

Re CONSIDERATIONS

DIETRICH VON HILDEBRAND
TRANSLATED BY JOHN HENRY CROSBY

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

ON HIS DEATHBED, Chopin said to his friends, “Play something for me together and think of me while I listen to you.” When his friend Franchomme then said, “Yes, we will play your sonatas,” Chopin exclaimed, “Oh no, not mine. Play for me the true music—that of Mozart.”

Our hearts are filled with great joy when we think of the words of love and admiration that have been spoken about Mozart—from Goethe to Hofmannsthal,¹ from Søren Kierkegaard to Theodor Haecker,² from Beethoven to Walter Braunfels.³ Few great geniuses have been venerated and loved as much as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. And yet it seems to me that not everything that has been said in praise of him has been said with true understanding. Along with wonderful expressions of the deepest insight, the praise is sometimes even painful because it is not really praise but a celebration of things that would not make Mozart greater if he possessed them, and which, thank God, he does not possess. This error is above all true of some contemporary “admirers,” who are caught up in the fashionable trends of the day or are infected by historical relativism.

Many music critics choose for themselves certain great artists whom they make into heroes of their “fashion” ideals and into whom they arbitrarily interpret, more or less consciously, things with which these artists have nothing to do. And so, in the age of “new functionalism,”⁴ of neutralism and antipersonalism, in an age that scorns every “ethos” as “subjective” and romantic, one tries to brand Mozart as a kind of “ironist” and to pit him against the earnest and solemn Beethoven. There are quite a few critics who praise Mozart at the expense of Wagner and even of Beethoven.

Instead of seeing that the individual differences between the great artistic geniuses in no way carry an antithetical but rather a complementary character (for example, between Michelangelo and Raphael, Titian and Giotto, Brueghel and da Vinci—or between Bach and Haydn, Handel and Schubert), these critics try to pit Mozart against Beethoven. Whoever does this can never see the height, breadth, and depth of Mozart’s spirit. Alexander Ulibishev is quite right when he says, “To love Mozart in all his masterworks means not to belong to any musical faction. It means to declare oneself for the beautiful and good in every category.”⁵

There is only one real antithesis in the artistic realm, namely that between true art and bad pseudoart; between powerful, inspired works of an inner necessity [*innere Notwendigkeit*] and tedious emptiness; between noble, authentic poetry and trivial kitsch. He who does not understand the ultimate greatness and depth of Beethoven’s music, who approaches him with slogans such as “subjective,” “romantic,” and “emotionally overwrought,” who does not grasp the extraordinary objectivity and classical balance of his symphonies and quartets or the unique artistic depth—full of mystery—of his late quartets, who has no inkling of the breathtaking inner necessity of the Ninth Symphony, who does not perceive the ultimate artistic word it contains, who is not profoundly moved by the transfigured sacred depth of his *Missa Solemnis*—to him also will remain hidden the mystery of Mozart’s world, the soul of his art.

Such a one would necessarily misunderstand Mozart, even if he were the greatest connoisseur of Mozart's works. Our hope is that every music critic misguided by fashionable trends and by the "Zeitgeist" might be affected by the spirit of Mozart as was the great Søren Kierkegaard who said, "You immortal one, to whom I owe everything, to whom I owe the loss of my understanding—that my soul was stirred up and my innermost being was shaken—to whom I owe my not having to walk through life as one who is incapable of being deeply moved; you whom I thank for my not having to die dying without having loved."

I do not wish to speak here about Mozart the man or about his life but rather about the genius of Mozart in his works. Many music historians expect to find in the life and person of the artist the key to his work. I believe, on the contrary, that we should let the work itself affect us without projecting something onto it. The spirit of the work reveals to us much more about the deepest level in the person of the artist, a spirit which he need not have radiated during his lifetime. Neither the person of the artist nor his life discloses to us the world and essence of his works but the works themselves, which, in the case of a great artist, usually far surpass what he amounted to as a human being. Apart from their own artistic content, the works reveal what was highest and deepest within the artist and for which he at least had a yearning. To actualize as a human being the spirit embodied by his work, Mozart would have had to have been a saint—and that he was not.

When we look at his immense work, the inexhaustible richness of which seems like a miracle—and all this within a lifetime encompassing only thirty-five years—there unfolds before us a world of sublime spirituality, unfathomable creative power, and inexhaustible poetry. In Mozart's work we find a unity of apparent antitheses, a *coincidentia oppositorum*. Like that of no other, his art is angelic, of other-worldly sublimity, and yet like no one else's in being permeated by all that makes this world so ravishingly beautiful. It is full of

the enchantment of this world, full of the charm of this life, full of humor; as hardly any other artist's work, it reflects the sweetness and delightful poetry of life and its many-sided situations. In his art, there reign the high spirits of the most intense joy of life, an incomparable naturalness and immediacy, and the boldness and freedom of a spiritual language over which a transfigured splendor radiates perpetually and the aura of another world hovers. Everything is suffused by an angelically transfigured air, everything is full of a message from heaven.

Along with an extraordinary ability to give a definite spiritual shape and precision to his works as well as his masterful sureness of touch [*Treffericherheit*], there is in Mozart's work a unique effortless-ness. It is a special sign of the possession of a virtue when the good is done effortlessly; however painstaking the acquisition of a virtue, its possession is distinguished by effortless-ness. This effortless-ness of virtue presents itself in Mozart's art. Not the effortless-ness of certain brilliant but lighter works of art, nor that of playfulness, but the giftlike effortless-ness that goes hand in hand with the greatest depth and precision of expression—an effortless-ness that lies in the word "gratia," spanning everything from the highest meaning of "grace" to the "graceful" loveliness of outward manifestation.

