

EIR Book Reviews

The battle Mozart won in America's war with Britain

by David Shavin

Mozart in Vienna, 1781-1791

by Volkmar Braunbehrens

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In the summer of 1781, the 25-year-old musical genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was chosen by the Emperor Joseph II of Austria to set the opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, for the occasion of a critical state visit to Vienna of the Russian Grand Duke Paul, son of Catherine the Great. Mozart had recently arrived in Vienna, having broken with his father's employer, the Archbishop Colloredo of Salzburg. The Emperor Joseph had had sole possession of the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for less than a year, for his co-regent, his mother Maria Theresa, had died the past November. The fortunes of the upstart revolutionaries in the British colonies in America were still in doubt. And the Russian court was pressing Joseph to ignore the new developments in America and to join them in a colonial venture against the Turks, who were by that time no longer a serious threat to Europe, as they had been in past centuries.

Within a year, Mozart had pulled off a stunning political and cultural victory, the Americans had shocked the British Empire at Yorktown, and Joseph had derailed the war-party from Russia, winning several years of time to attempt to base Austria upon his educational and cultural reforms.

Along the way, Mozart changed some of the rules of the game, partly redefining the practice of opera, while facing

an enraged oligarchy that did not shrink from threatening, and actually imprisoning, his loved ones, friends, and associates. The abduction that Mozart carried out involved stealing political victory away from a seraglio of oligarchical schemers, agitated over the possibility that republican policies would carry the day.

Mozart in Vienna, 1781-1791, among all the books on the market around the bicentennial of Mozart's death in 1791, is one that must be read. Volkmar Braunbehrens surpasses the field in his stated goal of stripping away the romantic myths and properly situating Mozart's life, and strews tantalizing suggestions throughout his book. Mozart deliberately undertook to fight for truth and to change the world by means of creating beauty. Any attempt to account for Mozart's extraordinary contributions that implies some innately magical phenomenon, is either the product of abysmal ignorance, or willful lying.

The following story, which I have been able to assemble based upon Braunbehrens's book, and upon independent research, is definitive proof that the image of Mozart as an irrational, selfish, and irreligious freak, which prevails in the public mind thanks to the movie *Amadeus*, is a vicious fraud. It also removes all validity from the slander peddled by Freemasonic circles today: namely, that Mozart's Freemasonic ties made him a collaborator in their Gnostic schemes for a "new world order" ruled by a self-appointed aristocracy of secret knowledge. The story of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is the story of how, in the hands of an artist who understands that reason and beauty are morally identical, art becomes a powerful *cause* of historical events, to the greater good of humanity.



*Mozart's first effort to compose German-language opera was *Zaide*, as a contribution to Emperor Joseph II's program for a high level of culture for all Germans, not just the aristocracy. Shown here is the Opera Theater of Northern Virginia performance of *Zaide* in July 1990.*

Emperor Joseph's reforms

Mozart arrived in Vienna as a young man who had traveled all over Europe since early childhood as a musical prodigy in performance and composition. Born in 1756, the son of the eminent Salzburg composer Leopold Mozart, young Wolfgang had absorbed the musical cultures of centers as diverse as Naples and London, and he had also had plenty of chances to observe the social and political suffocation of Europe by the dominant oligarchies, obsessed by hatred of reason and creativity.

Mozart's early contacts with the court of Joseph II in 1781 Vienna involved a group of progressive aristocrats, like the circles he had sought out during 1777 and 1778 in Mannheim, Germany and in Paris, France. These circles were interested in the "America" thesis: that the quality of freedom was a much richer source of development for their society than the quality of servitude favored by some of their peers.

The Emperor Joseph himself, 16 years earlier, had expressed similar ideas in a letter to his mother, Empress Maria Theresa: "All men are equal from birth: We inherit only animal life from our parents and in that there is not the slightest difference between king, count, burgher, and peasant. I believe that no divine or natural law opposes this equality."

Mozart's first student in Vienna was Countess Maria Caroline Thiennes de Rumbeke, the cousin of Count Johann Philipp Cobenzl. Count Cobenzl, who was the Chancellor of State and one of Joseph's closest associates, invited Mozart that first summer in Vienna to visit his home, and to take walks through his famous park. The contrast between this

civilized Chancellor of State of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the brutish behavior of Count Arco of Salzburg (the factotum of Mozart's recent employer, Archbishop Colloredo, who had recently applied his foot to Mozart's rear) could not have been lost on Mozart.

From 1780 to 1785, Joseph attempted, with some success, to implement a reform package: Serfs had to be granted freedom, large family estates were to be broken up, and modern agricultural technologies along with metallurgical and chemical advances were to be pushed ahead, not without the protection of high tariffs. Public hospitals, medical training, and broader education were to be made available to develop a middle class.

The language project

Not the least of Joseph's initiatives was his project for a National Theater. Before establishing his German National Theater in 1776, Joseph had visited the famous author Gotthold Lessing, who commented: "I honor Your Emperor; he is a great man! He will undoubtedly be the first monarch to give the Germans a national theater." He went on to make the ironical point about Joseph's "kindhearted idea of providing the Germans with a national theater—since we Germans are not even a nation!" Lessing's gentle humor addressed a fundamental issue: The enrichment of the language spoken by the potential middle class was critical for building a nation.

Joseph struggled against the prejudice of the Viennese nobility that the lower classes had no need for beauty. Italian opera was for the entertainment of the higher classes; the

masses could feed upon a low German fare. Joseph's National Theater harbored his unique hybrid called "Nationalsingspiel," where the German language would be taught to sing. This idea found a ready sympathizer in Mozart. He had worked on a German opera, *Zaide*, before arriving in Vienna, without any commission in hand, and he presented it in an incomplete form to Joseph's court, as testimony to his interest in seeing the "Nationalsingspiel" project succeed.

