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# On Ancient Languages: The Historical Idiom in the Music of Wolfgang Amadé Mozart

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## Mozart and History

Ancient (or classical) languages are those languages which are no longer spoken; these are those, like Latin or Ancient Greek, that are considered today to be “dead.” They still command a certain respect, because of the “timeless truths” that they may be used to express. But these may just as well be expressed in translation, more comfortably and just as accurately. If Joseph Haydn’s music, as the composer himself is reported to have said, was a language understood by the whole world, then it could hardly have been an “ancient” language—only that which is in use, is up to date, of the present, can be understood directly, and understood to be “new.”<sup>1</sup> So just how old is the term “ancient music”? (As it began to be called in the closing years of the eighteenth century; today we say “early music.”) Not music that is outdated, to be sure, but the music of the past that is of the present, that derives a certain aura of truth, life, and uniqueness just from being “old”?

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1 Conrad Ferdinand Pohl, *Joseph Haydn*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1928), p. 251: “Auch Mozart hatte Bedenken und meinte gutmütig: ‘Papa! Sie sind nicht für die große Welt erzogen und reden zu wenig Sprachen.’ Worauf Haydn: ‘Aber meine Sprache versteht man in der ganzen Welt.’” (“Mozart also had reservations and said, in a friendly tone: ‘Papa! You were not raised for the wide world and do not speak enough languages.’ Haydn replied: ‘But the whole world understands my language!’”)

The greatest of his predecessors among composers of Protestant church music.<sup>2</sup> And even if he had known the one or the other, it would still be a trying exercise in speculation to trace any possible influence.

When we speak of Mozart we hardly ever ask about his historical consciousness. Did he have one at all? When it came to music, did he think in historical dimensions, that is, did he understand his compositions as part of the stream of history, emerging from the depths of historical time, flowing through a present in which he had a place, and continuing then into a future? Or was he more of a pragmatist, oriented to the present available to him through personal experience, which could of course have included the thoughts and creations of one or two previous generations? Georges Duby once proposed that the first human historical horizon, in the middle ages, was about fifty years long, bordered by the power of memory, and that the second was another fifty, in which reconstruction of the past was at best possible only with gaps. Before these two, almost everything was forgotten: "Au-delà, le souvenir se perd."<sup>3</sup>

Let us borrow Duby's insight on the middle ages, which seems quite plausible, and apply it as a thought experiment to Mozart's music historical memory. Mozart would have been aware of European music history from the end of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth, that is of his father's and grandfather's generation. But he manifestly wasn't; indeed, he couldn't have been. Duby's claim refers to humanity not as a kind of collective historical subject, but to the

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2 Kirsten Beißwenger, *Johann Sebastian Bachs Notenbibliothek* (=Catalogus Musicus 13) (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1992); Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach. The Learned Musician* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), passim, mentions that works of Schütz were held, in Bach's time, in the libraries of the choirs at St. Michael's church in Lüneburg and St. Thomas's in Leipzig, but he cannot prove that Bach encountered them at either.

3 Georges Duby, "Structures de parenté et noblesse dans la France du Nord aux Xe et XIe siècles," in Georges Duby, *Hommes et structures du moyen âge. Recueil d'articles* (=Le savoir historique 1) (Paris: Mouton, 1973), pp. 267-285 ; quotation from p. 282.

individual experiences of discrete human beings. So of course Mozart was not acquainted with the abstract “mass” of music of one hundred years of history, but rather with a unplanned, almost random, and even broken repertoire made up of works of diverse provenance.<sup>4</sup> The historical music that was important to Mozart—whose historical knowledge was, in comparison with many of his contemporaries, astounding—was important not because of some abstract historical dignity, but because of its use to Mozart’s actual creative practice. To exaggerate slightly: Mozart didn’t care much if a creative impulse came from a (certainly not uninteresting) violin sonata by Joseph Schuster or if it came from J.S. Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*.<sup>5</sup> The only thing that mattered was historical music’s productive relation to what he was composing at the time.

In order to examine this rather general claim more closely, we will first have to revisit some aspects of Mozart’s biography. Then we will have to investigate a well-known historiographical topos, namely Mozart’s supposed “Bach experience” during his first years in Vienna. Finally, we will attempt several at least cursory observations of significant works, chosen because they—to take up the music as language metaphor once again—make use of an idiom that is clearly at odds with conventions of the time and make obvious use of historical musical “dialects.” We are less interested here in the bare fact that Mozart made use of certain historical idioms. What concerns us more are the functions in which these are used and the composer’s communicative intentions in specific and diverse compositional situations.

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4 On the music in Mozart’s estate see Ulrich Konrad and Martin Staehelin, eds., *allzeit ein buch. Die Bibliothek Wolfgang Amadeus Mozarts* (=Ausstellungskataloge der Herzog August Bibliothek Nr. 66) (Weinheim: VCH, Acta humaniora, 1991); Cliff Eisen, “The Mozarts’ Salzburg Music Library,” in Cliff Eisen, ed. *Mozart Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 85–138.

5 Joseph Schuster, 6 Divertimenti da camera für Cembalo (Klavier) und Violin, ed. Wolfgang Plath (Kassel: Nagel, no year); Ludwig Finscher, *Mozarts Violinsonaten* (=Hundertachtundachtzigstes Neujahrsblatt der Allgemeinen Musikgesellschaft Zürich Auf das Jahr 2004) (Winterthur: Amadeus, 2003), esp. pp. 16–22.