In spite of all its inner necessity, Mozart's art is permeated by a spirit of holy lavishness [*heiliger Verschwendung*] that we otherwise find only in nature. Richard Wagner has wonderfully characterized the essential spirit of Mozart: "A genius of light and love." His art is luminous. And not only is he a unique bard of love, but his music is itself filled with the genius of love; it is love transformed into music wherein dwells the radiance, the delicacy, the sweetness of true love. The way in which Mozart himself describes genius is deeply characteristic: "True genius without heart is an impossibility. For it is not great understanding alone, or imagination, or both together that make for genius. Love, love, love is the soul of genius."

Mozart is in a certain respect the most universal of the great

musicians for he created works of ultimate greatness in the most varied domains. Not only did he surpass everyone as a composer of operas, Mozart also created works of the highest beauty in his symphonies, in his chamber music, and in the realm of church music.

Let us begin with Mozart as a composer of operas. The just-mentioned universality reveals itself in the fact that he—unlike other great operatic composers, such as Gluck, Wagner, or Verdi—created completely different basic types of possible connections between music and the stage. Mozart was not the only composer of operas of an extremely distinctive individuality; this is also true of Gluck, when we compare *Orfeo ed Euridice* with *Iphigénie en Tauride*, as well as for Wagner, when we think of the difference in the style of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger*, and for Verdi, the creator of *Otello* and *Falstaff*. Above and beyond this element of individuality, we find in the operas of Mozart four different basic types of possible connection between music and dramatic action.

The first basic type we find in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, the second in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, the third in *Così fan tutte*, and the fourth in *The Magic Flute*.

In *The Abduction from the Seraglio* we have the typical German opera, which reached its highest and most sublime expression in Beethoven's *Fidelio*. The relation between stage and music here is characterized by the following elements. The plot has a highly ethical content and the different characters retain a certain generality: the main characters are filled with a moving human ethos and the supporting characters display an endearing humor. It is entirely appropriate for this style of opera that the singing is interrupted by dialogue, which is neither sung nor recited in a stylized way. The music, as it were, grows out of the German dialogue. In contrast to Gluck, we find in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* a much more fluid plot—one that is not withdrawn into the world of antiquity with its strong style, let alone stylistically timebound like the operas of Handel.

The Abduction from the Seraglio is the earliest of Mozart's masterworks for the stage, the opera with a special personal touch, being written at the time of his engagement and marriage. In it there lives a happiness full of promise, a youthful note of hope. Carl Maria von Weber says of this opera, "This merry creation—glowing in the most exuberant youthful energy, virginally delicate in its sensibility—resonates with my personal artistic feeling and I have a special affection for it."⁶ Here too, as in all of Mozart's operas, love stands in the foreground. In the two magnificent arias of Belmonte in the first act, the genius of love manifests itself in a unique way. Especially beautiful is the purity and height of this love in the inexpressibly sweet music of Belmonte's second aria in the words, "Ist das ihr Lispeln? Es wird mir so bange. War das ihr Seufzen? Es glüht mir die Wangen."⁷ We are pierced to the heart by the extraordinary depth and dramatic power of the music in Constanze's great aria⁸ in the second act and, above all, by the great, sublime, tragic theme in the wonderful recitative in the middle of the last act, when Belmonte and Constanze believe everything to be lost.⁹ The genius of Mozart's specifically dramatic power reveals itself in the aria sung by Osmin in the first act and also in the delightfully poetic "Romance" sung by Pedrillo,¹⁰ which so perfectly shapes the situation. Again, it reveals itself in the sovereign freedom with which Mozart develops the characters, precise as always, in the quartet in the second act,¹¹ particularly in the words of Constanze and Blondchen: "Wenn Männer verdächtig auf uns sehn, das ist nicht auszustehn."¹² Independent of its special style and the interpretation of the stage, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, like all of Mozart's operas, carries as a whole the mark of a masterpiece. In many places the music rises above the frame of the drama; it hovers in heavenly height above the dramatic situation, which it thereby shapes in a masterful way.

In *The Marriage of Figaro* and in *Don Giovanni* we find a completely different type of drama, of interpretation of the stage, and of the connection of word with music. Here we have Shakespearian drama

in music: the full shaping of characters as well as of the various situations in their poetic power and intensity.

I know of no other comparison for *The Marriage of Figaro* than one of the comedies of Shakespeare, for example, *As You Like It*. One should not believe that it is Beaumarchais and da Ponte¹³ that give *Figaro* its dramatic stamp [*Cachet*]. We need only compare Rossini's charming *Barber of Seville* with Mozart's *Figaro* to see what a world separates both works; how Rossini expresses the Rococo world of Beaumarchais—graceful, witty, brilliant—whereas Mozart's opera, in its classical humanness [*Menschlichkeit*], the depth of its humor, and its sublime poetry, bears Shakespearean traits. The music gives shape to a world analogous to the world that Shakespeare expresses with words.

