

Class 7 : Crossroads of Europe

A. Mozart in Vienna

1. Section title A (Bellotto: View of Vienna)

I wanted to do something different with this class. Instead of looking at the prevailing styles of a particular country, I wanted to focus closely on one particular city—Vienna in the later 18th-century—where a number of quite different national styles seem to collide. Let's start with two brief opera scenes. Other than both being ensembles in works by **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756–91) that premiered in Vienna in the 1780s, they have something else in common. What is it?

2. Mozart: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Act I, entrance of the Pasha

3. Mozart: *Le nozze di Figaro*, Act III, fandango

4. Mozart, *Entführung*, and Figaro

Did you get what I'm after? I chose them for the number of national influences that went into them. Two in the case of *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782), which is a **German**-language opera set in Turkey and (in this scene) imitating genuine **Turkish** music which Mozart would have heard. A whopping four in the case of *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786): the scene shows a **Spanish** dance in a **French** play, translated into **Italian**, and set to music by a **German**-speaking composer. If you add the fact that the European characters in *The Abduction* are three **Spaniards** and a feisty **English** maid, you bring the score for that one up to four as well.

5. Gluck, Haydn, Salieri, Mozart, and Beethoven

This is a subject that, as an opera person and something of a specialist on Mozart, I know well. The rivalry between Italian and German opera—and Mozart wrote both—was always going to be a large feature of the class. I just assumed that if I looked hard enough, I would find a similar confluence of cultures in painting, architecture, and poetry. But in fact I have been able to find very little. I will throw in what I have, but this class is going to be almost entirely about music.

6. Jeffrey Jones as Joseph II and F. Murray Abraham as Salieri in *Amadeus* (1984)

I am going to play a fairly long scene from the 1984 movie *Amadeus*, directed by **Milos Forman** (1932–2018) to a script that **Peter Shaffer** (1926–2016) expanded from his stage play. It has two main characters: the Viennese court composer **Antonio Salieri** (1750–1825), whom you see here, played by F. Murray Abraham, and **Mozart**, whom you will see in a moment. Shaffer is quite frank that the old rumor of the rivalry between the two men—even to the extent of claiming that Salieri murdered Mozart out of jealousy—is largely baseless; current research shows that they viewed each other with a mutual, if cautious, respect. Also Salieri was only 5 or 6 years older, and something of a young prodigy himself, so

not really the older *maestro* resenting the arrogance of youth. But it gives Shaffer a strong basis for his plot, which has more to do with God and the nature of talent than with such melodrama.

I am always struck by Jeffrey Jones' portrayal of **Emperor Joseph II**, which I find entirely believable and really rather attractive; more on him later. Just before the scene I am going to play, Mozart has been brought to Vienna by his employer, the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, and Salieri has heard him. The conversation now turns to bringing him to Vienna permanently; as the Emperor says to Salieri and the two other musicians in the room, all of whom are Italian, "we could use a good *German* composer." I considered making some cuts, but it was too difficult without disturbing the continuity.

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

B. The World of Joseph II

8. Section title B: The World of Joseph II

9. Anton von Maron: *Joseph II* (1775)

So who was the Emperor Joseph II? He was born in 1741, the eldest son of Empress **Maria Teresa** of Austria. He was a **Habsburg**, a cousin of the Kings of Spain. His sister, **Marie Antoinette**, married King Louis XVI of France; his other sisters were the Queens of Naples and Parma respectively. He reigned as co-regent with his mother from 1765 until she died in 1780, upon which point, he inherited the titles shown here. The bottom-line point is that, like many of the European monarchs of the time, his connections were Pan-European. But his special position as **Holy Roman Emperor** requires some explanation.

10. Map of the Holy Roman Empire, 1789

Voltaire famously said, "The Holy Roman Empire was neither holy nor Roman nor an Empire." He was right. The political entity called the Holy Roman Empire began as a title conferred by Pope Leo III on the Frankish Emperor Charlemagne in 800, as a deliberate revival of the defunct secular Roman Empire. The Emperor was never conceived of as an absolute territorial ruler, rather an *primus inter pares* among the various monarchies within his territories. Officially, subsequent Emperors were elected by all the rulers within the territories, but in fact the office had been held by a member of the Habsburg family more or less continuously for several centuries. And, as you see, the Empire was comprised of a patchwork quilt of principalities, with virtually nothing to compete with Austria in size.

