Mozart and Prague

Master’s Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Music Department
Allan Keiler, Advisor

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of a

Master’s Degree

by

Jasmine Richard

May 2011
Abstract

Much scholarship has been conducted on W.A. Mozart; less has been done on his journeys to Prague. In fact, a lot of scholarship favors Mozart's success in Vienna, which this thesis argues is due to the Enlightenment which fosters a German centric history that will dominate for most of the 19th and 20th century.
**Table of Contents**

Introduction 1

Salzburg 3

Vienna 6

Prague 12

*Don Giovanni* 16

Myths/Legends of Mozart and Prague 21

The Enlightenment and German Scholarship 24

Conclusion 27

Bibliography 29
Much scholarship has been conducted on the great Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, a composer who can be seen as legendary. His music and influence carried through generations, and his works are still performed today. Due to his reputation and the abundant supply of primary sources (his letters and memoirs to family and friends) much scholarship has been conducted on Mozart, creating and depicting a story of a man who is larger than life.

Scholars have characterized Mozart’s life as a misunderstood genius, struggling to find approval from the aristocratic society he longed to serve. Mozart’s life is seen as tragic, never fully appreciated in his society with the exception of Prague, where the people seemed to worship him, and as Mozart stated “My Praguers understand me.”¹ So much of what is written and discussed about Mozart is built on legends or exaggerated truth, especially when it comes to his relationship with Prague as well as his struggling career in Austria.

Mozart’s story can easily be romanticized, a virtuosic and compositional child prodigy, heavily disciplined and influenced by a father who continually sacrificed for his children’s careers. With an intense family dynamic, a born musical genius, and an enlightened society, myths and half-truths were easily planted in biographies of Mozart.

Many scholars like Abert, Jahn, and Cairns gave credit to the Bohemians who were not only musically educated but also lovers of Mozart’s music in a time when most other societies were not. All three scholars, especially Cairns praise Prague’s musical scene and its patrons as a musically educated society, willing to accept new, contrasting ideas, almost suggesting that the Enlightenment at first failed to see the genius of Mozart.

Although Prague was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Enlightenment philosophy did not impact Prague with the same power as it did Vienna.

One scholar in particular gives a contrasting view of Prague’s society and culture. This scholar is Solomon who uses a letter from blah blah to suggest that the instrumentalist were sub-par to the Viennese. According to Solomon, even though Mozart’s music was well received in Prague, there was no future for the composer in Bohemia. Partly because of the poor musicianship and partly because of small existing patronage, leaving little means for a solid income.

With contrasting ideas about Mozart and Prague supported by semi-strong evidence, was the genesis of this thesis. Why did most scholars (with the exception of Solomon) paint a romantic view of Mozart’s relationship with Prague? More importantly, why did Solomon choose not to? And even though much scholarship praises Prague’s reception of Mozart’s music, why is Vienna still described as a culturally advanced city where as Prague is not? What fostered the idea of an elite German culture, where Bohemian society was rated as secondary?

There types of questions are slowly being raised and answered in more recent scholarship done by Nicholas Till and Daniel Heartz. Both believe the Enlightenment nurtured and created a German-centric study in musicology, focusing on Austro-German society and music thus neglecting cultural studies outside its domain.

The following prose begins to process the questions stated above, by critically analyzing the impact of the Enlightenment on Western society (mostly Austria) at the end of the 18th century through the life of W.A Mozart. Beginning with an overview of Salzburg’s culture and its relationship with Mozart, then looking at Viennese society
under the reign of Emperor Joseph II who is deemed responsible for the creation of an Enlightened Vienna. Following Mozart’s relationship with both these Austrian cities will come an explanation of Bohemian culture, its love affair with Mozart’s music and the myths that permeated throughout Mozart’s visits to Prague. Concluding with a discussion on the influence of the Enlightenment philosophy in Austro-German culture and its affect on creating the story of Mozart in order to support a clam stating that: Although hard evidence lacks when it comes to Prague’s musical scene and Mozart. One of the main reasons of the legends/lack of scholarship is because of the German centered scholarship in music, which was fostered by the Enlightenment.

**Salzburg**

Salzburg was an independent state that was between Bavaria and Vienna. Both Bavaria and Vienna were influential in Salzburg’s society. Salzburg “shared ecclesiastical jurisdiction and economic dependence”\(^2\) with the former, and cultural values of the latter. The political power of Salzburg went to the canons of the Cathedral Chapter who elected the Prince Archbishop. For many years the canons were equally divided between Bavarians and Austrians, slowly more Austrians began taking canon seats until there was a strong majority, which can be seen after the death of Prince Arch Bishop Lodron.\(^3\) Him and prior Arch Bishops were able to “play off the Bavarian rulers of the Wittelsbach dynasty against the Austrian Hapsburgs.”\(^4\)

---

\(^3\) Ibid, 487  
\(^4\) Ibid, 487
Unlike Maria Theresa, who did not pressure the canons to choose a specific archbishop (she was content as long as it was one of her citizens) Joseph II heavily persuaded the placement of Archbishop Colloredo whose father was the vice-chancellor of the Imperial Court. Colloredo became archbishop in 1772, with an agenda to cultivate a new Salzburg based on the changing Vienna dictated by Joseph II. By promoting more Enlightenment ideas, (such as an importance in science, individualism, and an increased middle class discussed on page 7 of this paper) there was an influx interest in Salzburg of writers and scientist, classes and nobility. These changes were met with some resistance, especially with Colloredo closing the University Theatre in 1778 “where school dramas had been performed since the 17th century.” This with the addition with a shortened Mass, and restrictions placed on purely instrumental music and sacred vocal music accompanied by instruments, are examples of transition in court music.

