercy is stern, dark, yet open to the transcendent. Einstein thought the mastery of structure and of detailed writing 'enough to make one fall on one's knees'. Musicologists no longer fall on their knees, and neither (if he was the person addressed) did the Elector.

Vienna, where Mozart lived from 1781, held out still fewer openings for church music. Joseph II's policy, very like Colloredo's, had cut down services and the use of instruments, besides doing away with one monastic church after another; it would later take a stand against choral singing. Neither Mozart nor Haydn was to write any sacred music for the Austrian lands until after Joseph's death in 1790. Oddly, there remained Salzburg – a Benedictine church there, outside the archbishop's control. On 26 October 1783, during Wolfgang's one trip home, he and Constanze performed the Mass in C minor (K. 427). For reasons still obscure, it was unfinished; he was never to complete it.

'I made the promise in my heart of hearts' – Wolfgang had written to his father on 4 January – to celebrate his and his wife's visit with a mass; at that time he had written 'half' of it. The mass was to give thanks for Constanze's having come safely through her pregnancy (or through an earlier illness) – essentially for their being together, a condition imaged by her performing one of the two soprano solo parts while he either played the organ or led from the violin. The dimensions and temper of the work suggest an aim more far-reaching. If Mozart had completed it on the scale of the parts he did write, it would have been as long as the Mass in B minor in which J. S. Bach had summed up a lifetime's devotional music-making. Like that work, though in other terms, it was heaven-scaling.

Mozart completed the Kyrie and Gloria, the first part of the Credo, enough of the Sanctus for it to be reconstructed, and the Benedictus; he never wrote the latter part of the Credo or the Agnus Dei. Just what was performed at Salzburg we do not know. The Kyrie and Gloria Mozart later (1785) adapted into an oratorio for Vienna on the theme of David's repentance. Presumably he saw no chance of ever having the mass sung there; that would tell us why he did not bother to complete it, though not

why he left it incomplete in the first place. There may have been local circumstances we do not know about.

Even in its truncated form the mass tells us more about its composer's relation to God than do his earlier letters. That relation is not quite straightforward. For Bach the individual – composer or hearer – lived without question as part of a spiritual world beyond time; experience of God was at once collective and personal, and music was to deepen it. In his mass Mozart shapes a grand framework within which the voices take now one view, now another of the tremendous events they sing. At the 'Qui tollis' for double chorus, with its relentless chromatic lunges, the freight of the world's evil bears down on us; Christ – the words say – lifts it, but according to the music it has not yet happened. When the words announce peace on earth to men of goodwill and, later, bless him who comes in the name of the Lord, an uneasy, almost questioning note slips in. Yet the Kyrie, alternately stern and elegiac, launches the mass on a note of certainty; the mighty homophonic shout 'Jesus Christ', leading to the athletic fugue on 'with the holy spirit', confirms it; the early part of the Credo, in the spirit of the 'Coronation' Mass, drives its tough ostinato along without bothering to imitate the descent from heaven it confidently asserts.

The solo voice utters, at 'Christe eleison' and in two arias; we do not know which of them Constanze sang. From the 'Laudamus te', a coloratura aria of Italian type, we gather that abstract beauty is, for God, praise enough. The more elaborate 'Et incarnatus est', a concerto for voice, flute, oboe, and bassoon to be sung at that point in the Credo, used to be thought of as operatic by those who disliked its kinship with the windblown angels in the South German churches of its day, innocent in painted stucco and gilt. It brings the good news in the most caressing manner imaginable, to now lilting, now leaping melodies berthed on the tenderest of accompaniments, and soothes on through unresolved repetitions ('-tu-us est') as though too enchanted to let go. Mozart left it in draft, complete but for the string parts. Incarnation is a mystery, as much in any new-born child as in the son of God: if Constanze sang this, she sang it two months after her and Wolfgang's firstborn had died.

We would be rash to draw conclusions from an unfinished work. As it stands, the mass bursts the banks of late eighteenth-century convention; it deploys a rousing variety and grandeur; praise for a transcendent God reaches high, yet some unevenness of tone hints that the composer was not altogether at ease with his task. At a conscious level, Mozart perhaps intended nothing so much as an outlet for powers Vienna would not let him use.