Even earlier, when news of Joseph's language project had first spread, Leopold Mozart, ever mindful of opportunities for his gifted son, made inquiries of a friend in Vienna. The friend wrote to Leopold (Jan. 23, 1778): "If your son will take upon himself the task of setting to music some good German comic opera, submit it to the discretion of His Majesty, and then await the decision," it might work. The friend told Leopold that the poet Wieland had just written from Mannheim that "Mannheim has changed all the opinions he ever had about music." Leopold's son had been in Mannheim for the preceding three months. What was Mozart doing with music during that overlooked period in Mannheim?

Mozart's aborted Paris trip

Prior to Sept. 15, 1781 Mozart wrote his father from Vienna: "I hope all will go well in the winter. . . . If I see that it is to my advantage, I shall remain here. If not, I am thinking of going straight to Paris."

Ironically, only three years earlier, Mozart had been driven out of Paris. In 1778, he was offered the position of court organist at Versailles, with a direct connection to Emperor Joseph's sister, Marie Antoinette. The French court had just officially thrown its support behind the Americans in their revolt against Britain's King George III.

While in France, Mozart frequented pro-American circles. For ten days he worked, with Johann Christian Bach (from London), at the estate of the de Noaille family, in-laws of the Marquis de Lafayette, who had gone to Philadelphia to fight for the Americans against the British. Lafayette's wife Adrienne's father was a key humanist Catholic figure around the French court; her uncle was the French ambassador to London.

Evidently the possibility of a great musical genius making such political connections did not please some powerful persons. Shortly after this visit, Mozart found his luggage put on a carriage out of France, and was given a ticket out of town.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart took a lively interest in the workings of the Mannheim theater, and collaborated in this dynamic institution with the Baron Otto von Gemmingen on the (now lost) melodrama *Semiramis*. Baron Gemmingen, we shall come to see, was one of a select group of conspirators committed to furthering the issues of the American Revolution. The particular Freemasonic chapter that Mozart later joined, was the one set up by Gemmingen in Vienna in 1783. And just four years after Mozart's sojourn in Mannheim, the Mannheim theater produced the first drama by Friedrich Schiller, the German "poet of freedom" who gave the highest literary expression, in any language, to the ideals of the American Revolution.

The Abduction from the Seraglio

It was as part of his German language project, that Joseph wanted Mozart to compose an opera in German, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), for the state visit of the Grand Duke Paul of Russia to Vienna in the fall of 1781. The theme resonated with the centennial celebrations of the Austria's great 1683 victory over the Turks, then in preparation, but the Russians and their allies in the Vienna aristocracy had darker motives in reviving the age-old (and once well-founded) animosity to the Ottoman Empire. The Austrian people was to be manipulated into ignoring the issues of the American revolt against the British Empire, and instead to define their strategic interest as continual warfare against the barbarian Turks, whose moribund empire happened to stand in the way of Russian and British imperial designs.

As Mozart explains in a Sept. 26, 1781 letter to his father, Leopold, "The whole plot is being turned upside down, and at my instigation." In the ending of the original play upon which the libretto was based, by the Leipzig merchant Christoph Friedrich Bretzner, a young Christian, Belmonte, is set free by the Turkish Pasha Selim because it is found out at the last instant that Belmonte is the long-lost son of the Pasha—a well-worn dramatic device dear to the oligarchist's bias. Mozart chooses to compose a much more powerful ending which confronts, rather than strokes, the listener's prejudices. At the climax of the opera, the Pasha tells Belmonte:

"It was because of your father, that barbarian, that I was forced to leave my native land. His insatiable greed deprived me of my beloved, whom I cherished more than my own life. He robbed me of honor, property, everything—he destroyed all my happiness."

Belmonte responds: "Cool your wrath on me, avenge the wrong done to you by my father. Your anger is justified and I am prepared for anything." The audience is prepared for the worst from the Turk, as is Belmonte.

However, they get the shock of their lives, as the Pasha announces: "It must be very natural for your family to do wrong, since you assume that I am the same way. But you

deceive yourself. I despise your father far too much ever to behave as he did. Have your freedom, take Constanze, sail home, and tell your father that you were in my power, and that I set you free so that you could tell him it is a far greater pleasure to repay injustice with good deeds than evil with evil."

Belmonte: "My lord, you astonish me."

Pasha (with a look of contempt): "I can believe that. Now go—and if you become at least more humane than your father, my action will be rewarded."

The appropriately jarring climax of the opera won the day, though not without drawing fire. For example, a review published in Graz that year by a Johann Friedrich Schink frets:

"What I like least is the alteration of Bretzner's dénouement. In Bretzner the Pasha forgives Belmonte because he recognizes him to be his own son. In the Viennese improvement he does so because he considers it a far greater act to forgive an enemy than to avenge oneself upon him: a motive which is indeed more noble, but also, as is invariably the case with such exalted motives, much more unlikely. The worst of it is that, with this improvement, Bretzner's reason for making the Pasha a renegade is entirely removed, and the alteration is thus rendered all the more absurd."

"Unlikely" and "absurd" as the American revolt was no doubt seen by the British monarchy—still, Mozart judged his dramatic ending to be the lawful one, and his judgment proved superior. What Mozart stated by the actions he wrote for the Pasha, was that bloodlines did not determine morality. The qualities of "Christian love" and of "dispensation" were qualities capable of appearing among various branches of humanity, not limited to aristocratic bloodlines. The opera shook Vienna and Europe no less than the "America thesis" was shaking the structure of European political relations.