## Counterpoint

Mozart wrote to his father on 29 March 1783 about the musical gatherings in the apartments of Baron van Swieten: “we love to amuse ourselves with all kind of masters, ancient and modern.”<sup>6</sup> So music was the main object of these *Kenner’s* interest—provided it was masterful. Occasionally, one of the other of the composers Mozart and his colleagues studied in these sessions is mentioned in the Mozart correspondence by name: Johann Ernst Eberlin, for instance, or Georg Friedrich Handel, or J.S. Bach and his sons Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Phillip Emmanuel, or Michael Haydn. Some of these were still among the living; the works Mozart and his colleagues examined were written for the most part in the first half of the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, some of the composers were already considered to be “old,” or, to put it another way, not “modern.” Yet their music inspired lively discussions among the assembled company. Perhaps these discussions revolved around questions of compositional craft, or the difference between former and present techniques, or the aesthetic value of the individual works. But should one of these compositions have demanded more detailed study or even a performance before a larger audience, then there would have been no question that it would have to be arranged and re-written to bring it in line with prevailing tastes. Even in places like Vienna, where, for example, there had been occasional performances of Handel’s oratorios since the beginning of the 1770s, it would have been impossible to speak of older music enjoying a true presence—in any case not the kind of presence that would make

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6 *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, chronologically arranged, translated and edited ... by Emily Anderson (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989) (hereafter *Mozart’s Letters*), quotation from p. 844. “wir lieben uns mit allen möglichen Meistern zu unterhalten; – mit alten und mit Modernen.” See: *Mozart. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen. Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm A. Bauer and Otto Erich Deutsch (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962/63, 1971, 1975), Paperback edition with additional vol. VIII *Einführung, Ergänzungen und Bibliographi*, ed. Ulrich Konrad (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2005) (hereafter *BriefeGA*). Quotation from: vol. III, p. 262.



older music a historical reality, an influence, for newer music.<sup>7</sup> So there was nothing like musical "historicism" in the explicit sense of the word, and nothing like an overt consciousness of music history (and of course no nostalgia, no yearning for an imagined better past, as, in a completely different direction, the historicizing parody of the song *Die Alte* K. 517 proves).<sup>8</sup> Not that Mozart wasn't interested in the flotsam and jetsam of the past. His proven knowledge of a canon by William Byrd, copied out of Mattheson's *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*,<sup>9</sup> or a fugue by Johann Joseph Froberger (from Athanasius Kirchers *Musurgia universalis*),<sup>10</sup> or a motet by Johann Stadlmayr (K. 44)<sup>11</sup> remained, however, peripheral and without consequences. The number of pieces by Bach and Handel Mozart studied more intensively is insignificant in relation to the massive output of the two older composers. Yet these two were of the same generation as younger composer's grandparents and their lifetimes

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7 Theophil Antonicek, *Zur Pflege Händelscher Musik in der 2. Hälfte des 18. Jahrhundert* (=Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.hist. Sitzungsberichte 250/1) (Wien: Böhlau, 1966); idem, "'Vergangenheit muss unsre Zukunft bilden': Die patriotische Musikbewegung in Wien und ihr Vorkämpfer Ignaz von Mosel," *Belgisch tijdschrift voor muziekwetenschap / Revue belge de musicologie* 26/27 (1972/73), 38-49; Otto Biba, "Bach-Pflege in Wien von Gottlieb Muffat bis Johann Georg Albrechtsberger," in Alfred Reichling, ed., *Mundus organorum. Festschrift Walter Supper zum 70. Geburtstag* (Berlin: Merseburger, 1978), pp. 21-35; idem, "Österreich und Bach," *Bachfest der Neuen Bachgesellschaft* 58(1983), 87-91; idem, "Von der Bach-Tradition in Österreich," in Ingrid Fuchs and Susanne Antonicek, eds., *Johann Sebastian Bach. Beiträge zur Wirkungsgeschichte* (Wien: Verband der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1992), pp. 11-33; idem, "Gottfried van Swieten," in Ulrich Prinz, ed., *Europas Musikgeschichte. Grenzen und Öffnungen. Vorträge des Europäischen Musikfestes Stuttgart 1993* (=Schriftenreihe der Internationalen Bachakademie Stuttgart 7) (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1997), pp. 120-137.

8 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werk* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1955-) (hereafter NMA). Here: NMA III/8, pp. 32-33.

9 K. 227 (K Anh. 28, K Anh. 10XI, K Anh. A 31), from: Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1739), p.409.

10 K. Anh. 292 (K.3 Anh. 109 VII, K.6 Anh. A 60), from: Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis* (Rome: Corbeletti, 1650), Liber VI., p. 466. See also: *Neue Froberger-Ausgabe*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, vol. VI: *Vokale und instrumentale Ensemblesmusik. Werkverzeichnis* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, forthcoming), there no. 201.

11 Ernst Hintermaier, "Zur Urheberchaft des Introitus 'Cibavit eos' KV 44 (73u). Mozarts mißglückter Transkriptionsversuch einer mensural notierten Musik," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1991, pp. 509-517.

either almost, or, in Handel's case, actually overlapped with Mozart's.