11. Map of Europe in 1790

As you will see here, however, Austria was less than half the territory that Joseph II ruled as an absolute monarch. He was also King of Hungary, which was even larger, and his family ruled Tuscany and the Austrian Netherlands. So, from his capital in Vienna, he was open to influences from East, South, and West, and as an ethnic German he was also connected to the cultures to his North.

12. Three Enlightened Despots

But there is an even more important feature that connects Joseph to several of the other crowned heads in Europe, most notably **Frederick the Great** of Prussia (reigned 1740–86) and **Catherine the Great** of Russia (reigned 1762–96). All three received a French education, based upon reading of the French *philosophes*, such as **Voltaire**, **Rousseau**, and **Diderot**. All three were deeply committed to the ideals of the **Enlightenment**, based upon reason and science rather than the dogmas of the Church, and treasuring the brotherhood of man. Yet all three were absolute rulers; the phrase that is often used is **Enlightened Despotism**. The monarch rules by decree, but his or her decisions are made solely for the good of the people. In Joseph's phrase: **"For the people, all; by the people, nothing."** Joseph's reforms included reducing the powers and number of the clergy, proclaiming religious toleration, abolishing serfdom, simplifying taxation, and ending the death penalty. He also strengthened Vienna as the seat of central government and made German the official language, which did not much please the Hungarians.

13. Jeffrey Jones as Emperor Joseph II in *Amadeus* (Milos Forman, 1984)

Joseph's immediate connection with France through his sister **Marie Antoinette** made him aware of the troubles brewing there. When **Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais** (1732–99) brought out his play *Le mariage de Figaro* in 1785, he immediately saw that it was a danger to social stability and banned it from performance in Vienna; the wonder was that Louis XVI had finally been persuaded to permit it. One of the scenes I especially like in *Amadeus* is the one after he hears that Mozart is planning an opera on the very same subject!

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

15. Lorenzo da Ponte and the *Figaro* playbill

I am convinced by this scene because it shows Joseph acting both reasonably and as a human being. As history tells us, he did eventually relent. Shaffer's movie and play had Mozart convincing him directly, but I am cutting this because it does not ring true in the same way. In fact, it seems to have been Mozart's librettist, **Lorenzo da Ponte** (1749–1838), who persuaded the Emperor that sung lines have a very different effect from spoken ones. So Mozart got his opera, which ran for 9 performances—a success, though a modest one, nothing to match the wild success it had in **Prague** a few months later.

16. Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna

Anyway, it is not surprising to find a strong French influence in Vienna. It is clear, for example, that the summer palace at Schönbrunn ("beautiful spring"), though built before Joseph's time and by an Austrian architect, **Fischer von Erlach** (1656–1723), is an obvious descendant of Versailles. We will see some more musical connections between Vienna and Paris in the second hour.

17. Bernardo Bellotto: Views of Vienna

The view of Vienna I used as my title slide, the two more shown here (and indeed most of the views you will buy printed on placemats or whatever), are by an Italian, Canaletto's nephew **Bernardo Bellotto** (1721–80), who spent several years in the city around 1760. But the Italian connection is much deeper

than that. Venice and Milan are just over the Alps; Joseph II's brother Leopold, who succeeded him as Emperor, was **Grand Duke of Tuscany**, and Italian artists had been working in Vienna since the middle of the 17th Century.

18. [Andrea Pozzo: *The Labors of Hercules* \(1693, Liechtenstein Gartenpalais, Vienna\)](#)

19. [Martin Knoller: Ceiling of Gries Abbey \(1775\)](#)

Andrea Pozzo (1642–1709), for example, who executed that remarkable ceiling for Saint Ignatius in Rome, settled in Vienna at the end of his life and did a number of church and palace decorations there, such as this ceiling of *The Labors of Hercules* in another Viennese palace owned by the Liechtenstein family. And the influence of this and other Roman artists can be seen in the work of native Austrians, such as this ceiling by **Martin Knoller** (1725–1804) at the Abbey of Gries. You could say, however, that the comparative restraint of his treatment, the light colors, and use of white and gold are distinctive national features found in Austria and Germany, but not so much in Italy or France.

