

EDITORIAL



The only acceptable ringtone on my new mobile phone is the overture to the *Magic Flute*, unfortunately in MIDI file. I guess this is Samsung's modest tribute to the Mozart year, but as the mobile phone does not identify the tune, its significance will probably pass most people by. One Sunday some time ago a colleague of mine was cruising on his yacht *Papageno* on the river Tagus facing Lisbon; as he passed a schooner he heard someone whistle 'Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja . . .'. He whistled back, and the man waved to him. The schooner, not surprisingly, had a German flag. On the other hand, in a remote corner of northern Portugal the petrol station shop is selling the Philips complete edition of Mozart's recorded works (though I did not have the courage to ask the attendant how many collections, or even individual discs, he had sold).

As I am writing, a Google search for Mozart on the internet returns 80,700,000 pages (8,930,000 for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart). The name Bach (which obviously includes all the family, as well as covering such possible meanings as 'brook' or 'stream') returns 72,800,000 pages and Johann Sebastian Bach 6,910,000, while Beethoven returns 38,700,000 pages and Ludwig van Beethoven 5,650,000. By way of comparison, Verdi returns 37,700,000 pages and Giuseppe Verdi 3,680,000 (as against 6,080,000 for Richard Wagner, the name Wagner alone being too common in German for a search to be significant), Chopin 18,100,000, Haydn 13,700,000 and Rossini a meagre 11,000,000.

Even if these figures are approximate and if they may in part reflect the fact that we are celebrating the two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of his birth, they show that Mozart is probably the most popular composer of all time (a search for The Beatles returns just 80,600,000 pages) and certainly the most popular of all the classical and romantic figures. No other composer has seen his home town capitalize on his posthumous fame in such a shameless manner. Reporting from Salzburg at the end of last year, William J. Kole, of the Associated Press, wrote:

Suddenly, Amadeus is everywhere, and not just on the usual T-shirts, calendars, coffee mugs and ubiquitous "Mozart balls" – small, round, unfortunately named candies that inevitably trigger snickers among tourists . . . Shelves are stacked high with bottles of Mozart beer and wine, Mozart baby bottles, Mozart milkshakes, Mozart knickers, Mozart umbrellas and Mozart jigsaw puzzles. There's Mozart torte ("a symphony of tastes," its creator promises) and even Mozartwurst, a sausage of beef, pork and pistachios courtesy of a Salzburg butcher who claims the recipe came to him in a dream. [William Kole, 'Roll over, Beethoven. Beat it, Brahms. Mozart is back with a vengeance . . .', accessed at http://www.insidebayarea.com/travel/ci_3380383 on 28 April 2006. The article was posted on the internet at least sixty-two times.]

This popularity is undoubtedly based on the notion that Mozart's music is 'easy', and not on the subtle complexity of his best works. The most successful of all biographical films on composers, Milos Forman's 1984 adaptation of Peter Shaffer's play created such a distorted image of Mozart that I always have trouble explaining to people who are not musically educated that he was not an idiotic and childish genius who happened to write very pretty tunes.

When, in 1932, the Portuguese conductor Ivo Cruz was interviewed on the occasion of his modern revival of the opera *L'amore industrioso* (1769) by João de Sousa Carvalho, Cruz referred to him as 'a Portuguese Mozart'. He considered Carvalho a precursor, belonging to that group of composers who had guessed the German modality of opera buffa and prepared the way for Mozart (cited in Teresa Cascudo, ' "Por amor do que é português": el nacionalismo integralista y el renacimiento de la música antigua portuguesa entre 1924 y 1934', in *Concierto barroco: estudios sobre música, dramaturgia e historia cultural*, ed. Juan José Carreras and Miguel Ángel Marín (Logroño: Universidad de la Rioja, 2004), 322). There were two obvious reasons for this. One was that Mozart was just about the only opera composer of the period whom Cruz expected his readers to know about. The other was probably that he himself considered Mozart to be the paradigm of the style of that period. His view of Sousa Carvalho as a precursor was satirized by Fernando Lopes-Graça in an article



published later that year ('Um precursor português de Mozart, o Nuno Gonçalves da Música Portuguesa, ou o lunatismo musical nacionalheiro', *Seara Nova* 306 (1932), 277–282).

We all remember the subtitle that Charles Rosen chose for his famous book *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*. The implication, which is fully developed in the book, is that the works of these three composers by themselves define the musical style of the classical period. It is based on the assumption that the style of a period is best seen in the exceptional works of exceptional composers, not in the plainer works of all the others. In this case, rather paradoxically, it applies to a period when the values of originality and individuality were coming to the fore, and styles themselves were in the process of rapid change, which meant that by the time those great composers were canonized their works could no longer be used as 'classical' models to be followed (even though the cases of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven are each different in this respect).