Just over a year after the performance of the Mass in C minor, on 14 December 1784, Mozart became an apprentice member of one of the eight Vienna Masonic lodges, named 'Beneficence'. Within three and a half weeks he was admitted as a journeyman to the second of the (then) three degrees of the Masonic 'craft', in a ceremony at the related, more important 'True Concord' lodge, and he ended as a master, perhaps

within a further week. He was to be a Mason for the rest of his life – after Joseph II's reorganisation of the lodges, as a member of the 'New Crowned Hope'. Did Freemasonry give him a new spiritual understanding such as to weaken his Christian belief? Did it lead him to question further the existing order of church and state?

Freemasonry in the late eighteenth century was in the first place a sociable movement, a loose chain of clubs where men could meet on an equal footing even though some were nobles and others minor gentry, merchants, officials, or professionals. The 'inquisitive women' named in the title of Goldoni's comedy of 1753 longed to know what their men were up to at their secret club; after many extravagant guesses, they crept in to find the men busy with a slap-up dinner. The clubbiness of Freemasonry was important: it signalled that men were no longer content to mix chiefly with their own class. They might still have to do so on public occasions, but here they could relax.

According to the statutes of every lodge they were not to discuss politics or religion. The lodges did, however, carry on a ritual of their own in a language of symbolic words, images, and gestures, a serious matter in continental countries where both church and state claimed exclusive power. In their known statements, for example in the words of the songs Mozart was to compose, Masons gave voice to benevolence towards fellowmen and a generalised praise of God, seen as the 'great architect' or 'soul' of the universe; they spoke of the need to uphold virtue, loyalty, brotherhood, and charity and follow the 'light of truth'. Much of this was the common coin of 'enlightened' thought.

The late eighteenth century, however, was also a time when more esoteric ideas were about, of philosophical or semi-religious cast – in part a coming into view of once obscure lines of thought, in part a sign that Christian orthodoxy was beginning to lose hold. Alchemy – the centuries-old endeavour to arrive at treasure more inward than material gold – was not spent. Ancient 'mysteries', those of the Egyptians in particular, interested some. Notions of universal happiness, to be attained by the use of reason and a more equal sharing out of wealth, informed a Bavarian secret society called the Illuminati. Some Freemasons held these ideas, and the Illuminati, anticipating later groups, wished to promote theirs by infiltrating the lodges.

Did Mozart share in the esoteric interests of some Masons? The chief evidence is a set of 'Zoroastrian riddles' he devised and handed out at a carnival masquerade in 1786; he later sent them to his father. Both riddles and eastern cults such as Zoroastrianism were fashionable, but Mozart's set is not so much arcane as bawdy; thus 'One can possess me without seeing me' means 'horns'. The riddles confirm Mozart's delight in both obscene jokes and the play of language. Whether they can bear the weight of psychoanalytical interpretation placed on them by Maynard Solomon is an open question; what is certain is that they do not show Mozart delving into the occult.

Can we then say that Mozart shared the radical views of some Masons? Since the Illuminati in particular can be seen as forerunners of communism, some writers have looked for evidence that Mozart was involved with them or, more generally, held radical ideas and welcomed revolution when it broke out in the Low Countries and France. There is, however, no direct evidence. The indirect evidence is weak. It depends on association: some Vienna Freemasons are thought to have been influenced by the Illuminati; Mozart was a member of the same lodge. This is wishful thinking rather than proof.

Mozart, we have seen, felt keenly the absurdity of privilege; he knew his talents had earned him a high place, and resented people's being able to deny it him. It is not surprising that he should have welcomed membership of a club where he could talk as an equal with some of the greatest nobles in the land. He used Masonic signs in correspondence with fellow members, and composed music for performance in the lodges, most of it in two bursts, one soon after his admission, the other just before his death – the period when he also wrote *The Magic Flute*, a work that embodies Masonic ideas and some Masonic ritual devices. Freemasonry apart, he admired Britain (where he had lived aged seven to nine) as the home of liberty – another commonplace among the 'enlightened', though questioned by advanced republicans and democrats. That is all we know. Assertions that he was a committed radical are speculative.