Herewith, the completely different conception of the stage in comparison to *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is already suggested: the much more intense dramatic aim, the new function that has been entrusted to the music—a totally different type of drama. What characters, how fully developed dramatically and alive—a Figaro, a Susanna, the Count and the Countess, Bartolo, Basilio, the gardener Antonio, and the enchanting invention of Cherubino, original in the operatic literature and so quintessentially Mozartean! An incarnation of Mozart's youthful phase of being in love, Cherubino is a unique character and incomparable to any other in the whole of literature. But the same holds for every character. Mozart's music has made Figaro into an extremely attractive person, who is not only a highly talented servant and master of every situation, but also a human being filled with a noble moral ethos and a great, deep, and faithful love. How different he is from Rossini's Figaro! What poetry, what fragrance in Susanna and the Countess! Again we must remember Shakespeare, whose female characters such as Viola, Rosalind, Perdita, Miranda, or Portia possess such an unspeakable grace and unique nobility, such a unity of inner moral beauty with the charm of their external being—a unity that we encounter nowhere

else in world literature. We find something analogous to these Shakespearean women in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Mozart, too, succeeds in presenting female characters of indefinable charm and fragrance, fully alive and as far removed from all naturalism as from classicist idealization—as real and natural as the loveliness of a splendid countryside.

The Shakespearean spirit also reveals itself in the kind of humor that is found in *The Marriage of Figaro* and especially in *Don Giovanni*. Here it is not as with Osmin in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, an essentially comic figure, but rather a much deeper humor as found, for example, in the scenes between Corin and Touchstone in *As You Like It*. This humor appears in the character of Basilio in the scene in which the Count discovers Cherubino¹⁴—where the music, as it were, is taken aback in amazement—in the appearance of the gardener Antonio,¹⁵ and, above all, in the sextet at the words, “E questo è mio padre, che a te lo dirà¹⁶ expressing a classical humor that radiates a noble joy of life.

The Marriage of Figaro bears the special signature of a masterpiece. What unparalleled unity of style from the first to the last note, what uninterrupted inspiration, every scene of the highest perfection! What a strongly enclosed world [*welch starke geschlossene Welt*], of luminous power, of fragrance and poetry! What accord between stage and music. There is hardly any work for the theater that is less problematic for performance, that in its poetry can unfold entirely within the framework made possible by the stage, allowing the stage to transport us effortlessly into the world presented by the opera.¹⁷

We find in *The Marriage of Figaro* an entirely new and extraordinary power of the music to heighten the dramatic situation, such as in the two grand passages in the second act, “Deh, signor, nol contrastate, consolate i miei (I lor) desir,”¹⁸ and “Mente il ceffo, io già non mento;”¹⁹ or in the theme when Susanna surprisingly appears: “Signore! Cos’è quel stupore?”²⁰ or in the theme when Antonio withdraws: “Parto sì, ma se torno a trovarti.”²¹ In each of these we

see the forward movement [*Schreiten*] of the music in the orchestra giving shape to a fully dramatic situation. What radiance of deep and true joy suffuses everything, what a festive character in this indescribable work! In spite of its compactness, strength, and breathtaking genius in the representation of a living world full of charm, the music again and again ascends to a transfigured, otherworldly height, which hints at the splendor of a higher realm hovering above.

We encounter the same kind of Shakespearean drama in Mozart's greatest operatic masterpiece, *Don Giovanni*. Here, too, we find characters who are thoroughly shaped; we find the full depth of dramatic crafting, and a rich and flourishing poetry. If we compared *The Marriage of Figaro* to *As You Like It*, *Don Giovanni* corresponds in its stature and dramatic form to a Shakespearean tragedy or a play such as *The Merchant of Venice*. Here Mozart unfolds before us the spirit of great and ultimate drama. The characters are more fully rounded, more sharply developed: Leporello's humanness reminding us in some of its traits of Sancho Panza, the sweet charm of Zerlina, the demonic Don Giovanni, Masetto, Donna Elvira, and the wonderful noble couple, Don Ottavio and Donna Anna.

Don Giovanni has often been misunderstood, even by those who speak of it with great enthusiasm. The character of Don Giovanni is seen as the hero whom Mozart wants to exalt, Don Ottavio, on the contrary, as a pale weakling. We have, however, only to immerse ourselves in the music with which Mozart characterizes Don Ottavio to grasp his unique nobility and moral strength. What a completely different note does Mozart strike in the music that embodies Don Giovanni! Yet this music, too, is extraordinarily beautiful and perfected, as, for example, the duet "Là ci darem la mano,"²² the "Campaign" aria,²³ the splendid passage "Vieni un poco in questo loco,"²⁴ the "Canzonetta,"²⁵ the aria "Metà di voi qua vadano,"²⁶ and many, many other passages.

Mozart's music always breathes an extraordinary purity, even when he is portraying the prototype of impurity. Yet the difference

in the tone of the music makes it quite clear to anyone who has ears to hear who is more lovable in Mozart's intention, and nothing justifies the interpretation that Mozart wanted our sympathies to lie with Don Giovanni. Don Giovanni is not only presented as a villain, such as Pizarro in Beethoven's *Fidelio* or Iago in *Othello*, but characterized with many extra-moral excellences: he is lordly, fearless, of inexhaustible vitality, captivating, and endowed with the brilliance of irresistible success. Yet precisely this proves the dramatic greatness of Mozart—that he is capable of creating a world in which he portrays in its reality and fullness and in the breadth of the flow of life, in which the wicked libertine, proud and lacking conscience, can be so full of seductive charm. Nevertheless, Don Giovanni is in no way worthy of love, neither in and of himself nor in Mozart's intention; rather it is Don Ottavio and Donna Anna who deserve our love.