Music performed despite its stylistic "backwardness," and the manner in which composers like Mozart engaged with it, depended on its specific contexts for legitimacy. As far as genres were concerned this was true almost exclusively of sacred music; as far as compositional technique was concerned this was true for canon, fugue, and counterpoint. Because of its function liturgical music always had enjoyed a special status: participation in developments emerging from secular music, and the stylistic changes that came with them, was always viewed with a certain suspicion. Mozart was of a similar opinion.<sup>12</sup> In the spring of 1783, when his father hesitated to send some of his own sacred compositions to Vienna, Mozart encouraged him to do so with the argument that *Kenner* knew full well, "that musical taste is continually changing—and *what is more*, that this extends even to church music, which ought not to be the case. Hence it is that true church music is to be found *only* in the attics and in a worm eaten condition."<sup>13</sup> This statement is not a remonstrance about the decline and fall of "true church music." If it were, then Mozart would have had to have viewed some of his own recently composed sacred music as having made sacrifices to prevailing tastes. It is an admission that the *stylus ecclesiasticus* has greater staying power, that is, it is of "longer duration" than other styles. Now of course Wolfgang's request was limited to specific works of Leopold's around a quarter century old; this would put our postulated historical horizon at around 1760. It is unlikely that Mozart would have considered older styles, like the classical vocal polyphony represented most of all by the works of Giovanni Pierluigi di

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12 Ulrich Konrad, "Lieblingsfach Kirchenmusik. Zur Musica sacra Wolfgang Amadé Mozarts," *Musica Sacra* 126/1 (2006), 10-16.

13 12 April 1783, *Mozart's Letters*, p. 845. "Baron van suiten, und Starzer, wissen so gut als sie und ich, daß sich der Gusto immer ändert – undabe – daß sich die Verränderung des gusto leider so gar bis auf die kirchen Music erstreckthat; welches aber nicht seyn sollte – woher es dann auch kömmt, daß man die wahre kirchenMusic – unter dem dache – und fast von würrern gefressen – findet." *Briefe* GA III, p. 264.

Palestrina, in his definition of "true church music." His encounter with Allegri's *Miserere* in Rome in 1770<sup>14</sup> and his first examination piece for Bologna, the motet *Quaerite primum regnum Dei* K. 86,<sup>15</sup> remained without any audible consequences in his later works.

In Mozart's lifetime, canon and fugue—counterpoint's non plus ultra—enjoyed the status of proven traditional techniques of composition, if not with the same intensity that they had before the profound changes in musical language that had taken place in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Despite these changes, professional composers in Mozart's time were expected to have command over traditional rules and procedures; the goals of their professional training reflected this. Yet—and this is important—such procedures no longer provided the axiomatic foundations of composition. The fugue as the most prestigious of the contrapuntal procedures or, more generally, imitative constructions of musical texture, was to be found most of all in one context: predetermined sections in sacred works, namely (in the Catholic tradition) in the mass and the litany of the sacraments. Mozart always respected these conventions in his own practice.<sup>17</sup> In fact, he composed

14 Wolfgang Plath, "Kleine Mozartiana," in Ernst Hertrich and Hans Schneider, eds., *Festschrift Rudolf Elvers zum 60. Geburtstag* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1985), pp. 397–406. Isolde Vetter, "Mozarts Nachschrift des Allegrischen *Miserere*: Ein Gedächtnis-wunder," in Hermann Danuser and Tobias Pleblich, eds., *Musik als Text. Bericht über den internationalen Kongreß der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung Freiburg im Breisgau 1993*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998), vol. 2, pp. 144–147. Magda Marx-Weber, "W.A. Mozart's 'Miserere' K.85/73," in Graham Strahle, ed., *All kinds of music. In honour of Andrew D. McCredie* (Wilhelmshaven: Noetzel, 1998), pp. 117–120.

15 On the genesis of K. 86 see the foreword to NMA I/3, pp. IX–X and the critical report to the same volume, pp. 39–42. Transcriptions in NMA I/3, pp. 73 and 267, facsimiles pp. 264–266.

16 Maria Taling-Hajnali, *Der fugierte Stil bei Mozart* (=Publikationen der Schweizerischen Musikforschenden Gesellschaft 2, 8) (Bern: Haupt, 1959); Isabelle P. Emerson, "The Role of Counterpoint in the Formation of Mozart's Late Style" (Ph.D. diss. Columbia University, 1977); Warren Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato in rococo and classical chamber music*, rev. and exp. 2d ed. (Durham / NC: Duke University Press, 1979); Manfred Hermann Schmid, *Mozart und die Salzburger Tradition* (=Münchner Veröffentlichungen zur Musikgeschichte 24) (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1976).

