

The image shows a page of aged, yellowed paper with handwritten musical notation in dark ink. The notation is dense and covers most of the page, with some areas appearing to be crossed out or heavily scribbled over. The handwriting is somewhat cursive and appears to be a historical manuscript. Overlaid on the right side of the page is the title "Mozart in the History of Opera" in a large, bold, black serif font. The title is arranged in five lines: "Mozart", "in the", "History", "of", and "Opera". The background music includes various notes, rests, and some clefs, though they are difficult to read due to the handwriting and the overlay.

Mozart in the History of Opera

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LOUIS CHARLES ELSON was born on April 17, 1848, and died on February 14, 1920. He was educated in Boston, his native city, and Germany. As a teacher at the New England Conservatory of Music and as music editor for Boston newspapers, he exerted a great influence for music in this country over a period of many years. He also served as music correspondent for several European and South American papers, and enjoyed distinction as a lecturer to the public as well as in the classroom. As author, composer, and editor, he had a career of great significance in America's musical development.

In 1945 the Library of Congress received a bequest from the late Mrs. Bertha L. Elson, widow of Louis Charles Elson, to provide lectures on music and music literature in memory of her husband. Professor Grout's lecture was one of the series made possible by Mrs. Elson's generous bequest, which also supplied funds for this publication.

IF you were to inspect the contents of any well-equipped music library, you would find that the amount of shelf space occupied by books about Mozart is very large—large enough to frighten away any but the most devoted student who aspires to a thorough knowledge, not only of Mozart and his music, but also of the multitude of things, wise and foolish, that have been written about this most beloved of all composers. Probably only the shelves relating to Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner would be comparable to those about Mozart. Particularly around 1956, the second centenary of his birth, the production of books and articles took on a tremendous increase. Moreover, Mozart is one of the few composers—along with Bach, Schubert, Palestrina, and Handel—who are honored in the 20th century by the undertaking of a new, thoroughly revised edition of their works to replace the older edition. Obviously no one but a Mozart specialist is likely to find anything utterly novel to add to the mass of information already on hand. Now I am not a Mozart specialist. I have no new documents to present, no hitherto unknown works to reveal, no revolutionary doctrines to proclaim. My task is the more modest one of considering one class of Mozart's works—an important class, to be sure: the operas—in the framework of the history of that form: their connections with historical developments up to Mozart's time, their place in the whole picture of late 18th-century opera, their influence and some of the changing views about them in the 19th and 20th centuries, and what I may call their historical position in our thought at present. Needless to say, this is not the first time that such a survey has been undertaken. Indeed, the title of this lecture is identical with that of a very good learned essay by Hermann Kretzschmar published in 1905; still, I believe the subject is worth reviewing, for reasons which I hope will become clear as we go on.

Before coming to the main matter I should like to notice briefly two current controversies which have some bearing on our subject. When we speak of "Mozart in the history of opera" we are making two tacit assumptions. In the first place, we are assuming that it is profitable to consider Mozart's operas in their historical aspects—how they compare with earlier operas, how they were affected by the circumstances of the time and place in which they were produced, how they may have influenced later composers, and other questions of that kind. Now some contend, and the same contention is made with regard to works of literature as well, that all such questions are irrelevant, and that the only important thing is to judge and appreciate a work of art for what it is in the present, what it means to us here and now. I have no objection to this point of view as long as it doesn't set itself up to be exclusive; in fact, I believe that any historical study of music should start from, or at least somewhere arrive at, an appreciation, a critical evaluation, of the music as it exists for us, as we hear it today. But I believe also that a knowledge of its historical background can be one means of arriving at a more just evaluation and a deeper appreciation of the music itself. This is not the only function of music history, but it is certainly one of its functions. Moreover, the antihistorical point of view carries with it a certain danger. Without some knowledge of history—specifically, without some knowledge of what a past composer intended and how his contemporaries understood his music—we are in danger of hearing not what he said but only what we imagine he said. To be sure, the danger is less acute in the case of Mozart than in that of some earlier composers, because Mozart's music comes to us within a continuous tradition of style which is still alive and is a part of our common musical heritage. Nevertheless, it is neither useless nor irrelevant for us to be aware of the historical bearings. After all, it is only natural that we should be interested in the history of a thing or a person that we love. Only consider how characteristic it is of two human lovers to delight in telling each other the story of their lives.

The other tacit assumption to which I referred is more basic and less obvious. In speaking of the history of an art, as of anything else, we assume that there is such a thing as "history." We assume that past events can be comprehended in a more or less orderly structure which is more than a simple chronological sequence, and that such structure has or can have a certain objective validity, that it is not something arbitrarily imposed on an otherwise meaningless flow of happenings.