Don Giovanni comprises, in a certain way (just as the greatest of all novels, Cervantes's *Don Quixote*), the whole length, breadth, and depth of human existence, indeed, of the universe. On the one hand, it encompasses the world of noble and great love in its full moral depth, in its strength and splendor, embodied by Don Ottavio and Donna Anna. On the other, it embodies the world of seductive vitality in Don Giovanni, which in spite of all its intoxicating fascination reveals an ultimate emptiness and tragic searching for joy where it is not to be found. Let us think of the almost leitmotif-like style that surrounds everything that has to do with Don Ottavio and Donna Anna: beginning with the wonderful recitative of Donna Anna and then Don Ottavio's response, "Lascia, o cara, la rimembranza amara,"²⁷ encompassing the various arias of Donna Anna and Don Ottavio, the theme in the "Trio of the Three Masks" in the first act when Don Ottavio and Donna Anna arrive at Don Giovanni's villa, and culminating in the musical high point of all arias, Donna Anna's "Non mi dir, bell'idol mio, che son io crudel con te."²⁸ At the appearance of Donna Anna and Don Ottavio, the music always bears the mark of special greatness, magnanimity, deep moral nobility, and

true strength; always it emanates the breath of great, noble love against which Don Giovanni's courtly elegance stands forth clearly in all of its transitoriness and false splendor.

Even more fundamental is the great antithesis between the Commendatore, representing the ethical and religious world, and the evildoing Don Giovanni, who is obsessed with success. Does music afford anything grander than the churchyard scene or the one in which the Commendatore comes to Don Giovanni? Here we find ultimate, otherworldly seriousness in the musical development of the Commendatore—a breath of eternity—and this in contrast to the wicked insolence of the libertine, Don Giovanni.

Here the Christian universe stands before us in all of its truth and greatness; and in wonderful contrast to this seriousness there is the deeply human figure of Leporello. Simple and lovable in an earthy way, Leporello embodies in all situations a simple, healthy understanding analogous to that of Sancho Panza, who is, however, morally much nobler, or to that of the porter in *Macbeth*: whether in the beginning, in “Notte e giorno faticar,”²⁹ in the “Catalogue” aria,³⁰ and most of all in the incomparable music during the scene in the second act when Leporello is discovered to be disguised as Don Giovanni. Throughout the colorful and rich situations that represent the fullness of life, the figure of Leporello resonates like an organ as the representative of a basic humanness and of a deep, classical humor.

How wonderful is the final scene after Don Giovanni has been taken to hell after everything demonic has passed away; it is so down to earth and joyously bright that it does justice to the spirit of the entire work, thereby underscoring the truth of it all. Yet also in this masterpiece of masterpieces (to which a place is due in the world of opera analogous to that of the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven among symphonies, in which the inner necessity of every note shapes the drama and the dramatic world), whether it be in “Metà di voi qua vadano”³¹ or “Zi, zi! Signore maschere! Zi, zi!”³² the music in many places transcends the wonderful, rich poetic world of the drama of

Don Giovanni, which itself forms the music, proclaiming the world of God through the redeemed and transfigured character of its beauty.

In *Così fan tutte* we find a completely new, radically different conception of the stage and the possible connection between music and word. Here we do not have the Shakespearean drama of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, but rather the drama of a Goldoni.³³ In this kind of drama the characters are not fully developed but are rather general types—Don Alfonso, the cynic of the eighteenth century; Despina, the plotting servant like the character of Scapin in Molière’s play, *Les Fourberies de Scapin*. The remaining characters are not even this developed and are rather just carriers of the plot. The stage has the charm of entertainment; things flow lightly and with much variety. The music here does not have the task of shaping fully dramatic characters as in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*; instead it cooperates, on the one hand, with the mood of the situation in the sense of Goldoni—the frequent use of two voices, the strong stylization, a different relation between word and song, a different role of the gestures. On the other hand, the aforementioned soaring of the music into a transfigured world becomes much more noticeable, precisely because the conception of the musical drama is not as intense. The quintet, “Addio,”³⁴ and the following trio, “Soave sia il vento,”³⁵ as well as the duet in the second act, “Secondate, aurette amiche, i miei desiri,”³⁶ Fiordiligi’s great aria, “Per pietà, ben mio, perdona all’error dun’alma amante,”³⁷ and the quartet at the end of the opera, especially at the words, “E nel tuo, nel mio bicchiero si sommerga ogni pensiero,”³⁸ all are of an unheard-of, sublime beauty. Without in any way skewing the framework of the Goldoni comedy, the world they emanate reaches far beyond it.

This is true above all in the aria, “Un’aura amorosa del nostro tesoro,”³⁹ which is one of the most beautiful of all Mozart’s arias. I could not believe my eyes as I read in the introduction to the recording of a Glyndebourne performance that Mozart meant this “milk-sop” aria ironically. Without regard for the fact that Ferrando sings

this aria while he still believes in the faithfulness of his betrothed, Mozart here is clearly making a more general statement, spoken from his very soul: he presents the mystery of true and sublime love as only he can. It is so deeply characteristic that he who created so many consummate masterpieces of drama, who could fulfill the genius of the theater so perfectly by creating a powerful world unto itself, individual in nature [*eine starke Eigenwelt individueller Art*], is also the one who with sovereign freedom expresses things that go far beyond the framework of the piece. The angel of light, who dwells in Mozart, lifts up his voice at Mozart's command, unhindered and unconcerned about any style or framework. Herein we see again the spirit of divine lavishness of which we spoke at the beginning.

So *Così fan tutte* shows itself to be another masterpiece, worthy of the aforementioned ones: entirely different in style, in the role of the stage, a completely different connection between music and word—a work complete in every respect, uninterrupted, borne by continuous inspiration, the delight of the enchanting commedia dell'arte, of precise diction, of wit, but at the same time, above and beyond all this, possessing the same genius of light and love as in all of his other works.