17 In the masses the final sections of the *Gloria* and *Credo*, and the "Osanna in excelsis" of the *Sanctus* require fugues, in a requiem fugues could appear in

extremely ambitious fugues in a large number of such sacred pieces; these are an early witness to his contrapuntal interests and abilities. Indeed, Mozart's contrapuntal education, based on his father's compositions and on Salzburg's traditions, had been early and swift. In addition, he had acquainted himself, beginning in 1770, with the strict and deeply traditional world of Johann Joseph Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum*.<sup>18</sup> Leopold admonished his son openly in 1777 that he not forget to make public demonstration of his abilities in "fugue, canon, and contrapunctus."<sup>19</sup>

Yet beyond the clearly confined contexts of the Catholic liturgy counterpoint had little substantial meaning for Mozart until his arrival in Vienna. The instrumental fugue seemed at first to be at most a useful model for improvisation at the keyboard, or so he reported in multiple letters from the 1770s and 1780s.<sup>20</sup> With his arrival in Vienna this situation changed, but not in such a way that such fugues became an independent genre to which Mozart, looking for new compositional

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the Kyrie and as settings to passages like "*Quam olim Abrahae*" and "*Cum sanctis tuis*." In the litany of the sacrament the *Pignus*, in the Vespers the psalm *Laudate pueri*, the ending of the *Magnificat*, and the final verse of the *Te Deum* ("*In te Domine speravi*") all lend themselves to fugal treatment. Mozart's participation in these conventions extends from his earliest sacred works, the masses K. 139 (11; 47a) and K. 49 (4) of 1768/1769 to the *Requiem* K. 626.

18 Alfred Mann, "Zum Salzburger Studienbuch," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1984-85, 71-75; idem, "Leopold Mozart als Lehrer seines Sohnes," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1989-1990, 31-35; idem, "Johann Joseph Fux's theoretical writings. A classical legacy," in: Harry White, ed., *Johann Joseph Fux and the music of the Austro-Italian Baroque* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992), pp. 57-71; Wolfgang Suppan, *Von Johann Joseph Fux zu Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. 2 Vorträge im Mozartjahr 1991* (Graz: Johann-Joseph-Fux-Gesellschaft, 1994).

19 Letter of 28.-29. September 1777, *Briefe GA II*, p. 18: "Nun auf die Sache von München zu kommen, so würde es vielleicht gehen, wenn du nur Gelegenheit bekommen kannst, daß der Churfürst, alles hört was du kannst, und sonderheit: in der Fugen, Canonen und Contrapuncts Composition zu machen im Stand bist." *Mozart's Letters*, p. 281: "I have this moment received your first letter from Munich. Perhaps all will go well. Possibly you could get things working if you could find an opportunity of showing the Elector everything you can do, especially in fugues, canons and counterpoint compositions."

20 *BriefeGA II*, p. 82, *Mozart's Letters*, pp. 338-339 (Mannheim 23.-25. Oktober 1777), *BriefeGA II*, p. 406, *Mozart's Letters*, p. 570 (Paris, 18. Juli 1778), *BriefeGA III*, p. 135, *Mozart's Letters*, p. 748 (Wien, 27. Juni 1781).

challenges, was to turn his specific attention. Counterpoint, in other words, was a means but not an end. Indeed, in his entire Viennese period he composed only two fugues meant to stand alone as independent works: the three-voiced fugue for clavier in C major K. 394 (with prelude), and the four-voiced fugue in C minor K. 426 (in 1788 arranged for strings and provided with an introduction as K. 546).<sup>21</sup> Both are in the spirit of Bach's and Handel's contributions to the contrapuntal genre. They show Mozart's newly awakened contrapuntal curiosity, brought about by imitation of the older models he discovered via van Swieten and his security—at a not quite consistent level—of his traditional fugal technique. Other contrapuntal projects of this time period, for instance the planned composition of five additional fugues to be dedicated, together with the C major fugue, to van Swieten as a six-work cycle, never came to fruition.<sup>22</sup> Something did, however, emerge from these projects that was to become quite central to Mozart's stylistic development: his ever more focused attempts, in the following Viennese years, to integrate contrapuntal techniques into his musical language as a whole. The combination of the widest range of musical means, derived from the most diverse stylistic contexts—in terms of our still-regulatory seventeenth-century categories, from the church, the chamber, and the theater—and the contrast of these means in very narrow musical spaces in every possible genre was to pave the composer's way to both compositional profundity and an individual musical idiom.

## The Bach Experience

One of music history's most sacrosanct pieces of conventional wisdom is that Mozart found the inspiration for this productive synthesis of the "learned" and the "galant" through his engagement with

21 K. 394: NMA IX/27/2, p. 10, K. 426: NMA IX/24/Abt. 1, p. 39, K. 546: NMA IV/11/10, p. 47. Dana Marie Havlice, "The Musical Style of Mozart's Fugues for Keyboard" (Master of Arts, California State University, Fullerton, 1983).

22 Cf. letter of 20. April 1782, *Briefe*GA III, pp. 202–203 (*Mozart's Letters*, pp. 800–801).

the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. As Alfred Einstein, for instance, tells the tale this experience of playing through Baron van Swieten's collected Bachiana, was Mozart's "Bach experience."<sup>23</sup> Now it is certain that Mozart must have received some kind of special creative impulse from the encounter, but there is no evidence at all to suggest that other, simultaneous encounters with the music of the Bach sons or Handel were of any lesser importance.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it would be just as accurate, if not more accurate, to speak of a "Handel experience," even if this might still provoke the occasional—quite ideological—response from German musicology. As always in such cases, it seems that closer acquaintance with hitherto unknown music led directly to a desire to imitate it. The contrapuntal imagination of his predecessors inspired Mozart to investigate their works, and then to put what he learned from the investigation to work in the service of his own composition *as yet another tool available to intensify a specific kind of musical expression*. Conscious composition in a historical idiom—for its own sake—is a plan he would not have considered even for a moment. Attempts like his "baroqueified" *Suite*<sup>25</sup> or the fugues mentioned above, or the *Kleine Gigue* in G major of 1789 (K. 574), a piece that plays especially acutely with historical idioms, had a specific value as studies for van Swieten's circle of Kenner, who might well have enjoyed lively discussions about how well Mozart had amalgamated Bach's and Handel's particular styles—however they might have judged them—into his own.<sup>26</sup>

23 Alfred Einstein, *Mozart. Sein Charakter. Sein Werk* (Zürich: Pan-Verlag, 1953). On Mozart's "Bach experience" see pp. 181–186. Stanley Sadie, "Mozart, Bach and Counterpoint," *Musical Times* 105(1964): pp. 23–24.