The usual main ordering principle of history has been that of cause and effect; historical events have been viewed as the result of previous events, both material and psychological. Thus in this pattern one might say that Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* is the result of a great many factors, including the state of opera in Europe in the year 1786, the notoriety of Beaumarchais' comedy at Paris, the presence of Da Ponte at Vienna, the tastes and expectations of Viennese audiences, Mozart's own musical education, all that he had already written, all the music with which he was familiar, and so on. Clearly enough, this sort of explanation is not very satisfactory nor even very practical. Even if *per impossible* we could know all the supposed causative factors and even if we could take into account the essentially unknowable factor of Mozart's mental processes while conceiving and composing the music, we should still have nothing that could be called a causal explanation of *The Marriage of Figaro*. In short, the concept of causality as commonly employed in the physical sciences will not work when it comes to history. And yet we cannot rid ourselves of the conviction that human events, including the composition of certain works of music at certain times and places, do have some kind of relation within the time-flow such that their succession is not a matter of pure chance. The whole subject, of course, is too large and complex to be discussed in detail here. What it ultimately comes to, I believe, is that explanations in history have to be expressed in metaphorical language; that metaphor can have explanatory value; that historians of music, when they use metaphor, should do so consciously and appropriately to the matter in hand; and that some of their critics might bear in mind as a general axiom that people who do not understand the nature of metaphor ought not to meddle with books written for grownups. No historical explanation can have the same kind of conclusiveness as a demonstration in geometry or an experiment in chemistry; explanation in history, and particularly in the history of an art, is itself like a work of art in that it seeks not to compel our assent by means of irrefragable proof but rather to persuade us to accept a proffered explanation as essentially right, just as a good play or painting or symphony persuades us of the essential rightness of its structure.

With this much by way of preface, let us proceed to consider Mozart's position in the history of 18th-century opera.

Of his approximately 20 works for the stage, 14 are on Italian texts and only six on German. This proportion is illustrative of the esteem

which Italian opera enjoyed in the 18th century, not only in Italy but in every country of Europe where opera flourished, with the partial exception of France. Italian was the common language of the librettos; Italian composers and singers occupied the important positions in opera houses; native composers were expected to learn their craft from Italian masters and to practice it in accordance with Italian principles. Among the thousands of Italian operas produced in the course of the 18th century, two main types can be distinguished: the serious (*opera seria*) and the comic (*opera buffa*). The former was, or professed to be, a species of "heroic drama," taking its subjects, or at least the names of its characters, from historical or quasi-historical or legendary sources and superimposing on them a largely invented dramatic action calculated to give rise to the most intense inner conflicts—for example, between love and duty, personal inclination and higher loyalty—so that the personages in the course of three acts could be portrayed in successively varied and contrasting moods or states of mind. All these emotional moments were expressed in solo arias, which made up the main musical content of the opera; the dramatic action leading up to each aria was disposed of in recitative, rapid and quasi-realistic dialog in speech rhythm with an absolute minimum of musical accompaniment. This model of rigid division of function between the musically important but dramatically static aria on the one hand and the dramatically important but musically negligible recitative on the other was of course modified to some extent in practice by the poets and composers of the 18th century, just as the rigid divisions of rank and definitions of function in the society of the same era were occasionally relaxed in individual cases. Such freedom of formal treatment is especially notable in the operas of Handel, for example. Modifications in the older scheme became more and more frequent after the middle of the century: differences, both dramatic and musical, between recitative and aria became less marked, so that the two styles interpenetrated to a certain degree; more of the recitative portions came to be accompanied by the orchestra instead of only by the harpsichord; more varied types and forms of aria were introduced; the chorus, which had always been prominent in French opera, began occasionally to assume importance also in Italian opera, and that not only as a mere decorative adjunct but with a functional role in the dramatic and musical scheme.

Such was the state of *opera seria* when Mozart appeared on the scene.

He began young in this field as in others: his first two *opere serie*, *Mitridate* and *Lucio Silla*, were produced at Milan when the composer was respectively 14 and 16 years of age. Neither was particularly successful and Mozart never received another commission to compose for the Italian stage. He still longed to make his mark in *opera seria*, however, and opportunity came in 1780 with an invitation to write a serious opera for Munich. This was *Idomeneo Rè di Creta*. Mozart made a good many changes in the libretto in the course of composition, all dictated by his own intuition and practical good sense as to what would be effective in the theater and best suited to the particular cast of singers. *Idomeneo* was his best work in the form of *opera seria*, with elaborate arias, symphonic treatment of orchestral sonorities, big choral scenes, and an excellent sense of timing. The work did not have a long success, though Mozart made a revised version for a private performance in Vienna in 1786. (It has been occasionally revived, most recently in a performance at the University of California in Berkeley.) Mozart's only subsequent venture into *opera seria* was *La clemenza di Tito* for Prague in 1791, hurriedly composed in the last year of his life, and usually regarded nowadays as an inferior work—although in the two or three decades after Mozart's death it was fully as popular in Germany as any of his operas, to judge by the comparative statistics of performances.