Those who make such assertions read back into the 1780s the part Masonry came to play on the continent after the French Revolution. Alarmed governments suppressed it (in Vienna, four years after Mozart's death); Freemasons, when they reappeared in the nineteenth century, by and large identified themselves with anticlerical liberalism, some with republicanism and democracy. In the 1780s, however, many high government officials and leading clergy were members of the Vienna lodges: 'it was clearly possible', the historian Derek Beales has written, 'to be both a Mason and a pillar of the Catholic Establishment'. Among other members were Mozart's noble patrons Count Thun and Count Esterházy, his publishers Artaria and Torricella, his printer-landlord J. T. von Trattner, his favourite tenor Adamberger, Leopold Mozart (admitted during his 1785 visit), Haydn (who did not bother to attend), bankers, officers, doctors, merchants, an actor, a bookseller, an apothecary – a virtual cross-section of the upper and middle classes. Attempts to identify them with the programme of the Illuminati are hazardous; so far as they were politically inclined they supported Joseph II's reform of the church. Early in 1785 Joseph rewarded the effective leader of the movement in Vienna, the mineralogist Ignaz von Born, for his discovery of a process that increased miners' safety. Mozart helped one of the lodges to celebrate by writing a cantata, 'The Masons' Joy'.

Nor did Joseph the Wise (as the words of the cantata termed him) unambiguously round on the Masons when, in December of that year, he cut down the number of lodges and had their members officially listed. In a country where little was meant to happen without the government's

knowing about it, regulation was a kind of recognition. The Masons may have been shaken – some of the more esoterically minded dropped out, as Joseph had intended – but most carried on. The emperor, they could reassure themselves, was of their frame of mind: ten years earlier he had thrown open his private suburban park and inscribed on the gateway 'Pleasure ground dedicated to the People, by one who esteems them'; he still dressed and behaved with the greatest simplicity and went on imposing church and educational reform. Even when the Netherlands revolution brought new strain, Joseph would have nothing to do with a proposal to infiltrate an alleged Masonic revolutionary conspiracy. This was in late 1787, the very time when he bestowed a sinecure on the Freemason Mozart.

If we interrogate the music Mozart wrote for his brothers in the lodges, we get a disconcerting reply. As the Marxist scholar Georg Knepler – keen to bring out Mozart's radical sympathies – has honestly acknowledged, these compositions, 'all but one, never rise above a middling artistic level'; some are 'banal'. 'Four-square' and 'routine' also fit these songs, duos, and cantatas; some of the choruses (male only, of course) evoke a German glee club. Knepler's explanation – these works were written for people who had little or no musical grounding or sensibility – does not fit what we know of some lodge brothers; 'The Masons' Joy' was written for the admired professional Adamberger. Mozart used customary Masonic devices – thirds, threefold structures, slurred notes, 'knocking at the door' rhythms, the key of E-flat – but seems not to have put his heart into the job.

Knepler's one exception, the *Masonic Funeral Music* (K. 477), was written in 1785 for meetings to commemorate two aristocratic lodge brothers, one a ruling prince, the other a high official; neither death can have touched Mozart personally. Its texture is heavy with deep wind instruments – bassoon, basset horn, horn (to which Mozart later added a contrabassoon) as well as oboe, clarinet, and strings. It works a sonority more than literally profound, a colour at once dark and glowing. Framed by a C minor slow march, a middle panel of chorale variations in E-flat lifts a voice plangent yet serene. A hint of Christian supplication – a fragment of chant traditionally used in the Miserere of the Requiem mass – runs athwart the Masonic symbols and the Masonic equanimity. The whole thing takes just over four minutes; the end resolves from gloom into a C major chord; the indigo vault bleaches into open sky. This extraordinary work holds in balance sorrow and peace; men's souls can face death because they hold to a ruling power not themselves, but in that power dwells no transcendence, no personality; Christ's face is nowhere.

Writing for instruments rather than for earnest Masonic voices may have set free Mozart's creative powers: the *Funeral Music* looks forward to some of the works of his last phase. In the years 1784-88 we can glimpse his experience of the spirit mostly in his secular works. Some have found it in tormented minor-key works like the piano concerto in D minor (K. 466), first performed in February 1785. To do so is tempting

but probably fallacious – the outcome of listening across the roar of the self-dramatising nineteenth century. Mozart could be poignant in major-key works. He could also create such a masterpiece as the piano concerto in C minor (K. 491, finished in March 1786), which keeps up the tension more thoroughly than does the D minor concerto and works its ideas more fully and explicitly; yet its total gesture is of a heroism that seeks no monument. Mozart, in any case, tended to pair a stressful work with another more relaxed or affirmative – the D minor concerto with that in C (K. 467), the string quintets in C and in G minor (K. 515-516), the two last symphonies in G minor and in C (K. 550 & 551) – just as, in the operas of 1786-87, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, an opening on a possible heaven or hell will yield to the concerns, laughable, erotic, or crass, of everyday humanity.