Changes outside the musical realm took place as well. Colloredo abolished the tradition of firing cannons while “carrying pictures and statues during church processions,” as well as abolishing the well-known established pilgrimage to Pinzgu. Due to the abrupt change in Salzburg, there was more than likely an influence on performance and composition, with these alterations came newly formed musical activity. Colloredo, in 1775 with the city’s money, built a Theatre in the Hannibalgarten for opera and spoken drama. There was also the establishment of private orchestras, the first

5 Ibid, 487
7 Ibid
8 Ibid
established by Count Johann Rudolf Czernin, Colloredo’s nephew. (All of these changes helped cultivate new forms of musical activity in Salzburg)

Although some of these changes seemed positive, there was an overwhelming complaint about the decline of musical life in Salzburg, especially directed towards the locals. Colloredo’s promoting of Italian musicians over the local Austrians/Germans (appointment of Kapellmeister in 1772: Domenico Fischietti and in 1777: Giacomo Rust) further instigated negative opinions of his ruling. This could have easily been the beginning of an ongoing power struggle and a difficult relationship between Colloredo and the Mozarts.

Leopold was Vice-Kapellmeister from 1763 onward, and had good reason to expect a promotion. Even though relations were never perfect between these parties, Mozart (Wolfgang) still worked for Colloredo’s court. In the early years of his reign (1772-1774), Mozart compositional output was large and included three masses K167, K192, and K194, over a dozen symphonies, and keyboard concerti, the K190 Concertone for two solo violins, K203 Serenade, the K174 Quintet, and many more works.

Around 1774 Mozart became disinterested with Salzburg court music, however the current scholarship has yet to find concrete reasons for the composer’s seemingly abrupt change in attitude. However it is noted in Groves that around this time Leopold’s frustrations with his and his son’s inability to attain fitting positions, which added to the existing troubles between them and Colloredo. With his discontentment with Salzburg’s court music, came an increase in secular vocal and instrumental music, which was commissioned, to him by the local nobility. During the years of 1775-1775 he composed no symphonies. Mozart also began to feel confined by court music, only producing music
his audience wanted. Abert suggests Mozart’s transition into a more artistic style began in the later year in Salzburg, carrying over to Vienna in the 1780s.

In Salzburg, Mozart was still under his father’s authority. Leopold resigned from many over his other activities in order to dedicate more time to his son. Under his father’s apprenticeship was forced to write quickly, precisely, and efficiently. Mozart would also re-compose other artist works. Although Mozart was a prolific writer, he was predominantly perceived as a virtuoso, and his reputation as a composer carried little weight outside Austria. According Abert “there were very few people in Germany who had ever heard of the operas he had written for Italy.” Even in Italy, Mozart was never given a steady job, nor perceived as much more than a virtuoso.

By the end of his residency in Salzburg, Mozart was displeased with his musical career making few “appearances at court as both performer and composer, half-heartedly; his music-making was instead chiefly for a small circle of friends and the local nobility.” With his success with *Die Entfuhrung aus dem Serail* in Vienna, Mozart set his sights for the Imperial Capital, believing his fortune would change.

**Vienna**

Scholars Abert, Landon, and Solomon argue that Vienna in the 18th century was known as the ‘Capital of German Music’, with an enthusiastic Emperor keenly interested in music. Like most European cities at this time Vienna was undergoing social changes

---

9 Abert, Hermann; Spencer, Stewart; Eisen, Cliff. *W.A.Mozart.* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007) 364
abolishment of serfdom for example), in response to Enlightenment sweeping through Western Europe.

The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason brought forth skepticism of religion and a rejection of the divine and dislike of the super natural. According to Nicholas Till, “this is an era focused on individualism and unrestrained liberty”.11

Emperor Joseph II, intrigued and influenced by these philosophies began to create a new Vienna when he came to power in the 1770s. This can be seen in the so-called Josephinian reforms in which he abolished serfdom, minimized Catholic reign by disbanding many monasteries and abolishing the Jesuits within the city limits. These reforms also create an attitude of toleration towards Protestants and the Jewish people. This was the beginning of a new Vienna, which 10 years prior had ceased to exist. With the abolishment of serfdom, and dissolution of the Catholic Church, monasteries were abandoned, converted into residential apartments thus allowing for the growing middle class population to move within city limits.