More important than *opera seria* among Mozart's Italian works were those of the type loosely known as "comic opera" or *opera buffa*. The Italian *opera buffa* has an interesting history in the 18th century. All the national forms of comic opera in the same period seem to have grown up partly in consequence of a popular reaction against the solemnity and especially the stiffness and artificiality of the old *opera seria*, and partly—as in France, England, Spain, Russia, and Germany—as a national reaction against the domination of the Italians in the established, aristocratically oriented theaters. The early Italian comic opera, of which the best known example is Pergolesi's *Serva Padrona* of 1733, was an almost slapstick affair, with a small cast of characters representing type personages from everyday life (instead of the kings and heroes of *opera seria*) in farcical situations, the librettos sometimes using local dialects and the music appropriately lively and energetic. In *opera seria* most of the principal roles were for sopranos and were often taken by male sopranos (castrati); the comic opera excluded castrati altogether but exploited the comic possibilities of the bass voice.

The musical numbers of *opera seria* had been almost entirely solo arias and duets; the *opera buffa* made much use of larger vocal ensembles, especially in finales.

After the middle of the century the comic opera plots, both in Italy and other countries, begin to take on a certain quality of tenderness and even pathos, mingled usually with comic elements but always concerned with characters recognizable as "ordinary people"; such librettos correspond to the theatrical genre of "sentimental comedy." Composers sought for the appropriate melodies, simple but expressive, with occasional pathetic accents and touches of chromaticism, foreshadowing the romantic styles of the early 19th century.

Mozart had written four *opere buffe* before his first masterpiece in this form, *Le nozze di Figaro*, in 1786. The success of *Figaro* at Vienna was only moderate, but it evoked such enthusiasm at Prague that a new work was immediately commissioned for that city and produced there in the next year under the title *Il dissoluto punito ovvero Don Giovanni*. Mozart called this not an "*opera buffa*" but a "*dramma giocoso*." *Don Giovanni* was a great success from the beginning and spread to all the opera houses of Europe within a few years—though unfortunately not bringing in much money to its hard-pressed composer. His last *opera buffa* was *Così fan tutte* for Vienna in 1790; this also was quickly taken up everywhere, usually in translations and with fantastic rearrangements and so-called "improvements" of the libretto, which managers professed to find too artificial, improbable, and even immoral.

Equally important with the Italian operas, even though less numerous in Mozart's productions for the theater, are his dramatic works with German texts. All these belong in the category of the specifically German type of 18th-century popular opera, the *Singspiel*, which might be described as a spoken play with musical numbers interspersed. Spoken dialog instead of recitative was characteristic of national opera in every country but Italy, and the practice survived long into the 19th century; we find it still in Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Weber's *Freischütz*, as well as in the original version of Gounod's *Faust*. The German *Singspiel*, unlike the Italian *opera buffa*, was a comparatively recent growth in Mozart's time. From its very beginnings, around the middle of the century, it had been a mixture of sentimental and comic elements, librettos leaning to the sentimental or romantic side being more common in the northern part of the Germanic regions and the comic or farcical more characteristic of Vienna and the south. Mozart began his public career as

an opera composer at the age of 12 with a little one-act *Singspiel*, *Bastien und Bastienne*, performed in the garden of Dr. Mesmer, the famous hypnotist, at Vienna in 1768. In 1782 he produced *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, a work which revealed hitherto unsuspected dramatic and musical possibilities in the *Singspiel* form and incidentally capitalized on the current European fascination with the mysterious Orient.

Mozart's last important opera, *The Magic Flute* (Vienna, 1791) is also technically a *Singspiel*, in that it uses spoken dialog; but it is significant of his conception of the nature of this work that he called it not a *Singspiel* but a "grosse Oper," that is, an opera on the grand scale—which it most certainly is. The success of *The Magic Flute* was instantaneous, universal, and lasting. There were numerous imitations in the 1790's and Goethe in 1800 even wrote a sequel to it, though he never found a composer for his text.