Organized disruption fails

The first performance on July 16, 1782, was the scene of an organized attempt to disrupt the performance by hissing. But the audience fell in love with the drama and the music. Mozart wrote his father four days later:

"It was given yesterday for the second time. You will hardly believe it, but yesterday the cabal against it was even stronger than on the first night. The whole of the first act was hissed. But still they could not prevent the loud shouts of 'bravo' during the arias. . . . The theater was almost more crowded than on the first night, and by the day before there were no reserved seats left. . . ."

By the third performance, victory was unequivocal. "People are absolutely crazy about this opera. It does one good to hear such applause." On July 31, a few days before his marriage to Constanze Weber, Mozart wrote to his father about the futility of the rumors and gossip leveled at him:

"Your son's work . . . is making such a sensation in Vienna that people refuse to hear anything else and the theater

is always packed. . . . So the whole world declares that with my boasting and criticizing I have made enemies of the music professors and of many others! *What* world, pray? Presumably the world of Salzburg, for everyone in Vienna can see and hear enough to be convinced of the contrary. And that must be my reply."

For the moment, the war party was handed a decisive defeat in its attempt to lock Joseph and Austria into its racist and colonialist scenario. During the next nine years of Mozart's life, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* was performed in more than 40 cities all over Europe.

How thoroughly Mozart's opera had won over the public is shown by the change in the reactions of Bretzner, whose play *Belmonte und Constanze*, had been performed in Berlin in May of 1781. At the time of the first performances of *The Abduction* in 1782, Bretzner had launched a public protest: "A certain individual, Mozart by name, in Vienna has had the audacity to misuse my drama *Belmonte und Constanze* for an opera text. I herewith protest most solemnly against this infringement of my rights, and reserve the right to take the matter further" (cited in Deutsch's documentary collection on Mozart). Instead of suing Mozart, as he seemed about to do, by the spring of 1783 Bretzner placed a notice in the Berlin *Litteratur- und Theater-Zeitung*, claiming that the now successful dialogue of the Mozart version was really no different from his, and praising his music and his newly invented songs.

Lessing, Mendelssohn and the moral purpose of drama

The level of Mozart's involvement in the fashioning of the *Abduction* libretto broke all precedents for the composer's role. In early October 1781, Wolfgang wrote to Leopold Mozart about his distaste for having opera be some pretty little entertainment: "The words must be written just for the music, and not just put down to enjoy, here and there, some miserable rhyme which, by God! contributes absolutely nothing to a theatrical representation. . . . There are whole strophes which ruin a composer's entire idea: Verses are probably music's most urgent requirement, but rhyming just for its own sake is the most harmful. Those gentlemen who approach their work so pedantically will go under along with the music. . . . It is thus best if a good composer who understands the theater and is capable of putting his own ideas into action collaborates with a clever poet, a real Phoenix."

A few days later, he commented, "If we composers were always to stick so faithfully to our rules (which were very good at a time when no one knew better), we would be concocting music as unpalatable as their libretti."

Mozart's models for his compositional task were the dramas of Shakespeare, then being translated into German and his own contemporary, Lessing. Mozart learned from Lessing that a protagonist on stage should be a real character, with strengths and weaknesses, whom the audience could



*Friedrich Schiller giving a dramatic reading to a group of his fellow republicans. It was in Mannheim, where Emperor Joseph had established the German National Theater, that Schiller's first play, *The Robbers*, was performed. Six months after its resounding success, Schiller was imprisoned by Duke Karl Eugen of Württemberg.*

identify with. It was not enough for drama, including musical drama—opera—to present abstract models and roles of some mythical being, relying upon rituals and formulas to enthrall the audience. Rather, the audience—through the protagonist on stage—must be confronted with universal problems, which challenge each member of the audience not to remain a little, unimportant nobody. The listener must be a citizen, and not a subject.

Lessing's influence is especially clear in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. In its ecumenical lesson—that reason governed by the highest form of love, resolves the deadliest political and strategic conflicts—the opera strongly echoes the dialogue among Christian, Jew, and Arab in Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise*. Mozart not only relished Lessing's plays; he actually studied the mind of the original *Nathan*, Lessing's associate, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86). Mozart owned a copy of Mendelssohn's book, *Phaethon, or On the Immortality of the Soul*, which was being spread around Vienna by Fanny Arnstein, an associate of both Lessing and of Moses Mendelssohn. Moses Mendelssohn was the grandfather of the composer Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47), and Fanny Arnstein was his great-aunt.

Mozart, during the very period of his composition of *The Abduction*, lived with the Arnstein household, one Christian among a couple of dozen Jews! Volkmar Braunbehrens deserves full credit for calling attention to this remarkable situation. What discussions went on in that household over Moses

Mendelssohn's *Phaethon*, and over the composing of *The Abduction*, we can only imagine.

Mozart moved into the Arnstein household late in August 1781. A month earlier, on July 30, he had received Gottfried Stephanie's libretto of *The Abduction* for a performance scheduled for Sept. 15, about six weeks hence, for Grand Duke Paul's state visit. The Duke, his wife Maria Feodorovna, and her sister Princess Elizabeth of Württemberg had come to convince Emperor Joseph to enter into the Turkish war adventure, and to cement the imperial alliance by arranging the marriage of the future Emperor Franz to Princess Elizabeth.

Though Joseph took a strong interest in having the visiting dignitaries view this new opera, the actual performance before the Russian entourage did not take place for over a year. The machinations and maneuvering around Mozart's first opera for Joseph's Vienna, reflect a political and strategic brawl.