20. [Viennese Coffee House, 18th century \(left half\)](#)

So that covers influence from the West and South; what about North and East? Here's an anonymous 18th-century painting of one of the coffee houses for which Vienna became famous. Its style is vaguely Dutch; you might see something similar in German painting too.

21. [Viennese Coffee House, 18th century \(full width\)](#)

But this is only the left side of the picture; let me show you the whole thing. I am not sure if the man in Turkish dress is a genuine Turk or a fanciful costume for the waiters, but it is a reminder that the Ottoman Empire was out there at the far edge of Hungary. Twice over the preceding centuries, they had besieged Vienna, and the final skirmishes of the three-hundred-year Habsburg-Turkish War were still playing out. Though Turkey still represented danger in the Viennese mind, it was now of the thrillingly exotic sort. It was against this background that we saw Mozart proposing his *Abduction from the Seraglio* to the Emperor.

22. [Turkish Janissary Band](#)

23. [Janissary music and Mozart's compared](#)

And it would contain, as we have also already heard, a couple of choruses in imitation of the music of Turkish Janissary Bands, characterized by melodies in short phrases, a strong beat, and lots of percussion. If we compare Mozart to the real thing, we see that the similarity is not especially close, but it was enough to give that foreign *frisson*.

24. [The old Burgtheater, Vienna \(1741–1888\)](#)

You remember that, near the beginning of our first *Amadeus* clip, the Emperor had talked of wanting a German composer for the National Theater. He was referring to the building shown here (sorry about the Getty stamp!), the old Burgtheater. This was built in 1741, under the aegis of Maria Theresa, Joseph's mother, but Joseph himself had renamed it the **German National Theater** in 1776. Yes, it did

put on Italian operas—Mozart’s *Figaro* and *Così fan tutte* both premiered there—but Joseph was always looking for something German, and *The Abduction* filled the bill.

25. Playbill for *Le nozze di Figaro* (repeat)

I showed you the playbill for *Le nozze di Figaro* before. Looking at it again, though, what strikes me most is the way the opera is described. Although the work is in Italian, the German title is at least as large. It is not called an opera, but an Italian *Singspiel*, which is the term used for more popular works such as *The Magic Flute*. And although Lorenzo da Ponte is not mentioned at all, libretti are on sale both in Italian and German.

26. *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at Glyndebourne

There is one other way in which *The Abduction* might have pleased Emperor Joseph. Although the Pasha comes from an alien culture, he behaves in the end as more of an Enlightenment figure than even the Western heroine, by renouncing revenge and acknowledging the rightness of a freely-chosen love. Indeed, **Sir David McVicar**, in his production from Glyndebourne, costumes him very much like a Western monarch. But rather than that, I want to watch the glimpses of the opera we catch in *Amadeus*. I love the way in which the scales sung by the soprano, **Caterina Cavalieri**, at her singing lesson with Salieri turn into the runs of one of the more difficult arias Mozart ever wrote—more on that subject after the break. The clip will end, as the opera does, with some more of that Turkish Janissary music.

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

28. Class title 2 (*Abduction* at the Met)

C. International Italian

29. Section title 3: International Italian

Just before the break, we heard a scene in which a singing lesson by Salieri turned into an aria by Mozart: a *German* aria, “Martern aller Arten,” in a German opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. But in effect, Mozart was writing the kind of *aria di bravura* that Salieri had made famous—in *Italian*. The heroine has already sung one quite substantial aria, “Traurigkeit.” Mozart throws in this very difficult 8½-minute aria back to back with it, perhaps just to show that he can! In this hour, I want to look a bit further at **Salieri**, at Mozart’s predecessors in Vienna, and how an Italian operatic climate became a German one. So let’s start with one of those Salieri Italian arias in the style that Mozart might have been emulating, in a recording session with **Diana Damrau** and conductor **Jérémie Rhorer**. No need for titles; you just need to know that the character is both angry and determined. This is the second half.