To sum up, then, we find that Mozart, in opera as in other forms of composition, worked within the accepted conventions of the late 18th century as he found them. His interest was in the present. He cared for the past only to the extent that it might be practically usable in the present; for the future he cared not at all. Everything he wrote for the stage was done for a particular theater, at a particular time, for a particular cast of singers. And he took the utmost pains to see that the score he produced should be suited to the immediate circumstances of performance and calculated to put every detail of the drama and music across the footlights in the most distinct and forcible manner. He hoped for success with the public and was disappointed if he failed to achieve it; but it never occurred to him to console himself for failure by appealing to "the judgment of posterity," as some composers of the 19th and 20th centuries inclined to do. *Idomeneo* was certainly a work of genius; but when Mozart saw that there was no future for *opera seria* he gave it up (except for the one much later instance of *Tito*, which he undertook reluctantly and on commission) and turned to other forms. From our perspective today we can see that *Idomeneo* was, in fact, the last great work in the line of *opera seria*: the grand opera of Spontini and Meyerbeer stemmed not from Mozart but from Gluck and his successors at Paris. In the realms of *opera buffa* and the *Singspiel*, Mozart's historical position was more fortunate; in those forms it was possible to say something new, to produce viable works. Even so, of course, those operas of Mozart which still live and which delight us today do so not because of the historical circumstances under which they were created but because,

by sheer chance, or good luck or divine providence, in a particular, favorable historical environment there happened to live a composer whose genius embraced the qualities necessary for great dramatic music and to whom the established forms of opera were congenial.

This naturally leads to the question, "What were those qualities?" More concretely, how did Mozart's operas differ from those of his contemporaries who were working in the same forms and under the same historical conditions? When we hear an opera of Paisiello, for example, why do we very soon begin to have the feeling that here is Mozart without Mozart, Mozart without the pleasant surprises and the great moments?

The first thing to remember is that Mozart was one of those rare composers who are equally at home in every kind of music. He was not exclusively, or almost exclusively, an opera composer as Wagner and Verdi were; but he did, on the other hand, produce operas steadily throughout his career, unlike Beethoven and Debussy. I doubt that it would have been possible for any 19th-century composer to be so versatile. Things were becoming too complicated—everything on a bigger scale, a public demanding "originality" in every new work, all the different kinds of composition becoming more divergent and more specialized—so that, whereas our picture of the typical 18th-century composer includes something of the wonderful fluency and certainty of a Vivaldi, Telemann, Handel, or Mozart, when we think of the typical 19th-century composer we are more apt to recall Beethoven's painful brooding over every detail of a new work, or Brahms' long hesitation before venturing on his first symphony, or Bruckner's or Mahler's continual revision of their scores. But in Mozart's time, or at any rate with Mozart, it was still possible to occupy oneself and hope for success equally in several different fields of composition. Now I think it is fair to suppose that it has something to do with Mozart's constant concern with purely instrumental forms such as the symphony and string quartet that we sense in his operas, especially those from the last 10 years of his life, not only the typical Mozartean freshness and economy of orchestral color but also a certain clarity of the musical structure—in single numbers, in entire scenes, and in the opera as a whole—a purely musical "rightness," independent of, though fully concordant with, the formal structure suggested by the text. Particularly, I suggest that it was Mozart's preoccupation in the 1780's with the concerto that

helped him carry over into opera this sureness of form: for the concerto is, of all kinds of instrumental composition, the one closest to opera in its requirement of both independence and due subordination as between the performing partners—instrumentalist and orchestra on the one hand, vocalist and orchestra on the other. This connection is also a historical one; it seems quite plausible, as Donald Tovey suggested years ago, that the 18th-century classical concerto derived its form from the 18th-century opera aria.

It is in the finales of his operas that Mozart's genius for musical form and the alliance of music with drama comes most clearly into play. The ensemble finale Mozart inherited from his 18th-century Italian predecessors, though what he did with it surpassed anything they had imagined. Take any of the finales in his later operas—*Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, even *The Magic Flute*, but above all, perhaps, *The Marriage of Figaro*: successive different movements in different tempos and textures, all heading toward a final climax and all within a logical tonal order of contrasted and related keys, organized as tightly as a symphony and as nonchalantly as a divertimento. Hear one of these finales without knowing the action or understanding a single word and you hear a perfectly coherent, satisfying musical entity. And then look at the text or watch the scene enacted on the stage and you realize that all this apparently sheerly musical perfection seems to have grown, in the most natural and inevitable way, straight out of the dialog and action.

Another characteristic which Mozart possessed in supreme degree was that *sine qua non* of every successful opera composer, a sure knowledge of what is effective, what "goes" in the theater. Quite a number of very estimable composers have lacked this particular sense: Brahms and Bruckner, for example, who never attempted opera; Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn who attempted it without success. On the other hand, a feeling for "good theater" has brought success in opera to composers not otherwise outstandingly gifted: Meyerbeer, Puccini, and Menotti, for example. Mozart happily combined musical genius, practical experience, and dramatic imagination; when composing an opera he never once lost sight of the way in which every detail of the action and music would get across to the audience. One can get a glimpse of him at work from some of his letters to his father modifying the libretto he has been given to set—deleting an aria here, adding one there, shortening a recitative, substituting an ensemble for a solo—all

in the interest of producing a better effect in the theater; and "effect" is the word he uses, like the honest craftsman that he is.