Joseph II desired an educated middle class and believed theatre was essential for “educating the nation”12 according to Abert. Around this time, theatre was revived, and as a result of increased popularity in theatre, the Viennese created their own form of humor which Abert characterizes as “partly homespun, partly slapstick, but always good-natured, appealed chiefly to it’s listener’s emotions, rather than their intellect.”13 In 1776 Joseph II created the National Theatre and lowered ticket prices to make theatre more accessible to people of various social statuses with the intention of creating an educated

13 Ibid,408
audience. Furthermore, Italian improvised theatre gained popularity, which eventually gave direction to comic theatre.

Due to the newly acquired Enlightenment ideas, and a new class system, Viennese culture shifted with an encouragement of the sciences and fine arts in the court. This changes in cultural outlook coupled with the decreased power of the Catholic Church established a framework for a newly secularized city. Pezzl, in his 1786 sketch of Vienna describes its social roots as “law and order, arts and science, culture and reflection, society and improvement”\(^{14}\)

With the encouragement of arts by the court came a new social standing for poets, actors, and musicians, who were now accepted and attended the aristocratic salons with a higher social status. There was a class of artists, who, providing they served the court, were valued.

It was the imperial family’s interest in the performing arts, and in particular, their support of music that allowed Vienna to cultivate such a strong musical culture in the 18\(^{th}\) century. Like the rest of his family, the emperor Joseph II was well schooled in music – him, and most members of Vienna’s court. French music dominated the emperor’s musical sphere at least until the end of the 7-Year wars when Vienna could once again be influenced by the outside world without accompanying political ramifications. Vienna was greatly influenced by the French style; their court music had more of a focus on melody rather than complex harmonies. Joseph II, a man enthralled with the arts seemed to prefer this style, disliking but tolerating newer forms of music which can be seen in his

interest in Saleri’s, and his less enthusiastic comments towards Mozart’s music, according to Abert. He was disinterested in new musical concepts.

The Emperor proud of his more modernized Vienna, wanted his theatre to be best in all German-speaking countries. From his national pride stemmed his favor of the German singspiel and for a time this resulted in the dissolving of Italian Opera and ballet. It did not return until 1783. With influence from the Enlightenment, the Emperor.

This is the Vienna Mozart decided to live in 1781, a place where, according to Pezzl, there was “no class of people that (could not) find its own particular circle”. Vienna offered much promise to a musician with Mozart’s talent, (not to mention his speed of compositional output) and with his previous success in Vienna, Mozart had much confidence that he would find success. His plan was to enter Viennese society as a performer and teacher, slowly introducing his compositions until he could make his income from his compositional output alone.

In 1781 Mozart composed the Opera Die Entfuhrung aus dem Serail as a singspiel. He saw much success from this Opera, which helped catapult him into the aristocratic scene in Vienna. Although Mozart’s compositions did not find favor with the emperor certain members of court society appreciated Mozart’s music. One in particular was Countess Maria Wilhelmine Thun-Hohenstein, (née Uhlfeldt). She was well respected in court for her musical knowledge and education. She hosted the most cultured circles in Vienna and supported Mozart in his attempt to get a court position as well as giving him a job as music tutor to her son in law.

---

15 Abert, Hermann; Spencer, Stewart; Eisen, Cliff. W.A.Mozart. (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007) 435
A more influential patron was Count Van Swieten who was known as a musical connoisseur. Unlike most Viennese aristocrats, van Swieten was interested in music from the Berlin School from Northern Germany. This style of music varied greatly from southern Germany/Austrian music. Abert characterizes the Berlin School describing it as transitional in character, displaying rationalistic elements that come alongside a pure emotive tone. The use of mathematics, ethics, and rhetoric, with a touch of mystic symbolism of the Middle Ages were also features of the Berlin school and are exemplified in the works of J.S. Bach and

The ‘Doctrine of Affect’, that is, the passions and moods thought to be produced by specific musical sounds and combinations of sounds was also a feature of the Berlin school and appealed to a broad intellectual audience as it had its philosophical roots with both Descartes and Spinoza. Compositions by composers like C.P.E. Bach exhibit melodic lines with a tendency towards counterpoint and manipulation of Affect. According to Abert This style of music (the German symphony) was seen as more emotional, conservative, serious and maintaining a stronghold in Italian musical taste. There was a strong emphasis on harmony, less so on melody.

Viennese music was seen as artificial with a more harmonious “striking a good note.” With its focus more on melody, the Berliners placed themselves above Austrians, believing their music and composers to be far superior to those of the Viennese. Count Van Swieten persuaded by this ideology only allowed the style northern German compositions performed for him. When Mozart was under his patronage, he was greatly influenced by the Berlin School and soon became interested in early music. J.S.

---

17 Abert, Hermann; Spencer, Stewart; Eisen, Cliff. *W.A.Mozart*. (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007)

18 Ibid
Bach’s music intrigued Mozart who soon began composing contrapuntal works mostly for himself. Some scholars like Abert believe from this point on, counterpoint permeated through out Mozart’s compositions.