Unfortunately, *Così fan tutte* is often presented today as a pure satire, somewhat like Goethe's *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*. The two girls, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, are presented with such exaggeration that they are made to be "précieuses ridicules," which is no way in the spirit of Mozartean opera. Surely they are excessively emotional in their expressions; their love is not very deep, but it is not simply empty. And yet the point is precisely that in spite of a sincere belief in their own love, they are weak and yield to cunning temptation. They are unsuspecting and naïve, not fancy puppets impressing us from the outset as caricatures. The singers should not involve the audience in making fun of each other, because otherwise it becomes a comedy routine or a clown act, and the Goldoni-style with its gracefulness and poetic charm is destroyed—to say noth-

ing of the radical incompatibility of such portrayals with the unique music.

Most ridiculous of all is to think that Don Alfonso's opinions were shared by Mozart, to think that this pseudowisdom of the eighteenth century is not a caricature like Despina to be laughed at (a figure, among others, like Basilio in *The Marriage of Figaro*), but one with whom the authored identified. It is appropriate for this kind of comedy that there is neither in the plot nor in the so-called moral of the story any declaration by the author. Yet this is precisely because the entire work is only a comedy, an amusing aspect of the world, not a great dramatic expanse comprising the whole universe in all of its great antitheses, as in *Don Giovanni*.

Also interesting for the difference in dramatic conception is the predominance of wit—sometimes a bit of a caricature, such as Despina as doctor and notary—in place of the profound humor of *The Marriage of Figaro* and especially of *Don Giovanni* (recall Leporello). And this of course is fitting, because Goldoni provides neither comedy in the vein of Sancho Panza nor that of a classical Shakespearean humor, but rather an enchanting, ingeniously funny, slightly satirical representation of human weakness.

And now we turn to the fourth, completely different conception of the connection between drama and music in *The Magic Flute*. It is not a drama such as *The Marriage of Figaro* or *Don Giovanni*. We find here neither the Shakespearean molding of the characters nor the general “types” in the Goldoni sense, not a stage world [Bühnenwelt] at all but a fairy play, whereby the characters are more the bearers of a particular ethos: Sarastro, the Queen of the Night, Pamina, Tamino, Papageno, Papagena, and so on. Schikaneder's text,⁴⁰ with its sudden change—the Queen of the Night imperceptibly changing from good to evil—is not taken very seriously; its function above all is that it allows for an entirely new unfolding of Mozart's genius.

Mozart does not objectify a drama that is to be taken seriously in its own right, as in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, in *The Marriage of*

Figaro, or in *Don Giovanni*. Neither does he present a highly stylized commedia dell'arte, such as *Così fan tutte*. Rather, unhampered by considerations of stage and plot, he creates the means through which he can fully unfold his genius in worlds of sublime beauty, of the sweetness of being in love, of a solemn moral ethos, and of an entirely personal humor. The libretto enables a freedom of personal humor and a blossoming of naturalness, which is otherwise never to be found.

The text is here much more an opportunity for creating a musical-poetical world like that of the Three Ladies at the beginning of the opera or the passage at the words, "Drei Knäblein, jung, schön, hold und weise,"⁴¹ at the end of the first part of the first act. Other such passages include the wonderfully cool, nightlike, crystalline coloratura arias of the Queen of the Night, the quintessentially classical world of being in love in Tamino's wonderful aria, "Dies Bildnis is bezaubernd schön,"⁴² and the "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen."⁴³ The same holds for the extraordinarily natural arias of Papageno, expressing a world of joyous nonsense, his "Hm, hm, hm, hm,"⁴⁴ or his encounter with Monostatos, "Hu! Das ist der Teufel sicherlich!"⁴⁵

How sovereignly does Mozart set aside all rules, what joyful freedom, born of genius, do we find in "Das klinget so herrlich"⁴⁶ or in "Pa—pa—pa—pa."⁴⁷ What a contrast, what a juxtaposition between the sublime love of "Tamino mein!"⁴⁸ and Papageno's "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen,"⁴⁹ or "Bald prangt, den Morgen zu verkünden,"⁵⁰ of the Three Boys, and the magnificent choruses of the Priests, "Pamina lebet noch!"⁵¹ in the first act and, "O Isis und Osiris, welche Wonne!"⁵² in the second. In *The Magic Flute* the above-mentioned effortlessness reaches its high point. With the greatest ease, Mozart unceasingly pours out pure gold, never pausing to take a breath—the ultimate maturity of a transfigured depth.

The staging here is naturally much more problematic. The "joy of the stage" [*Wonne der Bühne*] of an opera like *The Marriage of Figaro* or

Don Giovanni is unattainable, and yet the looser style of the fairy tale facilitates entirely new things, both musically and even dramatically. There are new dimensions of the sung word, a sovereign unfolding of overflowing beauty, and a grand symphonic character of the music, as in the fugue in the choralelike music sung by the two armored men, all of which are dimensions that make *The Magic Flute* a high point *sui generis*. Yet I do not hesitate to repeat: Mozart's greatest, most perfect music drama, the last word of opera, is and remains his *Don Giovanni*.

This great fullness, this incredible multifacetedness, everything that we have mentioned so far concerns only one aspect of Mozart's musical creativity, namely the opera. Yet beyond this, Mozart's genius poured itself forth in his symphonies, his chamber music, and his sacred music. The limits of this essay do not permit me to go into these areas of his work one by one. The last symphonies—the Haffner and, above all, the Prague, the Symphonies in E flat Major and in G Minor, and the Jupiter Symphony—confront us with a world of spirituality, masterful shaping, light, and noblest beauty. Everything is of inner necessity, extraordinary precision, and yet so lovely, coming to us as a gift. Whereas the great music dramatists—Gluck, Weber, Wagner, Verdi—have either written hardly a single symphony or else only ones that are far inferior to their operas, it is overwhelming to realize that Mozart, the greatest of music dramatists, is a master who even apart from his operas reveals himself to be a unique genius in his symphonies.