The use of the ensemble finale and the practical sense of the theater are things that Mozart shared to some extent with all good opera composers of the late 18th century. More nearly unique is his uncanny ability to delineate character by means of music. The delineation of character on the stage, the creation of distinct individual persons, is of course one of the functions of drama, though its relative importance and the means used to achieve it have varied from age to age. In opera both the ideal and the means underwent a radical change between the beginning and the end of the 18th century. In the late operas of Alessandro Scarlatti and in all those of Handel, the method was one which might be called synthetic: an individual was depicted in successive states or moods ("affections," in 18th-century terminology)—such as firm resolution, anger, courage, calm happiness, mourning, ardent love, sorrowful resignation, despair, and so on—each affection being expressed, as it were, in a pure state at a particular moment of the drama but all attached to the same individual, so that by the end of the opera one could have a composite picture of that individual, made up of the sum of the separate affective states under which he had been displayed. This method at its best in the old *opera seria* produced characters of heroic dimensions, magnified still more by their supposed remoteness in time or space, personages whom one could contemplate with pity, horror, respect, or admiration, but not persons whom one could possibly imagine as existing within the circle of his own daily world. Mozart's method, and his results, are just opposite to these. In his important operas except *The Magic Flute*, even in *Così fan tutte* but especially in *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, each character exists complete, in the round, at every moment; what we hear from them is not emotion in the abstract, but the emotion of a particular person in a particular situation. To this extent Mozart's operas are "realistic" and accessible to present-day audiences as Handel's and Scarlatti's are not: for it is the radical strangeness of the conception and means of characterization, not the music or any outward details, that form the chief barrier to our understanding of the older operas. What is "uncanny" in Mozart is the way in which he makes the music do the characterizing—uncanny, because unanalyzable, miraculous. Moreover, it is done in duets or ensembles as often as in solo arias. Take, for example, the duet between Figaro and Susanna where Figaro is rejoicing at how convenient it will be when they are

married to have lodgings which the Count has so thoughtfully provided for them right in the castle. Susanna, better aware of their master's motive, points out the drawback that the Count himself will be likewise conveniently at hand to take advantage of any time when he chooses to send Figaro away on a distant errand. Figaro's jealousy and suspicion are aroused at once, and Susanna tries in vain to calm them. Mozart makes no crude, obvious contrast between the melodic lines given to the two characters; yet he subtly differentiates them at once, like a skilful draughtsman, with a few strokes of the pencil; and by the end of the duet we are as well acquainted with Susanna and Figaro as if we had just met them in the flesh.

These are some of the ways in which Mozart clearly excelled his contemporaries in the field of Italian opera. Note that in every one of them he was building within a tradition: not seeking to overthrow the past but simply doing the established things better than others were doing them. He was no revolutionary either in music or in politics. In all his correspondence there is nothing to show that he was even aware of the most important—or at any rate the most conspicuous—historical event of his time, the French Revolution. There are some writers today who try to make Mozart out a kind of cryptorevolutionist, by drawing far-reaching conclusions from motivic resemblances among the songs for personages of different social classes in his operas; but it seems to me that the arguments along this line have pretty hard going. Undoubtedly Mozart and his librettists were willing to take advantage of fashionable “advanced” sentiments prevailing in certain circles of Vienna; they certainly did not despise the publicity value of a libretto which had notoriously been censored or threatened with censorship. Like many other people then and now, they were probably glad to demonstrate their sympathy with bold, radical ideas insofar as they could do so without running any risks. If Mozart was, in truth, a real revolutionary, he was certainly an unconscious one, and in politics “unconscious revolutionary” is virtually a contradiction in terms.

Within a single generation after Mozart's death most of his important works had been published and his music was known all over Europe. In the general chorus of praise there were only a few dissenting voices. Some writers criticized him for what they called too great reliance on *contrast*, for juxtaposing tender cantabile melodies and impetuous passages of rapid notes—in brief, for not duly observing the principle of “proportion” in his music, as Haydn had done. This criticism all unaware

touched on a feature in which Mozart was most fully representative of the progressive currents of his time. The older generation had tended to favor in both music and society, the maxim of "a place for everything and everything in its place." The new generation preferred to mix things: in the symphony, cantabile and allegro; in opera, comic and serious genres, popular and learned idioms, arias, recitatives, and choruses—all formerly distinct entities opening up and recombining in new ways—in short, that blurring of boundaries and general coalescence of formerly distinct categories which is one of the distinguishing marks of the pre-Romantic and early Romantic movement in art and literature.