30. Salieri: *Europa riconosciuta*, “Quando più irato freme”

31. Pompeo Batoni: *Pietro Metastasio*

That aria comes from Salieri’s opera *Europa riconosciuta* that he wrote 1778 as a commission for the opening of **La Scala** in Milan. Salieri—at 28—was already an internationally-renowned composer, and that the international language of opera was Italian. Why Italian? Because the art form had been invented in Italy around 1600, Italian lends itself especially well to singing—at least of this kind—and even German princes preferred it for their court theaters. And the kind of Italian opera they preferred was largely the work of the man on the left, **Pietro Metastasio** (1698–1782), who was Court Poet in Vienna from 1730 until his death. Although not a composer himself, his *libretti* were set multiple times by composers all over Europe; they set the pattern for *opera seria*, which was essentially a showcase for one show-stopping aria after another.

32. Joseph Duplessis: *Gluck* (1775)

But arias like the one we have just heard were already out of fashion, and the person most responsible for making the change is this man, **Christoph Willibald von Gluck** (1714–87). Born near Prague, he studied in Italy, and then was appointed as *Kapellmeister* in Vienna in 1754. While he continued with the classical subjects favored by Metastasio, he had no interest in indulging the singers or their fans, and in the preface to his *Alceste* of 1767, he set out the principles of his reform. Basically, they boil down to one thing: nothing must get in the way of the drama. Here is the opening aria from *Alceste*, in which she laments that her husband must be sacrificed to appease the angry god unless somebody can be found to take his place. Its purity and absence of any frivolity should be obvious. Although the aria is full of passion, there is nothing inserted solely for display. The singer is **Carmela Remigio**.

33. Gluck: *Alceste*, “Ombre, larve”

34. Ballet sequences from Salieri’s *Europa riconosciuta* (La Scala, 2004)

The photo shows a couple of the ballet sequences in Salieri’s *Europa riconosciuta* in the production for the re-opening of La Scala in 2004. As you can guess, there were mainly there as decorative interludes.

Gluck, however, cut out all such frivolities from his operas, if they did not advance the plot. But this did not stop him from writing ballets that told a story. Indeed, his *Don Juan* of 1761 broke new ground as the first full-length narrative ballet. Here are two clips; the first is a fandango that Mozart must have had in his head when writing *Figaro*; the second shows Don Juan being taken down to Hell.

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

36. Gluck's Operas in Paris

I was going to include some Gluck in last week's class as an example of Neoclassicism, but I didn't because his essential reforms took place in Vienna. All the same, he moved to Paris in 1770, and his works there, some new, some reworkings of his Vienna compositions, are vital to the history of French opera. Salieri too wrote for Paris, though this time in French. Here is the opening of his 1786 opera *Les Horaces*. You will recognize one of the pictures, painted only the year before.

37. Salieri: *Les Horaces*, overture

D. The Language of Laughter

38. Section title 4: The Language of Laughter

Things were no less international, and a lot more flexible, when it came to comedy. Since the beginning of the century, Italian *opera buffa* had conquered most European centers. In Paris, this gave rise to a French-language version, the *opéra comique*, which had similar characters, plots, and tunes, but replaced Italian recitative by spoken dialogue. In Vienna, comic opera was supplied partly by the Italian variety, partly by French works translated into German. **Joseph II** tried to set up a company to play only German works—he called it the *National Singspiel*—but it lasted only from 1778 to 1783. Its two successes were Mozart's *Entführung* and—wait for it—a Salieri work called *Der Rauchfangkehrer* (the Chimneysweep). I don't have a usable clip of this, but I can show Salieri in a comic vein, with his short opera *Prima la musica, poi le parole* (first the music, then the words) of 1786. It concerns the travails of a composer and a librettist: the composer wants elevated lyricism; the librettist wants action and humor, and brings in a singer from a more vulgar background. Here is a scene in which she imitates a man with a stutter trying to talk about cucumbers. I'll follow this with the opening of the finale in a more modern production, in which both singers, *seria* and *buffa*, perform at the same time.