Mozart had yet to achieve status as serious composer in Vienna, and desperately desired to write Italian Opera. He was finally given the opportunity in 1785 when him and Da Ponte began their work on Nozze di Figaro. This, like many of Mozart’s works defied musical norms, meaning it was not a typical Opera Buffa. Comic opera of the era tended to be a “simplified style of writing, a regularity of rhythm, a more rational harmonic planning, and clear more towards natural dance-like melodies”\(^\text{19}\) It was also an “easy way to reflect new cultural and social concepts that were transforming the civilized world” i.e. the growing middle class, trades, family etc. Usually when comic opera uses seria style it is to depict someone from a high class or someone from the middle class who desires nobility. Comic characters tended to not reflect as much as they acted, and composers created these characters to simple, with little complexity.

In Mozart’s Figaro he created an opera buffa based on irony, not satire. He created complex characters, which came to life, and had a psychological affect. These characters could emotionally affect the audience, people can relate to them. They were complex; more than just a stock card character people were use to in opera buffa. He created irony rather than satire. With the exception of Prague, Figaro did not find success in any other city outside Vienna.

After the première Mozart’s career was the same. The court failed to see him as a dramatist or a serious composer. They still viewed him primarily as a keyboardist. Thus

he still had to rely on his concerts and his teaching for the majority of his income. At the same time, Mozart was growing tired of court aristocratic art, and according to Abert, he was developing a more romantic emotional musical style.

Prague

Prague was a city created around art in all forms. Entire villages had sophisticated systems of music education based on national models. The best musicians from rural areas were hired by the nobility or taken into the Church to further pursue their education. Abert continues to say that “gifted musicians continued their studies at ecclesiastical foundations but it was the village schools that were the real breeding grounds for the private orchestras of the aristocracy.”

Jahn states that any distinguishable child or teen was put in an “institution where he was able to continue his musical education, there was no lack of patrons ready to support him until he found a situation at a musical establishments.” He also mentions that anything to so with music: was held to a high esteem.

Also, both private and aristocratic orchestras helped in this music revival in Prague in the 18th century. The nobility in Prague really valued the arts, which can be seen in their livery servants especially. “Many employers in Prague demanded that their liveried servants should understand music before they were regarded as fit for service.” There ‘were also required to provide Tafelmusik and concert music of every

20 Abert, Hermann; Spencer, Stewart; Eisen, Cliff. W.A.Mozart. (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007)1009

21 Ibid, 1009
description.” Jahn also discusses that “many noble families in Prague required their livery servants to have knowledge of music before being competent for service.” This is yet more proof of how music affected the populace and not just the nobility.

A century earlier, the Protestant Reformation impacted Prague greatly, creating tension and bloodshed between Catholics and Protestants. From this came a strong Jesuit establishment within the city. It is commonly known that Jesuits were well schooled in musical training, and background. They used Baroque dramas to tell stories about Jesus, and their faith. Music was essential to Jesuit culture and lifestyle.

But even prior to the Jesuits coming, Prague was known for its music scene. The Bohemian Brethren, an organization that “rested on an intelligent approach to music that takes in the broadest cross-section of people but also a natural artistic gift,” was founded in the Czech Republic in the early 18th century. This was a “movement based on profound personal faith but at the same time allowing speculation along Scriptural lines.” After the 30-Year War and into the 18th century Prague was reviving itself with help from the Jesuits and other monasteries.

Abert discusses the musical education system within villages surrounding Prague. Music teachers had to compose a new Mass every year and have their students perform the composition. Musical knowledge trickled down to most social classes in Prague. Therefore when Mozart’s music was performed in Prague, a wide variety of people exposed to his music, and were eventually to understand it.

23 Abert, Hermann; Spencer, Stewart; Eisen, Cliff. W.A.Mozart. (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007)1009
25 Abert, Hermann; Spencer, Stewart; Eisen, Cliff. W.A.Mozart. (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007)1009
26 Ibid, 1009
An example given by Abert of Mozart’s music reaching the public is seen in Niemstchek’s account of *The Marriage of Figaro* in Prague. In his report he writes “It was performed in Prague in 1786 by Bondini’s company and received with an enthusiasm at its first performance such as only *Die Zauberflote* later knew. It is the strictest truth if I say that this opera played almost uninterruptedly that whole winter, and that it completely alleviated the wretched circumstances of the entrepreneur. The enthusiasm is excited from the public had no previous parallel; people could not hear enough of it. It soon came out in a good piano reuction by on of our best masters, Herr Kucharz; it appeared in wind parts, as a chamber quintet, as German dances: in short, Figaro’s songs rang out in the streets, in garden – even the harper inside the tavern had to play ‘Non piu andrai’ if he wanted a hear”.\(^27\)