24 Mozart arranged the following large-scale works by Handel: *Acis und Galatea* HWV 49a (K. 566: NMA X/28/Abt. 1/1); *Der Messias* HWV 56 (K. 572: NMA X/28/Abt. 1/2); *Das Alexanderfest* HWV 75 (K. 591: NMA X/28/ Abt. 1/3); *Ode auf St. Caecilia* HWV 76 (K. 592: NMA X/28/ Abt. 1/4).

25 NMA IX/27/2, p. 20. Anselm Gerhard, "Stilübung oder Karikatur? Mozarts Klaviersuite KV 399 und die Negation des 'klassischen Stils,'" in Annegrit Laubenthal and Kara Kusan-Windweh, eds., *Studien zur Musikgeschichte. Eine Festschrift für Ludwig Finsche* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995), pp. 393–404.

26 NMA IX/27/2, pp. 58–59. Joachim Brügge, "KV 574 – Kleine Gigue in G-Dur. Bach-oder Händel-Einfluß?," *Mitteilungen der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum* 40/1–4 (1992), 111–115. Clemens Kühn, "Alt und neu. Zu Mozarts

Mozart added this kind of counterpoint to his own compositional arsenal via a rather sober technical process, which we can trace through a series of revealing fugue fragments.<sup>27</sup> In some of these we can follow a well reflected trajectory of trial and error that ends with the kind of insight he seems to have sought for his own work. These unfinished pieces are by no means "work"-like; they are not the end results of some greater creative process. They are experiments. They reveal the isolation of specific technical problems and the attempts Mozart made to solve them. The five part fugue fragment in E Minor K. 455 (Sk 1782e) is an instructive example of this kind of progress and regress in contrapuntal thinking and experimentation within a discrete act of composition.<sup>28</sup> In this four-voice fugue, which aims at generous formal dimensions, Mozart examines the possibilities of sequence of the points of imitation, register, and metric displacement offered by broad-shouldered theme in 4/2 meter. Six written ideas group themselves into the following passages, which either link up with one another, begin anew, or recapitulate what has just been attempted:

### Ex. 1. and 2.

#### 1) Autograph

- 2) Measure groupings: 1) mm. 1a-15a 2) 4b-15b 3) 7c-15c 4) 12d-15d  
5) 1-20 6) 1-16

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'Kleiner Gigue' G-Dur KV 574," *Musik & Bildung* 23/3 (1991), 17-22.

27 NMA IX/27/2, pp. 173-187. NMA X/30/4, passim. Günther Wagner, "Mozarts Themenbildung unter dem Einfluß von Johann Sebastian Bach," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1980-83, 409-414; Johann Zürcher, "Über einige Fragmente Mozarts. Fragen, Hypothesen, Vorschläge," *ibid.*, 414-429; Peter Wollny, "Mozarts Fugen und der fugierte Stil in seinem Spätwerk," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1991, 86-92.

28 NMA X/30/3, No. 37 and 38. Ulrich Konrad, *Mozarts Schaffensweise. Studien zu den Werkautographen, Skizzen und Entwürfen* (=Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse. Dritte Folge, Nr. 201) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), pp. 471-478; Robert D. Levin, "Mozart's E-Minor Fugue for Keyboard: Chronicle of an Abandoned Labor," *Mozart Society of America. Newsletter of the American friends of Mozart* 4/2(2000), 10-11.

It is clear from these few examples that Mozart had no formally complete fugues in mind when he composed these fragments. Instead, it seems that he was aiming at the solution of specific problems, for instance the preliminary working out of the subject's thematic potential and its first entries (1), and then a second attempt to travel the same road, yet taking a slightly different path (2), then discarding this attempt and trying something completely different (3, 4), then returning to the original idea, if temporarily (5, 6). One clear influencing factor even in this series of experiments, mental and written, are—not so easy to make out, but nonetheless evidently of some importance—Bach's and Handel's instrumental fugues, for example those taken from the former's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and the latter's *Six Fugues or Voluntaries* op. 3. Their architecture, indeed, seems to have led to the creation of a musical space in which Mozart moves here.

### Ancient Languages

The question of how, and to what degree, Mozart's overall creative development was influenced by the experiences he had, in various phases and in varying degrees of intensity, in his childhood and youth with the music of "old masters" and their "old" techniques of composition is not the kind of question to which one can give simple, monocausal answers. The same is true of his supposed "Bach experience." This question (and its answers) must orient itself to concrete, specific cases. Without taking the musical context—in the widest sense—of a given composition into account it is impossible to draw any valid conclusions. Mozart scholars must most of all immunize themselves against confusing the Bach and Handel Mozart encountered in the 1780s in the selected scores he had at his disposal with the icons of art these composers are today, as a result of their respective reception histories. Mozart's artistic creativity was whetted not by heroes but by the actual contents of music from the pen of older colleagues, a word understood in its original Latin sense to mean a person who enjoys the



same rights and has the same responsibilities.