In September, Mozart described the uproar to his father: "The whole plot is being turned upside down, and at my instigation. Everyone grumbles about Stephanie, and it may be that he is so friendly only to my face; but he does arrange the libretto just as I want it, down to the last detail, and by God, I can't ask more of him. . . ."

The Sept. 15 deadline came and went. The visits of the Grand Duke Paul continued for more than a year, as Paul made the rounds of different capitals pushing his colonial

warfare plans, even though—or perhaps because—the American colonists had meanwhile defeated the British empire at Yorktown. In late 1781, Mozart did manage to have the Grand Duke hear his piano variations on Russian folk-songs, which he wrote to civilize, as he put it, the “grand beast.”

The world turns upside down

On Oct. 19, 1781, the world turned upside down on King George III, the British Empire, and indeed the very principle behind empires—the oligarchical system. The Americans and their French allies won their strategic victory at Yorktown, as Cornwallis surrendered the British Army to George Washington. The discussions already ongoing in the capitals of Europe about republicanism and colonialism, now rose to a new level of intensity.

One ruler of the numerous principalities that made up Germany, Duke Karl Eugen of Württemberg, was particularly interested in snuffing this fire. Karl Eugen has the dubious role of being the enemy of the causes of the two greatest artists of his era—Friedrich Schiller and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Five years before, Karl Eugen had distinguished himself by jailing his court poet and musician, Christian F.D. Schubart, for an unspecified sentence, and without the bother of a trial. In 1776, Schubart had been “too frank” about the sale of his fellow Germans to the British monarch as cannon fodder against the American colonies. Schubart had been the music director of the court and the theater in Stuttgart. Schubart’s imprisonment was the living example of the Duke’s politics. Only *six years* later did the Duke bow to political pressure, and release Schubart from prison. Though Schubart only enjoyed four years of freedom before his death, today his voice lives on in the glorious setting of his poem “Die Forelle” (The Trout), by Franz Schubert.

Karl Eugen worked hand-in-glove with his son-in-law, Russia’s Grand Duke Paul, in attempting to capture Joseph and the Austrians, with maneuvers which included multiple marriage alliances. During Karl Eugen’s trips eastward from Stuttgart to Vienna with the Russian party, Friedrich Schiller, an Army surgeon attached to one of his regiments, secretly headed north to Mannheim. In January 1782, his first play, *The Robbers*, based upon a story by political prisoner Schubart, was staged by the German-language theater where, only four years earlier, Mozart had attempted his German-language experiment *Semiramis*. As the battle around the production of Mozart’s *The Abduction* continued in Vienna during 1782, the first work of the young republican poet Friedrich Schiller was unfolding on a parallel track.

Fugues and van Swieten

During the first half of 1782, when the French and American success at Yorktown was being confronted in the courts of Europe, Mozart was kept aware of the strategic problems



A famous silver-point portrait of Mozart was made by Dorothea Stock, one of a circle of friends Mozart and the poet Friedrich Schiller held in common.

confronted by Joseph’s court. Chancellor of State Count Cobenzl regularly briefed Mozart on the decisions and diplomatic sensitivities involved in a visit the Pope made to Vienna to see Joseph shortly after Yorktown.

Mozart was in touch with three groupings which we can identify as the hotbeds of republican organizing in Vienna: Baron Gottfried van Swieten’s music seminars; Countess Maria Wilhelmine Thun’s salon; and Ignaz von Born’s efforts to win over the Freemasons, who had become hegemonic in nationalist political circles all over Europe, to republican ideas.

The musical afternoons at Baron van Swieten’s brought together leaders of the “American” faction within Joseph’s court in tackling key cultural and scientific issues. The Baron had introduced J.S. Bach’s music to Vienna, bringing it with him from his days as envoy to the Prussian court. Every Sunday from noon until 2 p.m., Swieten’s group would examine, play, and study manuscripts of Bach and Handel, the long disregarded “old masters” of the first half of the century; Mozart was at the keyboard. Among contributions to this fascinating process, today we can examine Mozart’s *Fugue in C minor* for two pianos (K. 426), and a provocative series

of string trios. In the trios, Mozart took several of Bach's fugues, set them for three string voices, and then composed a free-style introduction to each fugue, addressing the developmental potentialities of the fugal material that would have occupied Bach's mind. Mozart, in presenting to the assembly his hypothesis as to how Bach's mind worked, fashioned a powerful tool to aid in his own development, and in the development of those around him.

Future researchers would find interesting an arrangement for string quartet of Bach's *Well-Tempered Klavier* carried out in Vienna in 1780 by Emmanuel Aloys Forster. It undoubtedly was studied by Swieten's group, and probably was created as part of this same educational project. Forster later became the teacher to whom Beethoven gave credit for his own mastery of string quartet writing.

In April 1782, Mozart described these gatherings to his sister, saying that they play Bach and Handel, "usually in arrangements for string trio." He continued, referring to his future wife: "When Constanze heard the fugues, she absolutely fell in love with them. Now she will listen to nothing but fugues, and particularly those of Handel and Bach." Even the Emperor Joseph loved hearing these fugues, so much so that, whenever Joseph showed up where Mozart was playing, Mozart would make a point of including a fugal display.

Who were these people that spent Sunday afternoons exploring the geometrical transformations that the human mind and heart found lawful? What were they doing the rest of the week?

Vienna's 'Americans'

Gottfried van Swieten was the head of the Court Library. At this time, he was appointed president of the Court Commission on Education. Swieten's position was crucial for the upgrading of cultural life and developing a middle class, in post-American Revolution Vienna, where there was a vacuum in educational policy since the banning of the Jesuits.