In 1764 Giuseppe Bustelli established an Opera House in Prague, where Opera Buffà was performed. The Opera Company traveled between Prague and Germany performing Operas. With this establishment, opera especially opera buffa became popular in Prague, creating an environment where Mozart’s Opera’s like Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni would be received well. Prague soon became a place where Italian Opera singers would venture to begin their careers, so fresh and new talent would grace the stage regularly. And although orchestral famous names didn’t come from Prague, Abert provides much evidence to prove talented musicians made up many orchestras in the region. One example is seen in a letter written by Mozart to Gottfried von Jacquin, describing his time in Prague. In this letter Mozart praises Count Thun’s musicians stating “old Count Thun entertained us with some music, performed by his own people, which lasted about an hour and a half. This kind of real entertainment I can enjoy every

\(^{27}\) Ibid, 1011
After conducting *Figaro* on January 20th, please with the outcome, Mozart wrote a letter to the conductor Johann Joseph Strobach thanking him.

In 1783 the National Opera house was established in Prague, more proof of the popularity of Opera, and also creating more opportunity for Opera to be performed in the city. There was also an influx of Opera singers coming to Prague to start their careers. Prague was soon becoming the thriving musical metropolis it once was prior to the 30-year war.

Due to the musical education throughout the city, many bohemians were musically literate and enjoyed music. Once Mozart’s music was performed in Prague, the bohemians fell in love, and began programming his works at many musical venues in the city.

Another benefactor and contribution that helped prepare the arrival of Mozart was Duke Duschek, a close friend to the Mozarts. He held great influence in Prague’s musical scene and also kept “an open house that was much frequented by local musicians”. Duschek himself was a well-trained virtuoso keyboardist, and his musical ability helped him become a great patron of the arts. He was known as the ‘Patron of foreign artists visiting Prague.”

Unlike in Vienna, *Marriage of Figaro* found great success in Prague, which led to the first of three visits by Mozart. By the time Figaro was performed the National Opera house was under the direction of Bondini. He was the conductor who invited Mozart to come to Prague, and since Mozart was discontent in Vienna he was eager to accept the invitation.

---

28 Ibid, 1011
29 Ibid, 1011
Mozart loved his visit to Prague; he was treated like a celebrity. His music was heard everywhere and people adored him. Very little music was written on his first visit to Prague, he did a lot of visiting. And according to reports by Abert and Solomon, much of Prague’s nobility had great pleasure in hearing Mozart’s works such as the *Prague Symphony* and *Marriage of Figaro* performed. His main source of revenue was his performance of the Prague symphony, and as stated earlier, he had the chance to hear *Marriage of Figaro* be performed and one night he was also able to conduct it as well. As stated above, Mozart was very pleased with the musicianship in Prague, which transcended over into the creation of *Don Giovanni*.

**Don Giovanni**

Upon Mozart’s return to Vienna, he was commissioned to write an Opera for Prague. After the success of *Figaro*, he knew he wanted to collaborate with Da Ponte once again. It did not take long for the pair to pick a libretto for this commission, Da Ponte thought Don Giovanni would be a good choice, and Mozart agreed. By the time Mozart returned to Prague he was still working on the opera, it had yet to be finished. There was a delay in the premiere of *Don Giovanni*, its completion was suppose to coincide with the arrival of Prince Anton of Saxony and Archduchess Maria Theresia in Prague during their honeymoon. Instead, *The Marriage of Figaro* was performed.

Mozart heavily influenced the staging of the first performance of *Don Giovanni* as well as conducted the premiere. Like *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* was an instant success in Prague, and was continuously played for years. When Mozart returned to he was eager to premiere the work, unfortunately Saleri’s opera *Axur, re d’Ormus* took president over
Don Giovanni and as a result was not performed until May 7, 1788, Abert describes the premiere as a “failure and reviewers merely noted that the performance had taken place.”

It was only after a succession of performances at a rapid pace did the “Viennese audiences gradually come to terms with what they regarded as an unusual work.” Part of the cold reception of Don Giovanni could be the additions made to the score. Abert states, “dramatically speaking they are, without exception, unwelcomed”. Mozart was not enthusiastic about these alterations and wrote the added material to please the musicians, especially Caterina Cabalieri who played Donna Elvira. Solomon states that another reason why Don Giovanni lacked proper reception in Vienna because Mozart “had overestimated the capabilities of the Viennese opera audiences to adjust to a new musical aesthetic.”

