

Vienna's Musical Revolution, in Context

Had Mozart lived but another decade," writes Daniel Heartz, "perhaps he might have collaborated with Schiller himself." The basis of this insightful hypothesis, which appears on page 693 of this weighty volume of musicological analysis and cultural history, is not any of the known "connections" between the circles of the Vienna-based composer and the German poet who inspired Ludwig van Beethoven's Choral Symphony—although such links are many and tantalizing. Rather, Heartz arrives at his suggestion through an analysis of Mozart's grand opera, *Idomeneo*, which was completed by January 1781 in Munich.

It is worth quoting from the author's argument: "*Idomeneo* has in common with French grand opera, a concept of tragedy that transcends the individual; the fates of entire peoples typically hang in the balance. In this respect it resembles Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* and Verdi's *Don Carlo*, both written for Paris. Like those epic works based on Friedrich von Schiller, Mozart's *Dramma eroico* (as the first edition of *Ideomeneo* in score was designated) is a very long opera and rich in choruses and ballets. All three works emphasize the same key word or concept: *liberté/libertà*."

Heartz goes on to sketch the political context of Paris, where Mozart had obtained the libretto for *Idomeneo*. "Mozart was twenty when the Revolutionary War in America broke out in 1776. Hostilities did not cease until he had completed his grand opera and seen it through its first production. Its French source spurs us to ponder the political situation in Paris for a moment. French intervention on behalf of England's rebelling colonies in North America was absolutely crucial in winning their independence. As envoy to Paris, Benjamin Franklin succeeded in persuading a reluctant French government to back the insurgents. The Treaty of Friendship was signed at Paris in February 1778, just before Mozart's arrival. Caron de Beaumarchais, the creator of Figaro, did his

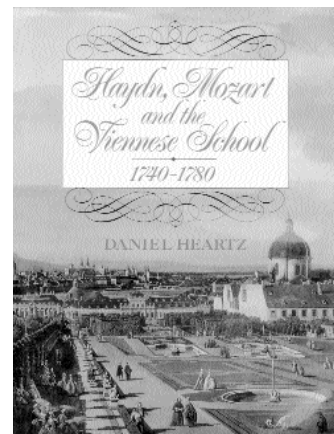
utmost to bring this about. . . . In the end, the American army under the command of George Washington combined with the French army under the command of Lafayette and Rochambeau to force the surrender of Cornwallis and his redcoats at Yorktown, Virginia, on 19 October 1781. A new nation was born under fire, and the ideal of liberty soon proved contagious."

Heartz concludes this chapter: "*Idomeneo*, in international terms, lays claim to being nothing less than the greatest lyric tragedy of its century. The effort Mozart put into creating a work of such magnitude and its public success helped precipitate the decisive turning-point of his life. Henceforth he could no longer resume the quasi-feudal status of a court musician. Vienna in the spring of 1781 represented for him the beginning of a new voyage."

'Multicultural' Vienna

Starting in 1740, Heartz's narrative takes us through the creation of an independent Viennese school of music under the Empress Maria Theresa, herself a gifted singer/actress who under other circumstances would have had a great career on the stage. In the early 1700's Italian musicians dominated music and art at the Viennese court. But little by little an impressive group of musicians came together in "multicultural" Vienna.

In common with Lyndon LaRouche, who has written eloquently in *Fidelio* on Haydn's adoption just before 1780, of the revolutionary *Motivführung* principle of composition, Heartz rejects such terms as "Classical," "Baroque," (and presumably also, "Romantic") as names for musical periods. Heartz argues that there is no linear connection between the "Classic" created in Weimar in northern Germany around Schiller and Goethe, and the distinctive culture of Vienna, upon which Hegelian historians imposed the label "Classic." As indicated above, for the author, the ties between the world of Haydn and Mozart, and that of Schiller, are on a



Haydn, Mozart, and the Viennese School, 1740-1780
by Daniel Heartz
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more profound and universal level.

What the northern German bias ignores, Heartz argues, is the reality that Catholic Vienna's culture was heavily influenced by Italy and France, and also, the major role of Bohemian musicians. Many instrumentalists in the Hapsburg imperial court were Czech. Composers of Slavic-Bohemian origin included Gluck, Steffan, and Vanhal. Hungary produced Haydn's important patron, Prince Nicholas Esterhazy; other Viennese composers, Michael Haydn and Ditters, worked for years in Hungary.

For the generation of 1710, training in Italy was still considered indispensable. Haydn, born in 1732, never visited Italy, but his training with the Austrian court musician Reutter "was supplemented by more penetrating lessons imparted by the visiting Neapolitan composer Porpora, as Haydn stressed in on uncertain terms in his autobiographical letter of 1776." Metastasio, the greatest Italian poet of the century, dwelt in Vienna for over half a century. As a contemporary author quoted by Heartz remarked, "Viennese audiences represent the distillation of all nations." Heartz himself points out, "Haydn's origin and life in the border area where many diverse peoples came together was a source of strength and, in his music, of infinite variety. More than any other

composer, Haydn united the Fuxian ideal of the contrapuntal with the *seemingly* popular that made him accessible to all.” (Haydn was born in Rorhrau, Lower Austria, on the Danube just upstream from Bratislava.)

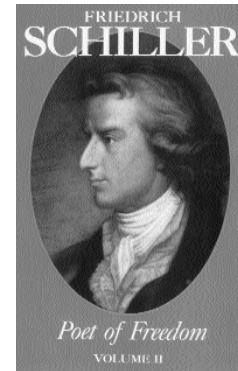
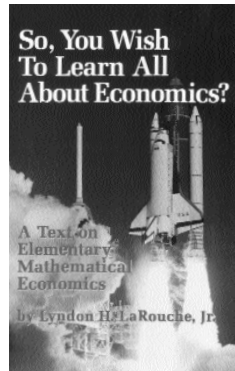
For the first time, Hertz describes in detail, using contemporary sources, the actual courts, churches, and other environments where the music of Haydn, Mozart, and their contemporaries and predecessors was performed. We get to know the voices—the tenor, nearly seventy years old, who had to sing the demanding trills and cadenzas in *Idomeneo*, or the strengths and weaknesses of Haydn’s group of singers at the Esterhazy palace—for whom the music was written. The image of operatic sopranos decked out in ostrich feathers and accompanied by kettledrums and trumpets, giving thrice-weekly Lenten concerts at the court chapel in Vienna is unforgettable, as is the outrage of some contemporaries who recognized that the choir’s “Sanctus” in the Mass, was sung to the tune from a popular Italian comic opera.

Revolution vs. Autocracy

While crediting the Hapsburg-Lorraine dynasty for a consistent patronage to music over generations which was unique among European rulers, Hertz is very clear that their autocratic system was incompatible with the breakthroughs Haydn and Mozart had achieved by 1780. In the very last sentences, he writes: “Haydn and Mozart together, reacting to each other’s genius and knowing that they were beyond the reach of all other composers—this is a new phenomenon of the 1780’s. The subject is sublime. It deserves to be at the center of another volume.” The principles of their musical revolution have been identified by LaRouche, and the environment in which Mozart worked after 1780 was described by David Shavin, in previous issues of *Fidelio*. If Hertz does write another volume as meticulously documented as this one, it will no doubt further enrich our understanding of the greatest revolution which has yet occurred in music.

—Nora Hamerman

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