Another key figure on Swieten's Education Commission was Joseph von Sonnenfels, a rabbi's son, a law professor, and a key republican figure throughout this period. His boldness in support of republicanism rivaled that of Caron de Beaumarchais, the force behind the French-American alliance. A fact which has gone largely unnoticed is that Sonnenfels met daily with Beaumarchais in Vienna in 1774. In 1779 Sonnenfels was assigned the ostensibly technical job of codifying the laws of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Far from taking it "technically," he reported back to his superiors that laws can only be codified with respect to an ordering procedure. Since laws exist to further the development of a people, laws that do not develop a people cannot be put into any lawful ordering; hence, not being coherent with natural law, there can be no place in Sonnenfels's codification scheme for them; hence, those laws should simply pass out of existence.

The oligarchs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire did not accept his "codification" procedure, some thinking at the

time that he had more than modestly overstepped his authority. Over the next decade, Sonnenfels was to be at the center of three political brawls: to save the thrift institutions of Vienna; to end usury; and to dismantle the secret police and their abuses of justice.

Mozart, who is always depicted today as having been oblivious to such goings-on, kept a full collection of Sonnenfels's writings among his personal possessions.

Another member of those seminars was Prince Karl Lichnowsky, whose Bach library was second only to Swieten's. Lichnowsky was a member of the same lodge that Mozart later joined, and was an old friend from student days of the republican leader Georg Forster. His brother, Moritz Lichnowsky, was one of Mozart's piano students. Later, Mozart accompanied Prince Lichnowsky on his 1789 trip to Prussia, where Mozart played concerts in Dresden, Leipzig, Potsdam, and Berlin, at many of the same haunts where J.S. Bach performed and composed half a century earlier.

It was on this trip that Mozart met Friedrich Schiller's closest associates, although he seems never to have met Schiller himself. In Dresden, Mozart met with Schiller's friends, the poet Gottfried Körner and Körner's sister-in-law Dorothea Stock, who commemorated the occasion with a famous silverpoint likeness of Mozart.

Another member of Swieten's Sunday seminars was Anton von Spielmann, the Court Councillor, in charge of foreign policy for Prince Kaunitz and Emperor Joseph. Both von Spielmann and his superior, Prince Kaunitz, would be impressed with the foreign policy success of Mozart's opera. Even so, the consequences of Mozart's investigation of the inner workings of Bach's mind in seminars with Baron van Swieten, Prince Karl Lichnowsky, and Anton von Spielmann, a policymaking core of the most American court in Europe, have not yet been properly appreciated.

We must also mention Maria Theresa von Trattner, who had just become a new student of Mozart. Mozart would later dedicate to her his "Fantasy and Sonata for Piano" (K. 475/457). This work can be considered his "doctoral thesis," culminating the educational project of those Sunday meetings. Maria Theresa's husband, Johann Thomas von Trattner, was, in his own way, part of Swieten's education project, as the official publisher of schoolbooks for the Austrian Empire. He owned five printing plants, a paper factory, eight bookshops, and numerous warehouses. He did especially well in publishing reprints of the classics. Later, Mozart took up residence in the controversial "apartment building" built by the Trattners. "Trattnerhof" housed 600 people, and was appointed with highly ornate furnishings and sculptures, and, of course, featured a concert hall. The Trattners stood as godparents for four of Mozart's children.

The Countess Thun

As intrigues against the staging of *The Abduction* continued, Mozart organized a concert in the Augarten on May



Countess Maria Wilhelmine Thun



Baron Gottfried van Swieten



Austrian Emperor Joseph II

26, 1782, which represented an early, and important, public success in Vienna. Baron van Swieten lent his support by contributing one of his symphonies for performance on this concert. A few days later, the final version of *The Abduction* was finished by Mozart.

As each act of *The Abduction* had been completed, Mozart had performed them for the Countess Maria Wilhelmine Thun, whose salon was reportedly extremely stimulating. If Baron van Swieten's seminars were the center of the "Bach" project for republican leadership, Countess Thun's salon was clearly the center of the ongoing political and cultural meetings and discussions.

A typical evening at Countess Thun's might find Mozart's friend from Mannheim, Baron von Gemmingen, reciting from Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise* for Karl Lichnowsky, Joseph Sonnenfels, and Ignaz von Born. Sometimes the Chancellor, Prince Kaunitz, or even Emperor Joseph himself would attend. Georg Forster was another participant: the man who popularized the image of Benjamin Franklin for Europeans as the inventor who could bring "divine sparks," *Götterfunken*, under control. Forster wrote the Countess: "Everything I experienced there now seems like a wonderful dream. Is it really true that I lived there among human beings—the kind of human beings about whom Nathan [the Wise] says it is enough for them to be human."

The Countess Thun proved instrumental in arranging for the young talent, Ludwig van Beethoven, to come to Vienna in 1787 and meet with Mozart. Two of her sons-in-law, Prince Lichnowsky (the one from the Sunday seminar series), and Count Razumovsky, later became major supporters of the adult Beethoven.

Baron Otto von Gemmingen, now in Vienna, founded

the Masonic lodge *Zur Wohltätigkeit*, which both Prince Lichnowsky and Mozart would join. As part of these efforts, Gemmingen published a *Magazin für Wissenschaft und Kunst* (*Magazine for Science and Art*).