The same holds for his chamber music, and the word that Mozart speaks here is likewise of ultimate depth and genius. It is painful not to be able to mention all of the branches of his chamber music, not even to be able to single many of them out. A lifetime would not suffice to immerse oneself in each, to receive into one's soul the word that it speaks. I can mention only one high point, one of the most sublime things ever to have proceeded from the spirit of man, namely the Quintet in G Minor. A mysterious greatness, a necessity and

inner form, a breathtaking, ultimate spirituality fills all of the movements and stirs us to our depths. In the theme of the third movement, the Adagio, we encounter a heavenly transfiguration before which all words are silenced.

We live in a time that is in danger of suspecting everything beautiful of being saccharine and pathetically superficial, a time that promotes a cult of ugliness, considering ugliness to be deeper than harmony and harmony as something cheap and boring. What a message for our time is the chamber music of Mozart, what a refutation of this nonsensical, indeed, of this evil animosity toward beauty! Think of the immense edifice of his piano concertos, of the world of inner joy and light, of the inexhaustible river of grace-filled beauty that is to be found in them, or in the Fifth Violin Concerto, and, most of all, in the Andante Cantabile of the Fourth Violin Concerto. What a triumphant refutation of this modern perversion is Mozart's genius, which unfolds itself in his chamber music in all of its sweetness, depth, and angelic transfiguration.

In a time of the cult of originality at any cost [*à tout prix*], in which man no longer wants to recognize his creaturehood, in which he thinks that he must create an Esperanto of atonality instead of using God-given ways and means of creating truly artistic values, Mozart's chamber music, eternally young and inexhaustible, shows us true originality. Mozart himself writes in a letter, "How is it that my works take on the form or style of being Mozartean instead of being in the style of someone else? It is just like the fact that my nose is so big and bent outwards that it is Mozartean and not like other people's noses! For I do not attribute it to individuality, and I would not even know how to describe mine more precisely; probably it is just natural that people who actually have a face also look differently one from another. And as this is true on the physical plane, so also on the spiritual. At least I know that I have given myself the one as little as the other."

To our age so lacking in reverence, Mozart's chamber music reveals the true spirit of reverence toward God and all high values,

the conscious “yes” to our state as creatures. While today one all too frequently thinks that only tension and problems are deep, there resounds through all of Mozart’s works, and especially his chamber music, a radiant inner happiness and light. Although Mozart in many respects had a tragic life, one finds in the work of hardly any other genius such a witness to how beautiful creation really is. In spite of all that is tragic, in spite of all that justifies us in speaking of this world as a valley of tears—which Mozart knew as well as anyone—the words of the liturgy resound throughout his work: “*pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua*”—“heaven and earth are full of your glory.” Yes, the world is also filled with God’s glory; it also proclaims the eternal beauty of God, creation too is abounding in mysterious beauty.

A festive radiance permeates Mozart’s entire work. It shines, for example, in the Clarinet Quintet, the magnificent quartets dedicated to Haydn, in his wonderful Clarinet Concerto, in his two unique piano quartets, as well as in many of the divertimenti. In all of them, we encounter the same deep understanding of the radiance of creation, the festive character of all great things, and the natural mysteries of this world. Mozart’s work is the greatest antithesis to the radical affective neutrality of our times, to the depoeticization of the world, to the blindness to spiritual realities, to the worldview that sees everything from below [*à la baisse*] and the reduction of reality to that which can be comprehended with the categories of natural science.

Walter Braunfels has splendidly captured the real and deep humility that dwells in Mozart’s work and that is so radically opposed to this reductive spirit:

It is the human commitment to events, however they may come, sustained by a trust that all things come from God, which for Mozart stripped reality of its problematic character and brought forth a liveness and freedom of spirit, which at the same time is a true commitment to the reality of the present moment; for true detachment does not remove itself

from reality, it only illuminates it with its special light from above. It is the humility which speaks out of Mozart's music in such a human way, lending it that metaphorical quality which may seem facile to the superficial listener, but for one attentive to the essential, that makes for what can stir most keenly—namely the lightest vessel with the deepest content. Only he who rests in God can overcome both sadness and happiness with such inner bliss that these opposites of the human soul can work upon us in a similar way. Mozart's music is carried by an inner joy that brings all emotions into harmony, be they joyful or painful. Humor and deep seriousness seem to accompany one another in his art and in this life all the way to heaven's gates. It is humility before things as they are which makes Mozart's world so sublimely natural.

We would not do justice to the spirit of Mozart if we did not briefly say a few words about his church music. Recently it was asserted by someone that Mozart's music is the typical representative of the spirit of Freemasonry, showing no Catholic characteristics. Supposedly he was a Catholic only out of tradition and for the sake of his father, while Freemasonry was his real inner conviction. This statement is again a typical example, on the one hand, of the aforementioned arbitrary interpretation that presents an artist according to preconceived wishes and prejudices. On the other hand, it is an example of the erroneous assumption that one comes to understand the spirit of a work of art through the biography of the artist. It is true that Mozart was a Freemason, and yet at that time Freemasonry was not yet seen as incompatible with the Catholic faith, and this humanitarian fraternizing was so much in fashion that Mozart and his father Leopold Mozart were Freemasons. Yet both of them were above all devout Catholics. Apart from the question of how Catholic Mozart was in his life, we must insist that he who in listening to Mozart's music does not sense its quintessentially Catholic character understands either nothing of the Catholic spirit or nothing of Mozart.