Let us now investigate four such contexts, if only briefly: two liturgical works, which we will examine against the background of the discussions about the musical "sublime," one characteristic aria from *Don Giovanni*, and one picturesque scene from the *Magic Flute*. Each of these well-known pieces has its own musical idiom, which at once contradicts, with a strange ambivalence, Mozart's "usual" tone of voice and is, at the same time, a part of that voice, lending to it a kind of historically metaphoric quality. In the literature this state of affairs is usually explained away quickly with a reference to the Bach-Handel "experience" we have been discussing. If Mozart's occasional use of historical musical idioms is a rational act of individual expression, then the question we must ask this process is: In what context does it take place? And with what intention?

Mozart's references, in the two large-scale (and unfinished) sacred works of his Viennese period, to compositional techniques familiar from Handel oratorios and oratorio-like works, are obvious to those who know how to listen for them. These references are all in the same affective "tone of voice"; they all take place, one might say, within the boundaries of a single discrete aesthetic gesture. The powerful double chorus *Qui tollis* in the *Gloria* of the C Minor Mass K. 427 (417a) follows—as Wolfgang Plath noticed for the first time—irrefutably in the footsteps of Handel's eight-voice chorus "The People Shall Hear" in the oratorio *Israel in Egypt* HWV 54/No. 25a, and does so with the utmost skill, even insight.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, both choruses are preceded by a duet in D Minor ("Thou in Thy Mercy" / *Domine deus*), which is a further

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29 *Qui tollis*: NMA 1/1/Abt. 1/5, pp. 49–62; "The people shall hear": Georg Friedrich Händel, *Israel in Egypt*, ed. Annette Landgraf (=Hallische Händel-Ausgabe 1/14) (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), pp. 354–378. The first to note this connection was Wolfgang Plath: "Zwischen Bach und Händel: Bemerkungen zum 'Qui tollis' aus Mozarts c-Moll Messe," paper at the conference "Alte Musik als ästhetische Gegenwart" (Stuttgart, 1985; unpublished); Silke Leopold, "Händels Geist in Mozarts Händen. Zum 'Qui tollis' aus der c-Moll-Messe KV 427," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1994: 89–112.

argument for seeing them as related.

**Ex 3**

Comparison Handel *Israel*/Mozart *Missa* (chorus)

**Ex 4**

Comparison Handel *Israel*/Mozart *Missa* (duet)

In the *Requiem* the opening movement is marked with the influence of the first chorus from Handel's *Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline* ("The Ways of Zion do Mourn") HWV 264 (No. 2), and the Kyrie double fugue that comes next bears relation to the final chorus ("We will rejoice") of the *Anthem for the Victory of Dettingen* ("The King Shall Rejoice") HWV 265 (No. 5).<sup>30</sup>

**Ex. 4**

Comparison Handel *Anthem*/Mozart *Requiem*

It would be possible to show how Mozart made use of these individual movements by Handel without surrendering his own "voice" in detail—for our purposes here, however, we will have be satisfied with simply having made the claim and secured the evidence. Intertextually, the compositions we have juxtaposed here speak to one another about sin, terror, and grief. The text in Handel's duet and chorus are exegetical; the commentary they provide illuminates the *Domine deus*, the proclamation of God's only son, and the *Qui tollis* in the mass. The text

30 *Requiem*: NMA I/1/Abt. 1, Teilband 1, S. 3–9; "The Ways of Zion do Mourn": Georg Friedrich Händel, *Anthem for the Funeral of Queen Carolin*, ed. Annette Landgraf (=Hallische Händel-Ausgabe III/12) (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2004), pp. 4–13; Kyrie: NMA I/1/Abt. 1, Teilband 1, pp. 10–16; "We will rejoice": *Anthems by George Frederic Handel, Volume the third* (Leipzig: German Handel Society, 1872), pp. 143–153. See also: Christoph Wolff, *Mozarts Requiem. Geschichte · Musik · Dokumente · Partitur des Fragments* (Kassel: Bärenreiter 2001); English Version: Christoph Wolff, *Mozart's Requiem. Historical and analytical studies, documents, score*. Translated by Mary Whitall. With revisions and additions by the author (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

of the duet begins: "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy people, which Thou hast redeemed. Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto the holy habitation". The Oratorio's continues in its tutti: "The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on them; all th' inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away by the greatness of Thy arm. They shall be as still as a stone, till Thy people pass over, O Lord, which Thou hast purchased." Yet the implications of these Gloria texts come only indirectly to the fore, of course, in Mozart's use of the music Handel set them to in his own composition. The *Requiem* movements and the choruses from the *Anthems* are similarly related. The word painting and the contents of both are expressions of the "sublime," the aesthetic category of which Sulzer wrote, in his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*: "[it is] far greater and more powerful that we could have expected...it effects the observer with its strong blows...draws one in...and grabs hold of the passions irresistibly."<sup>31</sup>