Now Mozart, as is well known, was one of the heroes of early Romanticism and it was his operas above all that made him so, to the literary as well as to the musical world. Two operas in particular contributed to this, the two that were most popular in the early 19th-century, *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*. *Così fan tutte*, despite overtones of romantic irony that have been read into it by later generations, was in intention and essence an *opera buffa* of the 18th-century type; but *Don Giovanni*—did not Mozart himself call this a "dramma," affixing to that noun the apparently contradictory adjective "giocoso"? Here was a mixture of genres indeed! And in *The Magic Flute* the mixture was even more comprehensive: *Singspiel* and grand opera, farce and serious drama, German national and Italian international idioms, folklike tunes alongside sentimental airs and elaborate coloratura arias reminiscent of the old *opera seria*, orchestrally accompanied recitatives in the German language, even a chorale with contrapuntal accompaniment in the manner of Bach and sung by two men's voices in octaves like eight- and four-part stops of an organ registration.

But it was not merely the fusion of categories that made *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute* so appealing to the Romantic imagination. *Don Giovanni* himself was taken, for the first time in opera, seriously: not simply as the incongruous combination of a figure of farce and a horrible blasphemer such as the earlier versions of the legend had represented him, but rather as a hero, and a typically Romantic hero at that, a rebel against society, a scorner and defier of vulgar morality along lines later popularized by Lord Byron and still later glorified by Nietzsche in the image of the "superman." It was Mozart's music, not Da Ponte's libretto, that raised the Don to this ambiguous eminence and made him a perpetually mysterious and fascinating figure, with one result, among

others—that more nonsense, beginning with E.T.A. Hoffmann and Kierkegaard, has been written about this opera than about any opera in history, except, of course, Wagner's.

The character of the hero was not the only feature of *Don Giovanni* that appealed to the Romantics. Hoffmann admired the power which Mozart's music had for suggesting the fantastic or supernatural, and nearly a century later Alfred Heuss published an essay which has popularized the word "daemonic" as descriptive of a certain element in some of Mozart's late works. Apart from the *Requiem*, probably the best examples of this quality are the beginning of the overture to *Don Giovanni* (that "sound of dreadful joy to all musicians," as Shaw called it) and the music that accompanies the spine-chilling entrance of the statue in the last scene of the opera. The German romantics, fascinated as they were with the supernatural and the means of suggesting it in music, found here still another bond of attachment to Mozart.

Of course there is much more of the supernatural in *The Magic Flute*; as the very title suggests, magic and the supernatural (for our present purpose the distinction between the two is immaterial) are of the very essence of the work, and this is one of the reasons why it is possible to regard *The Magic Flute* as the first German Romantic opera. There are other reasons as well. Notice that there are two kinds of magic in this opera: there is the lower magic of Papageno and the birds, the Three Ladies, the padlock, the bells, the dancing slaves, and so on—all simply entertainment of the same kind that had been common in the Viennese *Singspiel* for many years. But there is also the higher magic of the flute, of Sarastro and the Priests, the temples, the Three Boys, the two Men in Armor, the ordeals and initiations; and this magic obviously is something more than entertainment. It has, in fact, a moral purpose; it aims to encourage the practice of virtue, to present as worthy of acceptance the ideals of equality, love, constancy, purity of intention, and enlightened striving in brotherhood toward the perfection of the human condition—much the same ideals that were to inspire Beethoven 30 years later when he came to compose the finale of the *Ninth Symphony*. All the "higher magic" scenes in *The Magic Flute* are functioning in service to this moral and didactic purpose; the persons and events in these scenes are symbolic rather than realistic, as in Mozart's earlier operas, and the "magic" elements are inherent in the symbolism, not mere extraneous decoration. It was this deliberate enlistment of opera for propagating general philosophical, moral, or

political ideas and the consequent strong accentuation of the symbolic aspects of the action and characters which, united with the use of magic and the supernatural, found a responsive echo in Germany in the 19th century.

Naturally, neither Mozart nor Schikaneder foresaw any such consequences; but it is quite impossible to imagine that the example of *The Magic Flute* was without influence on Weber and Marschner, on Goethe (especially in Part II of *Faust*), on Liszt, Mahler, and above all on Wagner in the *Ring*.