The works of these years do speak in Mozart's personal voice. We do well to listen for it in the single work, yet also for the balance he achieved, much of the time, either within a single work or within a pair or series. If a mood, a gesture is unquestionable we should heed it, with reservations: Mozart meant it, but he meant a great deal else besides.

His outward personal life affords few clues. People close to him died, but the deaths of his and Constanze's children – three of them from 1786 to 1789 – left no record of the parents' feelings. Leopold Mozart's death in 1787, we have seen, led Wolfgang into borrowed 'philosophical' acceptance. He and his father had grown apart, perhaps more than adult sons and their parents generally did, though they still wrote and exchanged news; two years had gone by since Leopold had visited him and Constanze, it seems without incident, and had gathered from Haydn proof of his son's genius. Now Leopold was dying, that son, however 'emancipated', was bound to be shaken.

Did he express himself more individually in music than in his letter on death? We do not know. A possible memorial, Alan Tyson has suggested, is the well-known serenade for strings (really a brief chamber suite) *Eine kleine NachtMusick* (K. 525), written a couple of months after Leopold's death – the quintessence, a trifle ghostly, of the divertimenti Mozart had composed in his father's shadow at Salzburg. If Tyson is right in his shrewd guess, Wolfgang absorbed the death into music whose self-contained beauty fends off interpretation.

One might suppose that a tumult of feeling about Leopold's mortal illness accounted for the string quintet in G minor (K. 516), one of Wolfgang's greatest and most tragic works: he entered it in his register on 16 May 1787, twelve days before his father's death. Dates, in fact, all but rule out a connection.<sup>1</sup> At most, knowledge of what was about to happen may have shaped the end of the quintet. That, if true, would show a great deal about where Mozart's spirit was tending.

The G minor stands paired with the C major quintet (K. 515), written at the same time. Mozart, it appears, planned a set which he would offer to amateur subscribers, but when, a year later, he advertised these two, balked out with a transcription (K. 406) of the C minor wind serenade (K. 388), the scheme failed; he eventually sold them to a publisher.

Both quintets are built on a large scale. Charles Rosen, in his penetrating study, writes of the C major: 'Mozart discovers the secret of Beethoven's dimensions.' He does it by a use of motivic fragments held within tonal solidity, achieved by staying in the tonic far longer than usual; this creates tension 'while remaining at the extreme point of resolution'. The opening Allegro thus combines 'breadth and majesty' with 'lyric intensity'. This Allegro makes a complex argument at once grand and exhilarating. The Andante's dialogue of violin and viola, now yearning, now suave, shows tenderness may be a spacious emotion. The Minuet keeps close to it in mood until the trio brings in a sliding, lilting tune that might be an ironic device of Mahler's (his, though, would go on four times as long; here it is a passing joke). Abounding melodic ideas in the finale – friendly, vigorous, gracious – take us through one transforming adventure after another. Life rewards exploration; the Lord (if we admit the words Haydn was to set in *The Creation*) is 'great in his might'.

The G minor works the same means of tonal solidity in a wholly contrasting mood. The opening, disturbed over a quaver pulse, is (Rosen again) of 'a chromatic bitterness and insistence that can still shock by the naked force of its anguish'. The Minuet keeps up the tension, with, in the opening bars, a grinding contrast twice leading to a forte chord like a repeated pang and, in the trio, only a fleeting glimpse of sky. From the very start of the Adagio ma non troppo, fragmented motives stammer, mope in isolation; the rhythmic pulse alters, never settling for long; song-like melodies appear, but they dwell morbidly on suffering, or suggest tears, or, at most, acceptance of fate; a high one offers consolation so thin as to be none at all; the last phrase, in a quiet upward leap, seems to say 'finish'.

Worse is to come. The Adagio introduction to the finale, according to Rosen,

even surpasses the other movements in its open use of direct expressive symbolism: the sobbing rhythm of the inner strings, the sighing appoggiaturas, the harsh expressive dissonances, the aria at once sustained without end and continuously broken, the parlando insistence on one note, the unceasing chromatic movement. Nothing closer to ultimate despair has ever been imagined ...

Some have invoked Gethsemane: the agony in the garden. There, Christ at length said: 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.' Mozart stops, then picks up again with an Allegro in G major and in rondo form.