In 1782, or at the latest in 1783 during his study of Handel's score, Mozart must have been overwhelmed by the "strong blows" of its mighty choruses and recognized in them a paradigm for the construction of the sublime in music. They became a productive source of inspiration, both as source for new means of expression and, perhaps, a source of historical legitimacy for Mozart's own attempts in this direction (although we ought again to ask ourselves skeptically if Mozart was in a position to view history as source of such legitimacy.) The sublime—in connection with the *Requiem* it is reported that Mozart spoke of a "high and pathetic style of church music"<sup>32</sup>—had been associated in various

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31 [Es ist] "weit größer und stärker ... als wir erwartet hätten", [es wirkt] "mit starken Schlägen, ist hinreißend und ergreift das Gemüth unwiderstehlich". Johann Georg Sulzer, "Erhaben," in *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste in einzeln, nach alphabetischer Ordnung der Kunstwörter auf einander folgenden, Artikeln abgehandelt, von Johann George Sulzer, Mitglied der Königlischen Academie der Wissenschaften in Berlin etc., Zweyter Theil, Neue vermehrte zweyte Auflage* (Leipzig: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1792) (repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), pp. 97–114, quotation from p. 97.

32 "der höhere pathetische Stil der Kirchenmusik". The expression was first used in a paraphrase of a conversation with Constanze in Franz Xaver Niemetschek, *Leben des K. K. Kapellmeisters Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart* (Prague: Hierl,

aesthetic discourses since the 1770s very closely with Handel's choruses, which were received as monumental and full of affective power. Perhaps it was in this connection that they became the subject of both discussion and music performance at the weekly musical matinees on Sundays in the apartments of Baron van Swieten. These gatherings, after a one off production of *Judas Maccabeus* in 1779 and various performances under the direction of Salieri and Starzer by the *Tonkünstlersocietät*, were the impulse for the public rediscovery of various large scale choral works of Handel's in the late 1780s, a project with which Mozart was, as we know, intimately involved, both in its preparation and its execution.<sup>33</sup>

All of these "returns" to historical models and idioms, irrespective of Mozart's appropriation and transformation of them, result in certain "objectified" quality of distance in the music or its "Uneigentlichkeit" (a German word for which there is no adequate expression in English; one option is "improperly speaking"). It seems that Mozart added this quality to the music intentionally, especially in those instances where references to it are all the more obvious in that they stand out from the different sounding music around them. This happens with particular clarity in contexts where the "historical" tone has no particular original function, for instance in opera. Donna Elvira's aria *Ah fuggi traditor in Don Giovanni* and choral of the men in armor (*Gesang der Geharnischten*) from the *Magic Flute*, for example, seem to be placed, in their stylistic orientation towards the tone and compositional technique of Handel and Bach, in what for them can only be a foreign environment. To put it in reverse, they don't fit into the "place" that their composer has chosen for them. In both arias Mozart breaks with musical convention for the sake of a special dramatic effect, which we could describe generally as a kind of "emphasis of the strange."

Donna Elvira's aria,<sup>34</sup> with which she answers—in the tonic D Major

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1798), p. 33.

<sup>33</sup> Bernd Edelmann, "Händel-Aufführungen in den Akademien der Wiener Tonkünstlersocietät," *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 1 (1984): 172–199. On Mozart's Handel arrangements see footnote 24, above.

—Don Giovanni's and Zerlina's preceding A Major seduction duet *Là ci darem la mano* forces its way, violently almost, into the opera's dramatic construction. For almost a minute the tone is bitterly earnest, in diametric opposition to the Don's own opposing minute, his B Major—that is, as far as possible from Donna Elvira's tirade—confession in the so called champagne aria of his (im)moral life philosophy. And while the male hero's minute resounds with cues to a musical present, a present no less explosive in 1787 as today's would be, Donna Elvira does battle in hers with time itself. We can observe this easily by comparing the bass lines of the two arias: in Donna Elvira's one sixteenth upbeat breathlessly follows the other, yet all of her musical energy is expended in the shortest possible time: in 45 measures we find 26 rests. In Don Giovanni's aria, by contrast, the bass line pulses like an unfettered beating heart.

#### Ex. 5

Opening of the arias Donna Elvira/Don Giovanni (bass lines)

Yet Donna Elvira departs from her own time in another way as well. She articulates herself in a musical language that sounds old; her voice is coated in an expressive yet antiquated patina. In the absence of detailed reports of the work's original reception in Prague and Vienna we cannot know the first reactions to this rather atavistic intervention. We do know, in contrast, how Mozart's unusual tone here was received from the end of the eighteenth long into the nineteenth century: with incomprehension. The aria was almost always omitted from performance. In 1789 Friedrich Rochlitz found the piece eccentric, a "whim" of the composer's. Five years later Ignatz Ferdinand Arnold felt himself "transported, as if having been struck with a magic wand, into the Golden Age of the Bachs, Handel, and Hasse," a sensation he did not altogether enjoy. Otto Jahn, in his Mozart biography, drew the aria

into the spheres of the spiritual and felt himself under the influence of "a moralizing sermon."<sup>35</sup>