Ignaz von Born's conspiracy

Perhaps one of the most controversial of the guests at Countess Thun's was Ignaz von Born, thought to be the model for Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Years earlier in Prague, Born had established a "Society for the Study of Mathematics, National History, and Natural History." He headed a unique Masonic group called *Zur wahren Eintracht*, (The True Harmony), established in 1781 to organize other Masonic groups away from mysticism, Rosicrucianism, alchemy, and the like. Over the next few years, several hundred of the best scientists, artists, and writers of Vienna joined his organization. They worked to disseminate a republican outlook, with a vigorous promotion of science, by sending out both a journal aimed at Masonic groups, in addition to the scientific magazine. It is said that Joseph von Sonnenfels founded the *Journal für Freymaurer* (*Freemasons' Journal*). Ignaz von Born was the editor of the scientific journal, whose pages were open to scientists of many different specialties.

Though Georg Forster at the time had been rightly cynical toward Freemasonry, he was pleasantly surprised by Born's lodge: "It publishes a Freemason's journal in which everything—faith, the oath and ceremonies, and even fanaticism—is more openly discussed than at home in Saxony. The best scholars and poets are members of this lodge. They make light of the whole idea of secrecy and have transformed the entire thing into a society of rational, unprejudiced men dedicated to enlightenment."

The members of Born's *Zur wahren Eintracht* lodge are said to include: Count Lichnowsky; Schiller's acquaintance Karl Leonhard Reinhold; Mozart's publisher Pasquale Artaria; the court physician to Maria Theresa, Ferdinand Joseph Leber; the physician of Joseph II, Joseph Barth; the imperial surgeon (and for a time the physician of Mozart and Beethoven), Johann Nepomuk Hunczowsky; the Court Councillor Franz von Greiner, whose salon sponsored many concerts where Mozart performed; and a scientist, Joseph Marter, who would spend 1784-85 in America. Later, Joseph Haydn joined this lodge, while Mozart and his father were very active in the affairs of Born's lodge throughout 1785. The meetings of Born's lodge took place at the home of Joseph Paul von Weinbrenner, a Vienna industrialist who had opened Austria's first teacher training school in 1771.

Mozart composed a cantata, *Die Maurerfreude* (K. 471) to celebrate the public commemoration in 1785 by Emperor Joseph of the scientific achievements of Ignaz von Born. The Emperor held up for public honor the metallurgical breakthroughs which Born developed that were used to improve the mining operations of Austria. It is thought that Benjamin Franklin had written to Joseph, praising the value of Born's metallurgical processes. By singling out Born's accomplishments, Joseph showed what he considered healthy intellectual work.

Born stood in contrast to all the anti-scientific irrationalism that floated around all the other Masonic groups. An example of this problem was Count Thun, a member of Born's lodge whose preoccupation with Mesmerism, alchemy, and mysticism was frowned on by the rest of the lodge. Mozart limited himself to writing that Count Franz Joseph Thun was "peculiar, but well-meaning."

The story of Angelo Soliman

While the range of activities of the members of Born's association stretched far and wide, the story of one member, Angelo Soliman, provides a revealing insight into the thinking of the era's republicans and oligarchs.

Angelo Soliman was a former black slave, who became distinguished as a free man in Vienna, a brilliant chess player, and also a member of Born's lodge. Existing record books, kept over the years by the observant Viennese police authorities, indicate that Soliman and Mozart frequented the lodge together. Angelo Soliman was married to a Frau von Christiani, the widow of a Dutch general, in St. Stephen's Cathedral, the same church where Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart married Constanze Weber. For Vienna in general, and for Mozart in particular, Soliman was a living testament against the oligarchs' racist and colonial policies.

After the death of Emperor Joseph and his brother and successor Leopold—and Mozart and Born—the empire groaned under the infamous rule of Emperor Franz. The patron of Metternich, Franz presided over the imprisonment of George Washington's friend the Marquis de Lafayette,



Angelo Soliman, a freedman and lodge brother of Mozart's. Even after his death, he was a special target of hatred from his and Mozart's common enemies.

and over the trials and executions of some of the republicans in Mozart's circle. However, had Franz never perpetrated such evil acts, his treatment of Angelo Soliman alone would have established his notoriety, just as surely as his father-in-law, Karl Eugen of Württemberg, had established his by imprisoning Schubart. Even though Angelo Soliman had died, Emperor Franz, harboring some special vindictiveness against the free black man, had Soliman's corpse seized from his family. Over the objections of the Catholic Archbishop, he proceeded to have Soliman skinned, stuffed, and mounted! For the rest of Emperor Franz's long reign, the stuffed and mounted body of Angelo Soliman was proudly displayed next to the wild animals in the Emperor's museum.

Count Pergen's secret police

Competing with Countess Thun for the control of Emperor Joseph and the Empire was the salon of Countess Pergen, whose husband later became the head of the imperial secret police. Count Pergen's political loyalties do not have to be guessed at. A decade later, in 1791, when he was in charge of running operations against Mozart's lodge, Count Pergen issued a report purporting to cover the threats against the

Empire and the Freemasonic conspiracies. Pergen concealed the operations of the dominant “Scottish Rite” Freemasonry, which even then was taking over the French Revolution, driving it toward chaos and terror.

Instead, he attempted to convince Emperor Leopold, who had succeeded Joseph, that Mozart’s friends were the main threat—an explicitly “American” threat. There have always been secret societies, he reported, “But never was the mania to establish such secret and ambiguous societies greater than in our age; and one knows for certain that many . . . are not—as they pretend—simply for the purpose of sensible enlightenment and active philanthropy, but that their intention is none other than slowly to undermine the reputation and power of the monarchs, to excite the sense of freedom among the nations, to change the processes of thought among the people, and to guide them according to their principles by means of a secret ruling elite. *The defection of the English colonies in America* was the first operation of this secret ruling elite; from there it sought to spread out” (emphasis added).