Opinions differ on what this says and how it should be played. Cheered or disconsolate? Bright or subdued? What is certain is that the agony is over. God's will is reasonable, after all. The instruments talk on in lines

now simple, now contrapuntal, but the pulse is steady, the recurrent theme almost jaunty. We can understand this in various ways. It disappoints some: not enough, surely, to purge all that suffering? Or we may say: the classical spirit in the arts demands formal resolution, and this resolves what went before. Or, finally, we may hear in the quintet as a whole what the apparition in *Little Gidding* told T. S. Eliot about remorse:

From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit / Proceeds, unless  
restored by that fire / Where you must move in measure, Like a  
dancer.

The final Allegro does 'move in measure', with the disciplined cheer of purgatory. There is an everlasting No, but also, if we listen, an everlasting Yes. Perhaps, for reasons hidden from us, Mozart in this work overbalanced towards the No; but he heard the Yes, and moved with it.

The Yes speaks even in the work often said to show tension unresolved, the G minor symphony (K. 550). It was one of three he wrote in the summer of 1788, falling between the E-flat (K. 549) and the C major or 'Jupiter' (K. 551). All soon became famous, but in 1788 Mozart no doubt intended them as something he could make money with now that the Vienna audience – perhaps he too – had had enough of piano concertos; there is evidence that he had concerts lined up. At all events he did not write his greatest symphonies in a void; nor could he have known that they were to be his last. Nor, finally, do the symphonies as a group show the financial strain Mozart was under: with the outbreak of the Turkish war in February the bad times had started, and by June or July so had the series of begging letters to his friend Michael Puchberg.

What the three symphonies did show – with their fellow the 'Prague' symphony in D (K. 504), performed in late 1786 – was a new departure in the genre. The old symphony as overture or entertainment was no more. In these four, and in the symphonies Haydn was to write for London in the 1790s, music aimed at a discourse, perhaps of profound import, at all events fully thought out and worked out; to hear it properly you had to listen with care.

Since Mozart wrote it, people have heard the G minor symphony in widely varying ways. To contemporaries, the adventurous key changes in the outer movements must have sounded extreme, yet a couple of Romantic generations later Schumann heard only 'Grecian lightness and grace'. Modern critics tend to speak of 'inexorableness', 'neuroticism', 'passion, violence, and grief'. The final bar, still in the minor – an obstinacy unusual at the time – drives in a last nail.

Or does it? The work can sound not so much inexorable as keenly ambiguous. It too hears both the No and the Yes – in the universe, and in that other universe, the self; Mozart's experience of earth, heaven, and hell shows in the structure both of the symphony as a whole and of individual movements.

This is not to deny – though the odd conductor tries to – the merciless drive from the start of the opening *Molto allegro*, with its anapaestic rhythm prompted by an offbeat whisper in the strings. This temper, weirdly implacable, rules the first movement, the fierce main sections of the Minuet, and the *Allegro assai* finale. In its menace there is order of the highest kind, the more fearful because the symphony does without the intimidatory aid of trumpets and drums; the mutations we undergo in the development section of the first movement form an organised tempest. The structure of the last movement is so decisively regular as to attain formal resolution; its placing of 'the square upon the oblong' fulfils the classical task of rounding off (and therefore denying the ego the unbounded self-expression it craves) without conceding anything to heart's ease. Only the E flat major *Andante* and the Trio envision a world where order is beauty, calm, and delight.

Yet the contrast is stronger within the two outer movements than between them and the *Andante* and Trio. These gentler sections concern themselves with an order human beings might imagine, even attain, on earth. In the recapitulation of the *Andante* Mozart runs the consolatory falling phrase with its demi-semiquaver train above another, song-like melody; two human ways of loving go on together, with no need to overcome or merge. At the end of the movement a single chord with *appoggiatura* speaks a clear-eyed farewell.

In the outer movements, though, the uncanny enters with second subjects whose ethereal or mysterious character is flicked in by limpid woodwind textures. Counterpoint too eavesdrops: at times in the first movement a bass line muses, arcane, while the implacable discourse goes on overhead. Fierce outcries in that same movement give way to a benison dropping down, this time from heaven; or outcry and blessing go on at once. Just before the end the blessing recurs, offers a glimpse of salvation; a like chance hovers just before the symphony ends.

A few years after Mozart had completed the G minor symphony, a more radical artist, stirred by the great events in France, wrote *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. William Blake there abolished the boundary dividing soul and body, will and morality, men and women and God: 'All deities reside in the human breast'; and that breast holds the infinite if only we would see it, and its energy 'is Eternal Delight' if only we would unshackle it. Here at its purest was the Romantic vision of the human mind as the sole universe, imaging, shaping, determining the outer world. In Blake it could make for piercing sweetness and depth of understanding. In some later human beings it could breed monsters, as the mind fed on itself without care for any reality beyond itself, natural or supernatural. It is a vision we have cause at once to prize and to distrust.