Mozart's only significant work in which one could find a relation to Freemasonry is *The Magic Flute*. Yet even here one could only say this of certain passages, as for example, Sarastro's arias, the choruses of the priests, and so on. We have only to compare the "O Isis and Osiris" and "In diesen heil'gen Hallen"⁵³ with the "Ave verum corpus" or the "Et incarnatus" from the C Minor Mass to see how differently Mozart deals with the world of revelation and to understand the redeemed, transfigured character that permeates his entire work, derives its nourishment from religion, has its roots there, and takes on a specifically sacred tone in his church music.

If Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, with its arias, choruses, and the role of the Evangelist, embodies the world of the Gospels in a unique way, so the sacred music of Mozart too—his "Laudate Dominum," his "Ave verum corpus," the "Kyrie eleison," and above all the "Et incarnatus" from the C Minor Mass and the "Recordare" from the *Requiem*—is in a unique way filled with the spirit of the One who says: "I am meek and humble of heart." There is also a Marian spirit that wafts in Mozart's sacred music; it breathes the spirit of glowing, heart-melting love, one filled with the mystery of the Redemption.

If we find in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* a spiritual kinship with Michelangelo's "Deposition from the Cross," the work of his old age in the Duomo of Florence, or with his "Creation of Adam" in the Sistine Chapel, then the high points of Mozart's sacred music are in their ethos deeply related to two masterpieces of Raphael: "Feed my Lambs" and the "Miraculous Catch of Fish" in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London—the same redeemed, sublime note, the same quality of mysterious holiness, the same quintessentially Catholic spirit.

This wonder, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, this most loveable, most irresistible of all great geniuses can be counted by Austria as one of her own. This land of music *par excellence*, which produced a Haydn, a Schubert, a Bruckner, is also the fruitful ground of Mozart's spirit

and work. That Mozart's father came from Augsburg, with the result that Mozart is not as exclusively Austrian as Haydn, Schubert, or Bruckner does not change anything. For it is a well-known fact that many of the greatest and most typical Austrians came from other countries, as, for example, Prince Eugene of Savoy.⁵⁴ Mozart's music is surely universal like all of the greatest masterpieces of art, surpassing every cultural framework in its mysterious greatness. At the same time, it is for him who has ears to hear a unique incarnation of the genius of Austria, with its Catholic character, transcending all particular nations, with its festive radiance, which fills Salzburg in such a special way, and with its modest and so graceful countenance.

Hugo von Hofmannsthal says,

Mozart was here, and in these realms where the new and the old Europe touch one another, on this border between Roman, German, and Slavic culture, here his music arose, the German music, the European music, the true, eternal music of our time, the perfect culmination, natural as nature and as innocent. Arisen out of the depths of the most human of the German tribes, it presented itself to Europe, beautiful and clear as the ancient world, but an ancient world purified by Christianity and more innocent than the first. Out of the depths of the people their deepest and purest being had turned to sound; they were sounds of joy and a holy, animated spirit spoke out of them, a spirit free but not frivolous, a blessed feeling for life; the abysses are sensed but without horror, the darkness still irradiated by heartfelt light.

We want to take our leave of Mozart with the words of Franz Schubert, at the mention of whose name another unique world of deepest poetry and incomprehensible genius stands before us. In the mouth of Schubert, these words take on an especially touching note:

This will remain for my whole life a clear, bright and beautiful day. As if from a distance, the magic sounds of Mozart are

still quietly echoing within me. . . . Thus these beautiful impressions remain in our souls, acting in our lives for good which neither time nor circumstances can wipe away. In the dark-nesses of this life, they show us a clear, bright, beautiful dis-tance upon which we wait with confidence. O Mozart, immortal Mozart, how many, O how infinitely many such beneficent images of a luminous, better life have you impressed upon our souls!

Notes

The translator wishes to express his great gratitude to those who generously contributed their time in order to ensure the English text of *Mozart* would attain a high level of accu-racy and English style. John F. Crosby and Mary Seifert, gifted linguists, helped to make the text poised and polished; Madeleine Stebbins, who loves and understands the music of Mozart as do few others, as well as Susan Treacy, of Franciscan University of Steubenville, helped to track down von Hildebrand's sometimes obscure references to lines in the operas of Mozart; Alan Montgomery of the Oberlin Conservatory and Nico Castel of the Metro-politan Opera offered expert counsel on citing the operas of Mozart; and Anthony Gua-landri acted as a helpful editorial voice and an enthusiastic sounding board.

All endnotes in brackets were added by the translator.

1. [Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929) was a prolific Austrian dramatist whose works include the well-known play, *Jedermann*. Many of his dramatic works were written in collaboration with the German composer Richard Strauss (1864–1949), who composed many of his operas, including *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Die Frau ohne Schat-ten*, on plays by Hofmannsthal.]
2. [Theodor Haecker (1879–1945) was a German Catholic philosopher and theologian.]
3. [Walter Braunfels (1882–1954) was a talented German composer and von Hilde-brand's brother-in-law. His opera, *Die Vögel* (*The Birds*), based on the play by Aristo-phanes, was recently revived and given a world premiere recording that received much critical acclaim (conducted by Lothar Zagrosek on the *London* label, 448679-2; presently out of print but still available at some music stores and on the Internet).]
4. [Von Hildebrand discusses the meaning of the “new functionalism” at length in “The New Functionalism in the Light of Christ,” in *The New Tower of Babel* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1994), 91–111.]
5. [The Russian, Alexander Ulibishev (1794–1858), was a patron of the arts and the author of a three-volume biography of Mozart.]
6. [Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826) was an important German composer of the Romantic period whose most important work was his famous opera, *Der Freischütz*.]