Count Pergen wanted to keep the Emperor ignorant of the deep-seated Freemasonic operations in England and France, dating back long before 1776. Two months after his report, Emperor Leopold fired Count Pergen as head of the secret police; but within the next 12 months, Ignaz von Born, Wolfgang Mozart, and Leopold himself would be dead. The events in France, and elsewhere in Europe, spun downward, as the promise of the American Revolution to free the world of tyranny went unfulfilled—a subject addressed most powerfully by Mozart’s political co-thinker, Friedrich Schiller, during his remaining 13 years.

The 1782 arrests

With this hindsight, let us return to the spring of 1782, the final months of controversy before the premiere of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. After the American victory at Yorktown, Joseph’s realm was deluged with pamphlets on all topics, distributed for public discussion as part of his policy to allow issues to be aired freely. Joseph intervened a final time to force what was to be the controversial opening night of *The Abduction*.

On the evening of June 27, 1782, Mozart had a pleasant dinner with his librettist, Stephanie, his tenor (and future lodge brother) Adamberger, and Johann Valentin Gunther, who was coordinating the details of the performance with the Emperor. The premiere had already been secured for July 16. Gunther was perhaps Joseph’s closest confidant, spending hours every day alone with the Emperor. In 1780, when Joseph had traveled to meet the Russian Empress Catherine the Great, Gunther was Joseph’s companion in the highly secretive meetings. During the genesis of Joseph’s much-desired opera by Mozart, Gunther became Mozart’s “very good friend.”

The next morning, after his dinner meeting with Mozart,

Gunther was arrested and jailed! On the same morning of June 28, Friedrich Schiller, the regimental Army surgeon for Duke Karl Eugen of Württemberg, was also arrested and jailed! Schiller spent his time in prison writing an early draft of *Kabale und Liebe*, where he focused on the precise issue that had earlier sent Schubart to a Württemberg prison: In the play, a corrupt Duke sells his subjects as mercenaries—the famous Hessians—to defeat the American revolutionaries.

The simultaneity of the two arrests does not seem coincidental. The charges against Schiller cited an unauthorized trip that he had made to Mannheim in May. About the time that Mozart’s completed version of *The Abduction* was being presented at Countess Thun’s, Duke Karl Eugen had again gone to Vienna, to attend to operations against Emperor Joseph. Meanwhile, Schiller returned to Mannheim, where his play *The Robbers* was enjoying great success. However, this time, when Karl Eugen returned home, he decided to order the arrest. Schiller was released after two weeks, and warned not to write anything without first submitting the draft to Karl Eugen for censorship.

At his next opportunity, in September when Karl Eugen returned to Vienna, Schiller escaped to Mannheim, never to return.

‘Prussian spy’ charges against Gunther

Meanwhile, Gunther spent the whole summer of 1782 in prison on charges of being a Prussian spy; when he was released, the charges were exposed as bogus. Mozart wrote his father about Gunther’s arrest: “You can imagine what a shock. . . . For Stephanie, Adamberger, and I had supper with him one evening and the next day he was arrested. . . . Although he never divulged anything of importance, his enemies—chief of whom is the former *Stadtholder* Count von Herberstein—managed to play their cards so cleverly that the Emperor, who formerly had such immense confidence in Gunther that he would walk up and down the room arm in arm with him for hours, now began to distrust him with an equal intensity.”

Count Herberstein was Johann Gundaker, chamberlain, privy councillor, and master of the hunt of the Prince-Archbishop Colloredo of Salzburg, Mozart’s antagonist. Mozart did not take lightly the threat of reprisals from this quarter. The following year he hesitated to visit his father in Salzburg because “that wicked malevolent prince” might imprison Mozart himself. Mozart told his father that friends had advised him to “meet your father in some third place.”

The Gunther case was one of the cases revisited by the Emperor Leopold, a decade later, when he raised questions about how his brother, Emperor Joseph, had been manipulated by the secret police chief Count Pergen, and others. The wronged Gunther, a member of the lodge *Zur gekronten Hoffnung*. (New Crowned Hope), and his mistress, Eleonore Eskeles, were fraudulently branded as Prussian spies. When

Gunther was released after four months, Eleonore Eskeles received the blame, and was driven out of town.

In fact, Eskeles was a close friend of Fanny Arnstein, who had introduced Mozart to Moses Mendelssohn's works. A strong supporter of Joseph's National Theater, she rented a box there with Baron Raimund Leopold Wetzlar, a converted Jew, after whom Mozart named his first child. A decade later, Emperor Leopold granted her rehabilitation, and harshly criticized the judicial system. When Eskeles finally did return to Vienna in 1802, she set up an intellectual salon. She took care to obtain autographs of Mozart's works to send to Goethe.

By no later than June, probably after Mozart's initial public success in the Augarten concert in late May, Joseph had indicated clearly that Mozart's anti-war opera would be performed. The June 28 arrests notwithstanding, the opera was performed amidst great turbulence in July. It was a fabulous popular success. The war party did not get its way that summer, and the battle for the control of the future of Austria, for the future Emperor Franz, and his fiancée Princess Elizabeth of Württemberg, remained unsettled until 1792, after the death of Mozart.

However, justice moved slowly, and the damage had been done. Gunther would never again have the confidence of Emperor Joseph. Mozart would never again have such a close working relationship on an opera with an Emperor. Emperor Joseph would be isolated from the best ally he would ever have in any effort to win the hearts and the minds of his people. He would never again enjoy such popular support for his policies. Perhaps the final blow to his rule came when, years later, the Russians finally declared their war on the Turks. The Russians never deployed a soldier: The Austrians were sent in, became caught in an unwinnable war, and never recovered.