Mozart moves towards the Romantic vision as he lets the iridescent, at times appalling emotions of his life and ours move in and out of his finest work; but he remains conscious of an Other, holds himself ultimately ready to 'move in measure, like a dancer' and shape his creation not by his own will alone. The G minor symphony, high point of a line running through his work, holds in a perfect frame anxiety that is visited by knowledge of blessedness, yet remains anxiety still. It is once again modern, and shows why Mozart is our contemporary.

John Rosselli

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:: ROYE E. WATES: MOZART'S MASS IN C MINOR]

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1. The quintet is paired with that in C, completed by 19 April. Mozart worked on both at once, as Alan Tyson has shown from the paper used for the discarded opening of a finale to the G minor; he then switched to different paper for the final version of K. 516. News of Leopold's illness had reached him on 4 April. Complex chamber works, as we know from the string quartets, gave him a great deal of trouble and could take him months or even years: it seems virtually inconceivable that he could have written both the C major quintet and a first version of the G minor in a fortnight. Both must have been on the stocks before 4 April.

An Apropos Mozart Addendum to "Mozart and God" by John Rosselli

In his discussion of the G minor string quintet, Rosselli concludes with a quotation from *Little Gidding*, the last of the poems that make up T. S. Eliot's set of four, *Four Quartets*, written in the period just before and during World War II. Although in the poems as a whole there is little direct mention of the war, the war became central to *Little Gidding* as Eliot drew on aspects of his own experiences while serving as a watchman during the bombing of London by the German *Luftwaffe*. "In the uncertain hour. . .Near the ending of interminable night", the poet encounters the "apparition", as Rosselli puts it, and the apparition speaks. Given here is most of Part 2 of *Little Gidding*. It ends with the quotation Rosselli turned to as he meditated on the transcendent meaning of Mozart and his music for us today.

In the uncertain hour before the morning  
Near the ending of interminable night  
At the recurrent end of the unending  
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue  
Had passed below the horizon of his homing  
While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin  
Over the asphalt where no other sound was  
Between three districts whence the smoke arose  
I met one walking, loitering and hurried  
As if blown towards me like the metal leaves  
Before the urban dawn wind unresisting.  
And as I fixed upon the down-turned face  
That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge  
The first-met stranger in the waning dusk  
I caught the sudden look of some dead master  
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled  
Both one and many; in the brown baked features  
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost  
Both intimate and unidentifiable.  
So I assumed a double part, and cried  
And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are *you* here?'  
Although we were not. I was still the same,  
Knowing myself yet being someone other --  
And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed  
To compel the recognition they preceded.  
And so, compliant to the common wind,  
Too strange to each other for misunderstanding,  
In concord at this intersection time  
Of meeting nowhere, no before and after,  
We trod the pavement in a dead patrol.  
I said: 'The wonder that I feel is easy,  
Yet ease is cause of wonder. Therefore speak:  
I may not comprehend, may not remember.'

And he: 'I am not eager to rehearse  
 My thought and theory which you have forgotten.  
 These things have served their purpose: let them be.  
 So with your own, and pray they be forgiven  
 By others, as I pray you to forgive  
 Both bad and good. Last season's fruit is eaten  
 And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.  
 For last year's words belong to last year's language  
 And next year's words await another voice.  
 But, as the passage now presents no hindrance  
 To the spirit unappeased and peregrine  
 Between two worlds become much like each other,  
 So I find words I never thought to speak  
 In streets I never thought I should revisit  
 When I left my body on a distant shore.  
 Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us  
 To purify the dialect of the tribe  
 And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight,  
 Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age  
 To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.  
 First, the cold friction of expiring sense  
 Without enchantment, offering no promise  
 But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit  
 As body and soul begin to fall asunder.  
 Second, the conscious impotence of rage  
 At human folly, and the laceration  
 Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.  
 And last, the rending pain of re-enactment  
 Of all that you have done, and been; the shame  
 Of motives late revealed, and the awareness  
 Of things ill done and done to others' harm  
 Which once you took for exercise of virtue.  
 Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.  
**From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit  
 Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire  
 Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.'**  
 The day was breaking. In the disfigured street  
 He left me, with a kind of valediction,  
 And faded on the blowing of the horn.

T.S. Eliot (1943) **Four Quartets**