Mozart did not create a Romantic musical language and there is nothing in his operas of that mystical devotion to Nature and landscape which became so prominent with the German Romantics as in Weber's *Freischiütz*, for example. Nevertheless, all the Romantics took him to their hearts; praise came from musicians, artists, and poets alike. Mendelssohn said that the solo and men's chorus "O Isis und Osiris" from *The Magic Flute* was a work "before which every composer must bow in homage"; Schumann admired in Mozart the qualities of "tranquillity, grace, ideality, and objectivity"; Wagner saw him as having "raised the Italian school of opera to its most perfect ideal" and having created in *The Magic Flute* "the first great German opera"; Ingres compared Mozart to Raphael; Goethe (and many others) equated him with Raphael and Shakespeare. The prevailing image of Mozart in the 19th-century was that of a "Sonnenkind," a "child of the sun," the ideally perfect musician composing with effortless craftsmanship, his music serenely flowing, all-encompassing, transmuting the shadows and strains of the world into clear, calm, objective beauty, and bearing no message save that of beauty itself. When one reads the tributes of 19th-century musicians to Mozart, one cannot help sensing in some of them a slightly wistful note, as though of nostalgia for a vanished paradisaical era when it was still acceptable for a man to be a composer without having to be in some sort a prophet as well. Franz Grillparzer suggests some such feeling in these lines from his poem "On the Unveiling of the Mozart Monument in Salzburg" (1842):

 Nennt ihr ihn gross? Er war es durch die Grenze:

 Was er gethan und was er sich versagt,

 Wiegt gleich schwer in der Wage seines Ruhms . . .

—which may remind us of Mlle Nadia Boulanger's pronouncement to the effect that an artist is recognizable by the quality of his refusals.

And now, what of Mozart and his operas in the year 1970? Perhaps

this seems a strange question. Surely these works have not changed since the beginning of the present century? In one sense, of course, no; but in another sense, yes: they have been changed by reason of the changes that have taken place since 1900 in the way in which we of necessity perceive them. Let me introduce what I have to say on this point by quoting from T. S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and Individual Talent":

. . . what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.*

No one needs to be reminded of the tremendous changes that have taken place in the art of music during the 20th century. The past two generations have had a surfeit of the "new," not only of the new conceived as evolving out of the past but also of the radically new which deliberately declines any link with tradition. Specifically, in the field of opera since 1900 we have heard *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Der Rosenkavalier* (in my opinion a far more original opera than it is sometimes given credit for being), *Wozzeck*, and *The Rake's Progress*, to mention only a few works which have achieved a measure of general public acceptance and which can at the same time qualify as "really new" in Eliot's sense; not to mention more radically novel works such as Orff's *Oedipus* and other more or less experimental productions which have not, or not yet, attracted a large public. At the same time Mozart, Wagner, Verdi and Puccini have maintained their popularity practically undiminished since 1900, while Meyerbeer's *Huguenots* and other popular favorites of that time have completely dropped out of the repertory. In short, we have had enough experience of the "new" in music and opera to make it inevitable, if Eliot is correct, that Mozart's operas should now assume a somewhat, even if only slightly, different place in the "ideal order" of opera from that which they held at the beginning of the century.

*T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York, 1932), p. 5; printed with permission of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., New York.

There is still another present factor which contributes to this. If within the past 50 or 60 years we have experienced the new as the product of a thrust into the future, we have also during the same time experienced another kind of newness arising from an opposite and almost equal thrust into the past. Thanks to the constantly increasing number of good editions of old music, from the Middle Ages onward; thanks to historical investigations, to the devotion of performing groups, and perhaps above all to the phonograph, all of us today are aware to a much greater extent of our musical past and acquainted with much more actual music from that past than has been the case with any previous generation in our whole cultural history. And it is not a mere antiquarian interest. Appreciation of old musical works, styles, and composers is so widespread now and so much taken for granted that we seldom realize how modern and unprecedented it is. Before the 19th century a composer, if successful, was honored during his lifetime, but his works seldom lived long after him; his name may have been venerated for a time, as Monteverdi's was in the 17th century and Josquin's in the 16th, but his scores either slumbered in archives or else were scattered and lost, while younger men took over to supply the current demand. This is what happened to J. S. Bach, for example, except that in his case the descent into forgetfulness began even before his death. Handel was more fortunate. His oratorios, though not his operas, continued to be performed in England so that, to this extent, the tradition remained unbroken. Palestrina suffered a peculiar fate. His music did not exactly die but survived for two centuries in a quasi-cataleptic state as a model for one style of churchly composition and for the teaching of strict counterpoint. Exceptions aside, however, the usual course of events was recognition, death, oblivion. Nobody ever thought of reviving the music of dead-and-gone composers, and their reputations remained as unchanged and unregarded as the epitaphs on their tombs.