This raises the question: should we use the great classical masters as the yardstick by which to judge their contemporaries, or (as I always tell my students) shouldn't we rather look at the works of those contemporaries in order fully to comprehend the ways in which the masters expanded the basic language and (particularly in the case of Beethoven) eventually ventured into new territories? Another probably futile, but still intriguing, question concerns the development of Mozart's own style, had he lived a further twenty or thirty years. Given the level of 'classical' perfection that he attained in his mature works, might not this vein have dried out altogether? Or would he have struck upon another, unforeseeable, path somewhere between Beethoven and Schubert?

Rosen's position also reflects the traditional historical view propounded by Austro-German musicology, which left musicologists with an uncomfortable question: how should we characterize the style of contemporary music outside the German-speaking world, and in particular of Italian(ate) music of the same period? Should we place it in a kind of indefinite preclassical limbo, destined never to be resolved into a true 'classical' style? In spite of all the attention that has been lavished in the last decades on the works of many late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century composers, I believe we are still far from possessing an adequate view of stylistic developments in the music of Germany, Austria, Italy, France and indeed other countries too during the period, and of the way those different traditions intertwine with and influence each other.

Last year I took part in a conference in Salzburg on Mozart and Europe, part of a series entitled 'A Global View of Mozart', which in previous years had included conferences on Mozart and Africa, Mozart and America, and Mozart and Asia. The present conference, which was jointly sponsored and organized by the Universität Salzburg, the Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum and the Land Salzburg, was generally more concerned with Mozart in our own time, and I think I went a bit against the grain by talking about Mozart's reception in early nineteenth-century Portugal. I pointed to the relatively limited penetration of his operas, and of his sacred and instrumental music, showing how this was not much different from what had happened in other Latin countries, including Italy, and how it illustrated a clash between different music cultures which was already perceived at the time by the German amateurs who reported on musical life in Lisbon for the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. They noted, for instance, that most church ceremonies started with the overture to *La gazza ladra* or some other overture by Rossini, and that, even though Mozart's Requiem was performed five times between 1803 and 1823, the Italian singers of the Royal Chapel were not very fond of it, probably because it did not allow them to introduce many ornaments. A requiem by the Portuguese composer João Domingos Bomtempo, performed in 1821 and 1822, did not particularly please, either, because it did not sound theatrical *à la* Rossini, being reminiscent of Mozart instead. Likewise, as David Cranmer has shown, early performances of Mozart's operas in Portugal (*La clemenza di Tito* at the S. Carlos Theatre in Lisbon in 1806 and *Così fan tutte* at the S. João Theatre in Porto in 1814–1815), rather than responding to a particular interest on the part of the public, were related mainly to the singers who happened to be working in the two opera houses at that particular time, and who had been previously involved in productions of these operas in Vienna, Munich and London. (See David Cranmer, 'As primeiras execuções em Portugal de óperas de Mozart', VI Encontro Nacional de Musicologia – Actas, *Boletim da Associação*



Portuguesa de Educação Musical 62 (1989), 25–27, and Luísa Cymbron, ‘Don Giovanni as Performed by the Orchestra of the Teatro S. Carlos: Nineteenth-Century Reception’, in *The Orchestra in the Theatre: Composers, Orchestras and Instruments* (volume 2 of *The Opera Orchestra in 18th- and 19th-Century Europe*, European Science Foundation, in print.)

The most gratifying occasion during my stay, however, was the rare opportunity of attending Sunday Mass at the Basilica of Maria Plain near Salzburg. Set high on a hill with a beautiful view of Salzburg in the distance, the Basilica itself is a remarkable example of Austrian provincial Baroque. It was the annual commemoration of the coronation of the miraculous painting of the Virgin Mary that stands above the main altar, and Mozart’s Coronation Mass was sung. Even though we now know that, contrary to common belief, this mass was not composed for the anniversary of that coronation (the Mass in F major, K192, of 1774, may have been written for that purpose), this was quite a moving experience for me, for my wife and even for the Portuguese musician friend who took us there, who has been living and working in Salzburg for nearly thirty years. I think we were just about the only tourists. The church was filled with local people, most of them in traditional dress, and at the moment of consecration the local corporation of Bergheimer Böllerschützen, in typical Tyrolean attire, fired a very loud musket salvo of *Böllerschiessen* under a large tree outside.

Listening to Mozart in such a context made for a much stronger historical and personal experience than attending many ‘historically informed’ performances, even though there were no period instruments or traces of ‘period’ interpretation; this makes me ponder on the limits of historical performance when it tries to recreate artificially the context for which a particular piece was originally composed. As in the river of Heraclitus, where you cannot bathe twice in the same water, we are truly unable to recover a moment in the past and relive it. But we can experience the continuity of the historical flow in a tradition like the feast at Maria Plain, which started five years before Mozart was born and is still very much alive today.

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