7. [Act I, Aria: "Was that her whisper? I am becoming so anxious. Was that her sighing? My cheeks are burning."]
8. [Constanze sings two great arias in the second act. From the text of *Mozart*, it is not clear to which of these arias von Hildebrand is referring.]
9. [Act III, Recitative and Duet.]
10. [Act III, Romance.]
11. [Act II, Quartet.]
12. [Ibid. "When men look at us suspiciously, that cannot be endured."]
13. [The libretto for Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* was written by the Italian poet (among countless other occupations), Lorenzo da Ponte (1749–1838). The plot of *Figaro*, however, was not original with da Ponte, who took it over from the second of three plays by French playwright Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais (1732–99). The first of Beaumarchais's "trilogy" of "Figaro" plays was immortalized in Rossini's opera, *The Barber of Seville*.]
14. [Act I, Trio.]
15. [Act I, Finale.]
16. [Act III, Sextet. "And this is my father, he says so himself."]
17. Here I cannot help pointing out the unfortunate ways in which many directors of Mozart performances go astray today. Instead of helping the viewer to be taken completely into the world of the music-drama and to abide in imagination in the palace and park of Count Almaviva, to be drawn into the world of Mozart, instead of striving simply to promote the artistic illusion by theatrical means—as one did in earlier times—these directors believe they should push themselves into the foreground with new ideas—and foolish ones at that—in which they replace the interior of a Rococo castle with a room done in the art nouveau style [*Jugendstil*] having an open sky above, which reminds the viewers at every moment that they are sitting in a theater. This is a way of directing a production that forces us not to take the work seriously but rather to look at it as nothing more than a performance in a theater. And especially with *The Marriage of Figaro*, in which the work offers an ideal possibility for a poetic, artistic staging, the know-it-all attitude of modern directors is especially offensive. Even worse, admittedly, is the mindless speeding up of the tempos, the tendency to add as many staccatos as possible, to exaggerate the gesture of the music, to avoid all authentic, noble ethos and instead farcically to add coarse effects. All this reveals a radical misunderstanding, which would reduce Mozart's art to the level of something artsy, soulless, brilliant yet superficial, making him more like Bernard Shaw and failing to recognize his ultimately Shakespearean depth and angelic nature. In contrast to these misinterpretations, I remember with gratitude the unique Mozart performances under Felix Mottl, Bruno Walter, and, as concerns the musical direction, under Wilhelm Furtwängler in Salzburg.
18. [Act II, Finale. "Please, lord, do not refuse (their wishes), grant my (their) wishes."]
19. [Ibid. "My ugly mug may be lying but I am not."]
20. [Ibid. "Your lordship! What is this amazement?"]
21. [Ibid. "I will go, but next time I see you."]

22. [Act I, Duet. "There we will hold hands."]
23. [Act I, Aria. "While their heads are still hot from the wine."]
24. [Act II. "Come here with me."]
25. [Act II.]
26. [Act II, Aria. "Some of you go this way."]
27. [Act I, Recitative and Duet. "Banish, my dear, this bitter memory."]
28. [Act II, Recitative and Duet. "Do not tell me, my true love, that I am so cruel to you."]
29. [Act I, Introduction. "Night and day I slave away."]
30. [Act I.]
31. [Act II, Aria. "Some of you go this way."]
32. [Act I. "Psst! Psst! Masqueraders! Pst, pst!"]
33. Note well that the analogy to Goldoni concerns only the formal conception of the stage and drama. Goldoni manifests a morally noble tone in all of his works, which is almost entirely nonexistent in the libretto of *Così fan tutte*. Not the content of the libretto, but the formal method of dramatization is being compared here with Goldoni. [Carlo Goldoni (1707–93) was a prolific Italian playwright and librettist.]
34. [Act I, "Farewell."]
35. [Act I, Trio. "May the wind blow gently."]
36. [Act II, Duet. "Friendly breezes, aid my desires."]
37. [Act II, Rondo. "For pity's sake, my beloved, forgive the transgression of a loving soul."]
38. [Act II, Finale. "And in your glass and mine may every care be drowned."]
39. [Act II, Aria. "A loving breath from our sweethearts."]
40. [Emanuel Schikaneder (1751–1812)—actor, singer, poet, and theatre director—was the author of the libretto of *The Magic Flute*.]
41. [Act I. "Three boys, young, fair, lovely, and wise."]
42. [Act I, Aria. "This portrait is enchantingly beautiful."]
43. [Act I, Duet. "With men who feel love."]
44. [Act I.]
45. [Act I. "Hoo! That is the devil for sure!"]
46. [Act I. "That sounds so wonderful."]
47. [Act II.]
48. [Act II. "Tamino mine! Oh what great joy!"]
49. [Act II, Aria. "A sweetheart or a wife."]
50. [Act II. "Soon the shining sun . . . will proclaim the morning."]
51. [Act I. "Pamina still lives!"]
52. [Act II, Chorus. "O Isis and Osiris, what bliss!"]
53. [Act II, Aria. "Within these sacred halls."]
54. An important figure in Austrian history, Prince Eugene (1663–1736) was a French nobleman in the service of the Austrian emperors. In a life full of successful military exploits, Eugene fought to drive the Turks out of Vienna during their occupation of the city in 1683.