Besides its complexity, Don Giovanni maybe had the ability to offend the Viennese audience as well. Cairns discusses many reasons for why Don Giovanni could have been controversial in Vienna yet widely excepted in Prague. He states “such text, making no attempt to rationalize the story, as Gondini had in his play, might not do for the sophisticates who directed and attended the court theatre in Vienna, but the provincial city of Prague—looked down on by the Viennese for centuries and without a court theatre—had broader tastes and a more serious musical culture” According to Cairns, the Viennese thought to be above this ‘low buffoonery’ and could easily be offended by the content. A man continuously wooing women into his bed, some can take Don Giovanni’s

---

31 Abert, Hermann; Spencer, Stewart; Eisen, Cliff. W.A.Mozart. (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007) 1050
32 Ibid, 1050
33 Ibid, 1050
34 Ibid, 1050
actions as rape, (with the accusatory tone in Donna Anna’s voice or his view of seduction seen as a game) and when he meets death it is a supernatural situation. (The Enlightenment rejected the idea of the unnatural, seeing it as irrational, and medieval) Cairns continues discussing criticism of Don Giovanni, believing it partly stem from 18th century “dislike of the supernatural or fear of it masquerading as disbelief. Partly it is the revulsion from the character of the anti-hero…and partly it’s the discomfort of offended good taste, which cannot stomach a work embracing such extremes of high seriousness and force or cope with the sharply conflicting emotions it simultaneously provokes”36

Nicholas Till’s argument provides more support to Cairns reasoning arguing that Don Giovanni represents a conscious decision on Mozart’s part to treat the subject as a parable of contemporary life and to reassert the belief in the divine retribution reject by the Enlightenment because of Don Giovanni’s crimes are horrible “that only the ultimate punishment can serve. There is no protection against his fundamentally destructive energies, which attack not, as Moliere’s Don Juan, religion, which is of no interest to him, but society. He is the logical consequence of the Enlightenment cult individualism and unrestrained liberty. He has to be stopped but cannot be any human agency”.37 Basically Till believes Don Giovanni gives a negative spin on the Enlightenment society, which Vienna is apart of.

But it is deeper than that. It is easy to contrast Figaro and Don Giovanni the first praising and positively depicting the Enlightenment and the latter not. Till provides much detail and reasoning, creating an easily persuasive argument explaining the poor reception of Don Giovanni in the Enlightened Vienna. According to Till, Don Giovanni

37 Ibid,151
represents the repercussion of the Enlightenment culture. He takes individualism, and liberty out of context, instead of using his newfound freedom to learn and be well-read, Don Giovanni manipulates women, and lives carelessly.

The reality is Mozart was addressing a serious issue, which Cairns addresses in his prose, and what kept coming into my mind was *Lulu* by Alban Berg, written about 150 years later. Like *Don Giovanni*, *Lulu* represents German/Viennese society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both operas deal with more vulgar issues. *Lulu* is about a society based on deception, and the power struggle of sexual relations by manipulation through sex. Like *Don Giovanni* social issues are vulgarly brought to the audience’s attention, through sex and murder. Both operas degrade the value of marriage, relationships and sex to a beastly existence.

Mozart achieved this through humor and nonchalant approach to marriage and sexual intercourse in the character of Don Giovanni. Where as Berg accomplished the goal through a serious drama, creating the lesbian Countess Geschwitz as the heroine, used by Lulu most likely through sexual favors. At the end of the opera, Countess Geschwitz dies saving Lulu from her murder (who represents Lulu’s third husband Dr. Schön, whom she kills in Act 1).

The difference between the two operas is that one is a buffa and the other is a serious work. According to Cairns, Mozart wanted to set *Don Giovanni* as opera seria but he knew he couldn’t. His way of informing, or reflecting society had to come through opera buffa. When Cairns argues the Viennese negative response to *Don Giovanni* has a lot to do with how Mozart presented a negative light to a society praised by the elite and academics in Europe. Although this was the rise of critical thinking, Viennese/Austrian
society was not ready to be critical on their society, especially because the Enlightened or Freemasons believed society to be a blessing and the government as a necessary evil. There was also this belief that man can be moral without religion. Obviously in Don Giovanni lacks morality, represents the free libertine of the Enlightenment era but free in his sexual schemes, not held down by the ideals of Old Europe.

Other aspects of the Don Giovanni Opera filter into producing a negative outlook on the Enlightenment, Till mentions the idea of being a man of honor, and keeping to promises made and respecting the spoken contract between two individuals. Don Giovanni, a man of high society regularly breaks his promises or disrespects the agreement, “thus making a mockery of one of the very foundations of modern human community”\(^{38}\)(spoken contracts). He knows he will break his promise as soon as he makes it. An example can be seen at the beginning of the opera after Don Giovanni kills the Commendatore. He swears to Leporello that if Leporello gives his opinion about the crime Don Giovanni committed, he will not get angry. Obviously, Don Giovanni gets furious with Leporello, who retreats by saying “And your promise?” at which Don Giovanni responds with ‘I know of no promise.’

Another contract Don Giovanni flippantly handles is marriage. This can be seen in two prominent places, first with his attempt to sleep with Donna Anna who is engaged to married. The other is with Zerlina, in which he tries to seduce her as well. Her defense comes when she says ‘Sir, I promised to marry him (referring to Masetto)’, Don Giovanni responds with ‘That promise means nothing.’ According to Till, the promise of marriage

is sacred in bourgeois society, and with his frivolous view of marriage, some of the audience could easily be offended.