Aftermath

Through July and into August of 1782, Vienna was electrified by a series of performances of *The Abduction*. In the midst of his triumph, Mozart married the woman who had so enjoyed the fugues that came out of Baron van Swieten's Sunday music afternoons. Constanze Weber became Mozart's wife in St. Stephen's Cathedral on Aug. 3.

Two weeks later, Mozart wrote to his father: "You would scarcely believe what efforts Countess Thun, Baron van Swieten and other eminent people are making to keep me here. . . . Countess Thun, Count Zichy, Baron van Swieten, and even Prince Kaunitz are all very much displeased with the emperor because he does not value men of talent more. . . . [Chancellor] Kaunitz said the other day to Archduke Maximilian [in whose orchestra the young Beethoven was developing], when the conversation turned on myself, 'Such people only come into the world once in a hundred years and must not be driven out of Germany.' "

In October, when Russia's Grand Duke Paul and his party

finally heard the opera, Mozart made a point of conducting the orchestra from the clavier, "partly to show myself . . . as the father of my child." Four days later, on Oct. 12, writing about the possibility that he would teach another daughter of Duke Karl Eugen's, Wilhelmina von Württemberg, Mozart made clear he could not work as an appendage to such tyrants: "No doubt, if I had applied for the appointment I would certainly have received it, and with more than 400 florins—though probably with less salary than would have been fair and just. I am not looking for pupils, for I can have as many as I please; and from two of them, without causing me the slightest hindrance or inconvenience, I can get as much as the princess pays her master, who has thus no better prospect than that of avoiding starvation for the rest of his life."

The death of the German opera project

While Mozart had provided Emperor Joseph with the political victory that he needed, great pressures had been exerted upon Joseph, and, it appears, the Emperor caved in. In 1785-86, another brawl erupted around Ignaz von Born, the future of Joseph's policies, and Mozart's marvelous setting of Beaumarchais' play, *The Marriage of Figaro*. However, a great moment in 1782 to create a republican citizenry for Joseph's realm was frittered away. Joseph would continue to attempt to push ahead with his political agenda, but having compromised on Mozart's cultural commitment to better his people, Joseph became more and more isolated and eventually failed.

In the six months after the premiere of *The Abduction*, it was performed an average of three times a month at the Hoftheater. Unfortunately, it was the only powerful, German-language intervention into Viennese culture during that critical period of 1781-83. The rest of the German-language productions in Vienna were largely garbage, reflecting the prejudice of the nobility as to what the man-in-the-street should be entertained by.

On Feb. 5, 1783, Mozart wrote to his father:

"The German opera will no longer exist after Easter, but it seems they want to kill it off even before then. And Germans themselves are doing this—it's disgusting! . . . I prefer German opera, even though it means more trouble for me. Every nation has its own opera—why not Germany? Is not German as singable as French and English? Is it not more so than Russian? Very well then! I am now writing a German opera for myself. I have chosen Goldoni's comedy *Il Servitore di Due Padroni* [*The Servant of Two Masters*], and the whole of the first act has now been translated. Baron Binder is the translator. But we are keeping it a secret until it is completely finished."

Mozart undertook such German projects with or without a commission. He explained to his father that the lack of commitment by the nobility must not deter him. After the success of *The Abduction*, he was ready to produce operas at his own expense, and reap the profits.

In 1783, Antonio Salieri became head of the National Theater, ending its "German" experiment.

The 'golden mean of truth'

In December 1782, in writing to Leopold Mozart about an ode that he was to put to music, Wolfgang Mozart identifies the goal of his composition process: "The ode is sublime, beautiful, anything you like, but too exaggerated and pompous for my fastidious ears. But what is to be done? The golden mean of truth in all things is no longer either known or appreciated. In order to win applause one must write stuff which is so inane that a coachman could sing it, or so unintelligible that it pleases precisely because no sensible man can understand it."

Provocatively, Mozart revealed his preoccupation with communicating what Shelley later called "profound and impassioned ideas," explaining that he "would like to write a book—a short critical work with musical examples—but not under my name" that would address this matter.

The man who did write the book that most appropriately addressed Mozart's expressed concerns was Friedrich Schiller, at the time a man on the run. He spent almost a year moving in and around Mannheim, assuming names, being hidden by friends who warned him about Duke Karl Eugen's searches for him. His lectures presented in Mannheim are known to us today as "The Stage Considered as a Moral Institution." Schiller explained that an actual composition

does not embrace morality by lecturing its audience on what is right, and what is wrong. Instead, drama must develop the inner workings of the human soul, and thus empower man to act morally. Schiller's plays were tremendously successful in Mannheim, but "anonymous threats" communicated to the theater management regarding his continued employment followed him there.

It was Gottfried Körner, who later received Mozart in Dresden, who rescued Schiller from Mannheim in 1784, when he had lost his job at the theater and was besieged by creditors.

The zeal for a national theater continued to flicker in Mannheim. In 1785, a Mannheim professor named Anton Klein wrote to Mozart, offering him a German libretto, and requesting news on the future of the German opera in Vienna. Mozart responded: "I for my part have no great hopes of its success. According to present plans, it looks more as if they were attempting to bring final ruin upon German opera, which at present is suffering a perhaps only temporary eclipse. . . . If there were but *one* patriot on the board—the affair would take on quite another aspect!"

Mozart's next, and last, German opera, *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*), was produced six years after this exchange, and without a government board. His "patriot" was Emanuel Schikaneder, his opera house was not much different from a burlesque house, and his success was unprecedented.

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