39. Salieri: *Prima la musica, poi le parole*, "Cucuzze"

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

41. Haydn and Schikaneder

Joseph II's experiment most probably failed because there was a lack of genuine German *Spingspiels* of sufficient quality. But that was not to say that German comic opera did not flourish in the margins. **Joseph Haydn** (1732–1809), for example, produced several Italian operas among his many works he wrote for his patron Prince Esterhazy over the border in Hungary, but among them were a couple of German-language pieces written to be performed by marionettes. I'll show you the trailer for one of

them, *Philemon und Baucis* (1773). And the gentleman on the right, **Emanuel Schikaneder** (1751–1812), opened a popular theater on the outskirts of Vienna, where he presented musical comedies in German, in which he often took the principal comic roles. I'll show you a bit of his greatest commission, Mozart's *Magic Flute*, in a moment, but first I want to give you a glimpse of an earlier and more typical undertaking, *Der Stein der Weisen* (the philosopher's stone), whose music was a joint effort by **Mozart**, Schikaneder himself, and three other composers. The character we see is looking for his wife, who has miraculously been turned into a cat; this is Mozart having fun!

42. Haydn: *Philemon und Baucis*, trailer

43. Mozart, cat duet from *Der Stein der Weisen*

E. Beyond Singspiel

44. Section title 5, Beyond Singspiel

Schikaneder persuaded Mozart to write a full opera, to his own libretto. This was *Die Zauberflöte* or *The Magic Flute*, which premiered in 1791, the year of Mozart's death. Schikaneder and Mozart were both **Freemasons**, and the central action of the opera's second act consists of the initiation of the hero and heroine, **Tamino** and **Pamina**, into the Brotherhood of the Sun—rituals that apparently have a lot in common with Masonic rites. Of course, there is always the ordinary guy **Papageno** (Schikaneder himself) there to screw up, but even his most comic antics cannot take away from the deep moral seriousness underpinning the piece, which is why I call this section **Beyond Singspiel**. I won't play any of these serious moments right now, though. Instead, I'll give you one last clip from *Amadeus*, in which the nagging of Mozart's mother-in-law turns into the coloratura of the villain, the **Queen of Night**. I'll follow it with the scene where Papageno, the bird-catcher, finally gets his **Papagena**; scenes like this are where *Singspiel* lives. Both scenes, though, owe something to **Salieri**: the Queen's aria is another *bravura* piece such as the one we heard at the start of the hour, though Mozart now uses the style only for melodrama or parody; and the start of the "Pa-, pa-, pa-" duet is surely a trick learned from Salieri's stutterer!

45. *Amadeus*, Queen of the Night aria

46. Mozart: *Die Zauberflöte*, Papageno/Papagena duet

47. Beethoven and Schikaneder

In 1803, Schikaneder approached **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770–1827) to write an opera for him. The younger man had arrived in Vienna eleven years before, in 1792, to study with Haydn, and was fast establishing a reputation in the city. The libretto that Schikaneder wrote, *Vestas Feuer*, was a mostly serious piece, but it was not to Beethoven's taste. All the same, one of the two numbers he set before giving up would become a duet in his *Fidelio*, two years later. Actually, the opera we know as *Fidelio* was first called *Leonore*; it had to go through many revisions (and four different overtures) over the next nine years, before it reached its final version in 1814.

Part of Beethoven's problem was that he was trying to use a popular form, the *Singspiel*, to convey lofty ideas about freedom and the brotherhood of man; the action is set in a prison. Personally, I feel that he never got the mixture quite right, but I know there are many who disagree. I am going to play two short excerpts. The first, in a conventional production, is from the opening scene: the young man **Jacquino** is attempting to get his sweetheart **Marzeline** to name a date for their wedding, but she has fallen for the new arrival Fidelio, and puts him off. This is realist *Singspiel* stuff: domestic comedy involving ordinary people. But then I'll show the moment later in the act, after the new arrival Fidelio (really the heroine **Leonore**, disguised as a man to seek her husband, a political prisoner) persuades the jailer to allow the prisoners a few minutes in the sun. For this, I'll use an abstract production by **Claus Guth** from Salzburg, which I think distills the abstract nobility of Beethoven's ideas.

48. Beethoven: *Fidelio*, opening

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

50. Class title 3: A Hymn to Freedom