**Myths/Legends of Mozart and Prague**

Mozart’s third trip to Prague took place in 1791 when he was commissioned to write another Opera for the coronation of the new Emperor Leopold II. This opera was written in a short amount of time. Shortly after his death in 1792, reports were published that Mozart wrote *La Clemenza di Tito* in 18 days, composing some of it on his journey to Prague from Vienna. More likely he wrote this opera in six weeks. Domenico Guardasoni, the impresario of the Prague National Theatre, commissioned this work Mozart reluctantly accepted this commission because he was in a financial downturn and needed money. It was also a prefect opportunity for Mozart to present his talent to the new Emperor.

This opera was not chosen by Mozart, which led to his lack of enthusiasm for this piece. The music is more bland and simple, Till believes it was this style of music that one Mozart “favor with some who had formerly complained at the complexity of his music.”

39 Ibid, 259
40 Ibid, 261
41 Ibid, 260

Metastasio, who at the time was “one of the most politically astute writers”, wrote the libretto, which according to Till “contains his best exposition of the principles of enlightened monarchical absolutism.” Metastasio, a believer of absolutism, (a direction Germany was taking, due the poor outcome of the French Revolution) and
with a libretto exemplifying this idea, *La clemenza di Tito* was seen as the perfect piece for Emperor Leopold II coronation in Prague.

Out of the three visits Mozart took to Prague, his last is the least important to the narrative of his life. In scholarship, the first two visits are seen as an invigorating time in Mozart’s life, and these visits have been romanticized into an almost legendary folktale about Mozart.

For example, like *La clemenza di Tito*, no one really knows when *Don Giovanni* was completed. There is no evidence on how much was finished upon his arrival to Prague or even when he returned to Prague in 1787. There are conflicting sources, one is Stiepanek who states that Mozart arrived in September and Dlabac who said Mozart was in Prague all summer.\(^{42}\)

As for the completion of the opera, this date is unknown too. According to Abert, the *Don Giovanni* was finished on October 15, where as the myth has it, Mozart completed the opera the night before. The orchestra received the overture the day of the premiere and was able to play it up to Mozart’s standards. Abert counters this legend by mentioning a letter to Gottfried von Josquin from Mozart, in which Abert states that “all we can deduce from his letter…is that the opera was completed by an earlier date than is generally assumed.”\(^{43}\)

The evidence provided above is an example of why these myths still permeate throughout scholarship. Abert gives no real concrete evidence for the completion to an earlier date. Scholars post Abert’s researches are still using the later date of the opera’s

---

\(^{42}\) Abert, Hermann; Spencer, Stewart; Eisen, Cliff. *W.A.Mozart*. (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007) 1017

\(^{43}\) Ibid, 1017
completion. In reality there scholars are still unsure when Mozart actually finished the opera.

Legends have also “arisen around the genesis of Don Giovanni, the foremost among which are the inevitable tales of Mozart’s affairs with his female singers.” But aside from the affairs, other, more constructive and useful rumors linger in the creation of Don Giovanni. It is no surprise that Mozart was heavily involved with the staging of his opera. The first Zerlina, Caterina Bondini was reluctant to scream in the first act finale. Mozart, frustrated with her lack of compliance, went up on stage asked for the passage to be repeated and when it came time for Zerlina to scream, he went up behind her, roughly grabbed her unexpectedly so that she would scream. After she screeched, Mozart said, “that is what it should sound like!”

It is also said that Mozart “had to console Luigi Bassi for the fact that Don Giovanni had no major aria to sing. The he is said to have written the duet ‘La ci darem la Mano’ five times before Bassi was satisfied with it.”

Abert also supplies the myth the Commendatore scene in the graveyard. “The Commendatore’s word in the graveyard scene, it is also reported were originally accompanied only by trombones but the players could not perform the passages as Mozart wanted it and so he collected up the parts and added the woodwinds there and then.” Also, apparently the “Tafelmusik in the second act finale was improvised at the rehearsals, a living example of one of the oldest Buffa traditions.”

---

44 Ibid, 1018
45 Ibid, 1018
46 Ibid, 1018
47 Ibid, 1018
48 Ibid, 1019
One more legend that permeates throughout a lot of scholarship and is documented by Abert is the composition of K 528 *Scene Bella mia frimma*. Abert phrases it like this, “here too, he delayed putting pen to paper, with the result that the singer finally locked him in a garden room at the Villa Bertramka and declared that she would let him out only when he had finished it. Mozart set to work but for his part vowed in turn he would give her the aria only if she could sight-read it note perfect.”

These are some of many stories and legends of Mozart’s life. Like most myths there is little factual evidence to support these claims. However, it helps in romanticizing the great composer, whom the romantics idolized.

**The Enlightenment and German Scholarship**

The Enlightenment created a society based strongly against ban uninformed society. Rousseau, in his *Social Contract* (1762) states, “Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains” Richard Taruskin further explains Rousseau’s reasoning by saying “intellectual chains that people voluntarily (or so they may think) assume: religious superstition, submission to time-honored authority, acquiescence for the sake of social order or security in unjust or exploitative social hierarchies. The remedy was knowledge, which empowered an individual to act in accord with rational self-interest and with ‘general will’ of similarly enlightened individuals.”