It was toward the end of the 18th century that this attitude began to change, so that eventually people were glad to go on listening to the music of past composers while at the same time enjoying the new kinds of music which their contemporaries were writing. This was a change of great importance for the history of music, and Mozart came along just in time to be one of its first beneficiaries. He and Gluck are the oldest composers whose operas have come down to us in an unbroken tradition of performance. At least this is true of those works which we ordinarily hear today; the earlier operas of both men are

still, to us, in the class of historical revivals, like those of Handel and Monteverdi. It must be said, parenthetically, that we know less about the opera before Mozart and Gluck than we do about most other kinds of music from those early periods. We are sophisticated enough about Renaissance madrigals and baroque keyboard music and concertos, but we are still in the age of innocence as far as baroque operas are concerned. We have revived the recorder, the cromorne, the lute, the viols, the harpsichord and clavichord and the "baroque" organ, but we have not yet revived the castrato singer. Modern performances of pre-Mozart operas seem to require a great deal of tinkering with the scores to adapt them to present-day conditions of performance and make them palatable to modern listeners, and they certainly require a considerable amount of what may be called "historical conditioning" on the part of the audience. None of this is needed with Mozart. Of course his operas are products of a certain period of history, and in many respects he was as much a child of his time as were Jommelli, Piccinni, Sarti, Paisiello, Cimarosa, Salieri, or any of his other contemporaries. But Mozart's operas are also, fortunately, part of a living, continuous tradition in the theater today.

They remain living because they are capable of change. Due in part to all that has happened in music over the past 50 or 60 years, to our added experience of new musical sounds and idioms from both our own time and our historical past, we now come to Mozart with different preconditioning: different expectations, mental associations, objects of comparison, categories of classification—in short, a whole different apperceptive stance from that which our grandparents brought to him. Consequently, the Mozart we hear is not quite the same as the Mozart they heard. What are some of the differences?

For one thing, I believe that we today—the intelligent musical public, not just the composers—are more keenly aware of the sheer beauty of Mozart's craftsmanship, his competence in manipulating musical materials. This admiration is quite separable from any expressive implications the music may have for us; it is the kind of admiration we may have for a good mechanic or any good workman who is expert in the use of his tools. Secondly, I think we have a better understanding of the many-sidedness of Mozart's genius, and in particular a more discerning appreciation of the realism in his operas—I mean of that kind of realism which is peculiarly Mozartean, which is not the same as the realism of *Carmen*, *I Pagliacci*, *Wozzeck*, or *The Consul*. Thirdly,

advances in Mozart scholarship have given us more accurate texts and have made us much more fastidious about performance practice. And although complete historical authenticity is a phantom which we probably shall never overtake and which we ought not to waste too much time pursuing, nevertheless a decent respect for the composer's intentions saves us from some of the distortions which marred performances of Mozart's music a couple of generations ago.

We have today a rather highly developed (some would say, perhaps, an overdeveloped) historical sense about music; and this enables us to hear Mozart as representative of a certain period in musical history, with all the limitations and potentialities of that period which are different from those of our own time. Thus we can add to our spontaneous enjoyment of Mozart's operas another dimension of enjoyment. We can hear them simultaneously as both actual and historical, the present experience being enriched by mental echoes of the past—a kind of stereophonic reception for which the stimuli come to us from different points in time instead of different points in space.

Our modern historical sense also preserves us from a dilemma: we no longer feel obliged either to reject past musical styles as most people did before the middle of the 18th century, or to embrace them as the Romantics did with Bach, trying to make him over into their own image. If it is true, as Leonard Meyer believes, that we are now in a period of "pluralism and stasis," then the kind of stereophonic hearing of Mozart's operas which I have suggested will be perfectly consistent with that state of affairs. On the other hand, if the present era of good feeling about our musical past gives way to an era of doubt, criticism, and indifference—as is already largely the case with respect to our literary past—then Mozart will be very vulnerable. There is no composer, except perhaps Bach, about whom it could be more truly said today that "everyone speaks well of him." This is dangerous: we remember Emerson's warning, and also the sad case of Aristides, who was ostracized and banished from Athens partly because, as one voter complained, people had become tired of forever hearing him praised. However, let us have faith that Mozart's music, which has weathered so many changes in public taste up to now, will remain valid and meaningful to us for a long time to come.

Since I have once in this lecture spoken disrespectfully of the opinions of theologians, in the person of Kierkegaard, let me now in conclusion offer amends by quoting a passage from Karl Barth's famous "Letter to

Mozart," published in a Swiss newspaper in 1956: "I am not quite certain," said this eminent theologian, "whether or not the angels, when they are intent on praising God, play the music of Bach—but I am certain that among themselves they play Mozart, and that at such times the good God listens to them with special pleasure."

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This image shows a page of handwritten musical notation on aged, yellowed paper. The score is organized into several systems, each consisting of multiple staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system at the top features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is dense and somewhat difficult to decipher due to the handwriting and the age of the paper. There are several systems of staves, some of which appear to be for different instruments or voices. The paper shows signs of wear, including creases and discoloration, particularly around the edges and in the middle of the page.