



# Crossroads of Europe

VIENNA IN THE 1780s. We look at the situation dramatized by Peter Shaffer in his play and film *Amadeus*, when the young Mozart comes to Vienna in 1782, and produces a German opera, three Italian ones, and another German masterpiece before his early death. What does this tell us of the cultural climate under Emperor Joseph II, and of Vienna itself, less notable as the center of a national style than as the filter bed for influences from the South, the North, the West, and even from the East? What are the historical and geographical causes of this confluence of cultures, and how is it reflected in the non-musical arts?

Nevertheless, the second half of the class will be entirely devoted to opera, taking us from Italian tragedy to German comedy and beyond. While we shall end with excerpts from two masterpieces that premiered in Vienna—Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Beethoven's *Fidelio*—we will trace the journey through less familiar pieces by Salieri, Gluck, Haydn, and others. *rb.*

## A. Mozart in Vienna

Mozart comes to Vienna, where the operatic scene is dominated by Italian works and Italian officials, including the court composer Antonio Salieri. Mozart's proposal to write an opera in German nonetheless has the approval of the Emperor, Joseph II.

**Mozart:** *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Act I, entrance of the Pasha  
La Scala, Milan; original production by Giorgio Strehler

**Mozart:** *Le nozze di Figaro*, Act III, fandango  
Garsington Opera, 2017

***Amadeus*,** Mozart is invited to the palace

Film 1984, d. Milos Forman. F. Murray Abraham (Salieri), Tom Hulce (Mozart), Jeffrey Jones (Joseph II)

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## B. The World of Joseph II

Joseph II's authority derives partly from his position as Holy Roman Emperor and partly from his more active role as King of Austria and Hungary. The combination makes Vienna an astounding conflux of international influence, but also strengthens the Emperor's desire to make it the cultural capital of a *German* state.

**Amadeus**, Mozart tells the Emperor about *Figaro*

**Janissary music** and Mozart's compared

**Amadeus**, the premiere of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

Original *Figaro* playbill (1786)

Fischer et al: Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna (1740s)

Bellotto: Views of Vienna (1760s)

Pozzo: *Labors of Hercules* (1693, Liechtenstein Gartenpalais)

Knoller: Ceiling of Gries Abbey (1775)

Old Burgtheater, Vienna (1741–1888)

## C. International Italian

Since its inception, opera had always been seen as an Italian art form, codified in the 18th century by the libretti of Pietro Metastasio, which places the focus on star singers and *bravura* arias. Salieri makes splendid use of this form, but another Viennese composer, Gluck, shows that a less flamboyant alternative might have greater dramatic impact.

**Salieri**: *Europa riconosciuta* (1778), "Quando più irato fremo"

Recording session, 2007. Diana Damrau and Jérémie Rohrer

**Gluck**: *Alceste* (1767), "Ombre, larve"

Venice, 2020. Carmela Remigio (Alceste), Pier Luigi Pizzi (d.)

**Gluck**: *Don Juan* (1761), excerpts

Versailles, 2006

**Salieri**: *Les Horaces* (1786), overture

## D. The Language of Laughter

In the 18th century, Italian *opera buffa* conquers Europe, giving rise in turn to French *opéras comiques* which, translated into German, would fill theaters in Vienna. Home-produced German comedy, or *Singspiel*, would arise mainly on the fringes, but interesting fringes at that.

**Salieri**: *Prima la musica, poi le parole* (1786), "Cucuzze"

Francesca Salvatorelli (Tonina); production not known

**Salieri**: *Prima la musica, poi le parole*, finale, opening

Venice 2021. Francesca Boncompagni (Eleonora), Rocio Perez (Tonina),

**Haydn**: *Philemon und Baucis* (1773), trailer

Bautzen, Germany, 2016

**Mozart**: Cat duet from *Der Stein der Weisen* (1790)

Amsterdam, 2011. Piotr Micinski and Renate Arends

## E. Beyond Singspiel

Bookending the turn of the century are two German-language masterpieces—Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Beethoven's *Fidelio*—rooted in the tradition of *Singspiel*, but achieving so much more.

**Amadeus**, Queen of the Night aria

**Mozart**: *Die Zauberflöte* (1791), Papageno/Papagena duet

Royal Opera, 2019. Christina Gansch and Roderick Williams

**Beethoven**: *Fidelio* (1805–14), opening

Hamburg, 1968. Lucia Popp and Erwin Wohlfahrt

**Beethoven**: *Fidelio*, prisoners' chorus, opening

Salzburg 2015; d. Claus Guth, c. Franz Welser-Möst

## Artists, Composers, and Writers

Pierre-Augustin Caron de **Beaumarchais** (1732–99, *French playwright*), Ludwig van **Beethoven** (1770–1827, *German composer*), Bernardo **Bellotto** (1721–80, *Venetian painter*), Lorenzo **Da Ponte** (1749–1838, *Italian librettist*), **Fischer** von Erlach (1656–1723, *Austrian architect*), Christoph Willibald von **Gluck** (1714–87, *German composer*), Joseph **Haydn** (1732–1809, *Austrian composer*), Martin **Knoller** (1725–1804, *Austrian painter*), Pietro **Metastasio** (1698–1782, *Italian librettist*), Wolfgang Amadeus **Mozart** (1756–91, *Austrian composer*), Andrea **Pozzo** (1642–1709, *Italian painter*), Antonio **Salieri** (1750–1825, *Italian composer*), Emanuel **Schikaneder** (1751–1812, *German impresario*), Peter **Shaffer** (1926–2016, *English playwright*)

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