Vienna became the prototype of the Enlightenment philosophies with an Emperor saturated in these ideals and made haste changes to Vienna in the 1770s and 80s. Many

---

49 Ibid, 1023
attitudes and self-identity changes took place in the Viennese/German people. With the rapid spread of the Enlightenment encountering most of the western world, came a stigma of superiority given to those who were deemed well read and educated. Therefore a society of connoisseurs is cultivated, opinionated, ‘well educated’ class is created, the idea that society is finally reaching a pinnacle of reasoning.

The Enlightenment brought a German centered focused which can be traced to these 15 years of change in Austria, promoting a strong Austro-German musical culture that would transition into the following century where a domination of German composers and scholars. An example of this can be seen in Carl Marie von Weber, a composer, conductor, and opera director sought to create a ‘Romantic German Ideal’ and promote new-sophisticated romantic German opera.

Weber was a conductor in Prague at the Landständisches Theatre between the years 1813-1816. As a conductor he had to cater to his Prague audience who enjoyed new music. However, with a new surge of German nationalism “(nurtured) but the ideas and ideals of the American and French Revolutions and fueled by the Napoleonic Wars was gaining impetus among the intellectuals of the artistic community through the writings of Herderm Tieck, Wackenroder, Brentano, and Novalis,”51 Weber desired to promote German music. In 1810, prior to his placement in Prague, Weber created a secret society to promote German works. This desire carried over into his postion in Prague where him and Jahann Karl Liebich, the director of the LandstUandisches Theatre wanted to encourage the development of a German operatic style. According to Houtches, “In 1806

51 Houtchens, Alan. “Carl Maria von Weber in Mozart’s Prague” The Opera Journal Vol. 27 Issue No. 2 (1994) 4
Liebich disbanded the Italian Opera and set about replacing it with a specifically German theatrical company.”

Weber belonged to this category of musicians and critics at the beginning of the 19th century. His journal articles helped to promote German operas and opera style. The German Romantic though at the time was “the striving to create a single all encompassing work of art through the unification of all arts.” Weber, desiring this new art for German culture recognized in French culture. “French-style Opera, with its emphasis on the visual arts (stage sets, décor, costumes) as well as on the arts of dance, acting, and stage deportment, come the closest to fitting his own conception” of the German Romantic thought.

Men like Wagner and Schopenhauer were greatly influenced by this idea and helped greatly in creating the idea of a German National Opera. Not only were musicians and philosophers influenced by this new trend of German thought, but also scholars who, influenced by the Enlightenment desired to create a narrative about their culture and society. After Mozart’s death, he was soon forgotten in many Austro-German cities and states. His music like most other compositions by dead composers was scarcely played, seen as archaic. However with this rejuvenation of German pride came a narrative of German music, and Mozart, an Austrian became part of the story.

In the century following Mozart’s death there is a revival of his music as well as J.S Bach. A canon of Western music was born; many composers within this collection are German or German trained. Many of the prominent music theorists like Schencker help

---

52 Ibid, 4
53 Ibid, 6
54 Ibid, 8
develop new ways of analyzing music, and creating a musical taste for Western society. As many of the scholars used in this paper stated Vienna as the ‘Musical Capitol’, and neglecting music making in other cities besides Paris.

It is no wonder that much scholarship either neglects Mozart’s trips with Prague or gives a brief overview. The reality is, an Austro-German Enlightened society failed to recognize Mozart’s brilliance. So with the birth of the German Romantic Thought came a skewed history in favor of German society and culture. Where evidence to prove or disprove Prague’s musical intellect doesn’t exist. Scholarship on Prague and Moazrt is based on much myth and legend, and it could have been presented this way in order for the Germans to create a narrative where they are presented well.

Slowly scholarship has been changing, there is a less of a German influence in musicology, and a leader in this is Richard Taruskin, who quoting Heartz states, “Histograph of 18th century music ‘has been done largely by, for, and about Germans’”

**Conclusion**

After *Don Giovanni*, the emperor hired Mozart to be a konzertmeister for the court. Even after another brilliant composition, Mozart was not given the respect he deserved in Vienna as a composer, and he was still labeled as a keyboardist. It is no wonder why Mozart loved Prague and the Bohemians; they understood him and his music, where as this so-called capital of music, Vienna failed to recognize his ability to create timeless pieces. Slowly his popularity in Vienna dwindled, the days of his big concerts was over, and his teaching career was unreliable.

---

As for compositions, Mozart struggled to sell any of them. The bright eyed hopeful Mozart who came to Vienna in the beginning of the decade was disappearing, and financially going under. As we know, in 1791 Mozart died in an unmarked paupers grave without proper recognition of his true brilliance. Legend tells of a heart-broken Prague, a place where Mozart has always been seen as genius.
Bibliography:

Abert, Hermann; Spencer, Stewart; Eisen, Cliff. *W.A.Mozart.* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007)