Donna Elvira finds herself here in a state of exquisite shock and rage, overwhelmed, we read in the Prague libretto, by "atti disperatissimi"; this bodes ill for Don Giovanni's hitherto so unproblematic attempts to seduce Zerlina.<sup>36</sup> The heavens have given her the power, she sings, to see the dissolute Don's moral turpitude clearly—"il ciel mi fece udir le tue perfidie"—and now she has the chance to protect an innocent victim. This hysterical attempt to play the guardian angel makes it simple for Don Giovanni to paint her as "lovesick," as a "povera infelice," and the aria that follows conforms his denunciation: one sign of Donna Elvira's momentary distress is her inability to speak in music like a "normal" person. In her rage she loses herself and with this her power to speak; she falls into an anachronistic idiom. To put it musically, she falls into the superannuated language of opera seria. At this point in the opera's dramatic trajectory, this regression helps make Donna Elvira into an aesthetic caricature. Her anger veers into comedy, just as Osmin's does in the *Abduction from the Seraglio*, surely a rather similar case. Just as in the *Abduction*, according to Mozart's own report, the Turkish music marks the transition to the comical; that is, an exotic idiom overwhelms a more familiar musical dialect.<sup>37</sup> Here a kind of stylized anachronism gives the lonely voice of warning in a moral desert a humorous undertone. But whereas the *Alla turca* was a universally loved expressive trick in Mozart's musical present, Donna Elvira's *colour annccienne* must

35 See the references in Martin Staehelin, "'Ah fuggi il traditor...'" Bemerkungen zur zweiten Donna-Elvira-Arie in Mozarts *Don Giovanni*," in Jürgen Schläder and Reinhold Quandt, eds., *Festschrift Heinz Becker zum 60. Geburtstag am 26. Juni 1982* (Laaber: Laaber, 1982), pp. 67–86.

36 Il *Dissoluto Punito o sia Il D. Giovanni, dramma giocoso in due atti, da rappresentarsi nel teatro di Praga l'anno 1787*. (Facsimile) (Prague: Sekretariat Mezinárodního Hudebního Festivalu Pražské Jaro, [1987]), p. 22.

37 Osmin's aria "Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen": NMA II/5/12, pp. 73–89. Mozart expresses his opinion of the aria in a letter of 26. September 1781, *BriefeGA* III, pp. 161–164. See also Ulrich Konrad, *Wolfgang Amadé Mozart. Leben · Musik · Werkbestan* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2005), esp. pp. 149–150.

have been off putting in the opera house, especially if less sophisticated or younger members of the audience missed the point and were only able to relate to it as being somehow strange.

Aesthetically, Mozart risked much in the Donna Elvira aria, and in this form it was to remain an experiment.<sup>38</sup> He may have learned from the experience that such a direct appropriation of historical music, as opposed to his use of the collective affect of the sublime, was not the best tool to use in the face of the subject centered emotional expressivity demanded more and more in dramatic opera—except, of course, if the intention was to distort. But beyond the solo set piece it was certainly possible to continue to make use of the historical idiom, as we will now show, in conclusion, using the *Gesang der Geharnischten* from the *Magic Flute* as an example.<sup>39</sup>

Reinhold Hammerstein dedicated a groundbreaking study to this portion of the opera's second finale more than fifty years ago; since then it is often regarded, in Hammerstein's words, to be "perhaps the grandest document of Mozart's encounter with history."<sup>40</sup> In this music Hammerstein hears the echoes of Mozart's second "Bach experience," which took place in Leipzig in 1789, in which, Hammerstein writes, Mozart made the acquaintance of the "master of the text bound forms." Although the composer is said to have been "deeply impressed by the Motets and perhaps also arrangements of organ chorals" Hammerstein admits that the second "Bach experience" did not have the same "synthetic" effect as the first. That is to say: the legend of Mozart's

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38 On the figure of Donna Elvira see, in addition to Staehelin, "'Ah fuggi traditor': Hermann Abert, W. A. Mozart, Zweiter Teil 1783-1791 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1956), pp. 366, 37-376, 402-403, 410-411; Dieter Borchmeyer, *Mozart oder Die Entdeckung der Liebe* (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 2005, pp. 998; Stefan Kunze, *Mozarts Opern* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1984, 1996), pp. 403-407.

39 NMA II/5/19, pp. 287-294.

40 Reinhold Hammerstein, "Der Gesang der geharnischten Männer. Eine Studie zu Mozarts Bachbild," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 13 (1956), pp. 1-24. The newest interpretation of this scene is in Jan Assmann, *Die Zauberflöte. Oper und Mysterium* (Munich: Hanser, 2005), pp. 237-244.

supposed encounter with Bach's music in Leipzig—propagated by the tireless Rochlitz—is questionable in the extreme, and hardly possible to confirm by music analytical means.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the only concrete evidence of an encounter with Bach's vocal music, the manuscript copy of the motet *Singet den Herrn ein neues Lied* bears a telling note in Mozart's hand: "N.B.: an entire orchestra needs to be added to this."<sup>42</sup> In Vienna, at least, a performance of the motet in its original form seems to have been out of the question.

It is not our intention to provoke a discussion of Hammerstein's telling of this story, which has lost little of its power. That the *Gesang der Geharnischten* is a very unusual piece of music, stylistically far outside of the normal compositional idiom around 1790, is beyond debate. But the notion that it is somehow laden with world historical meaning, overflowing, as it were, with historiographical importance, seems exaggerated, if not downright dubious. Hammerstein writes: "its ideal content points beyond the humanitarian ideology of the eighteenth century back to ancient Greece and Egypt. The choral melody draws an arc from Protestantism and the Lutheran Reformation to the psalms of the Old Testament. The factual appearance of the cantus firmus opens a connection to the oldest forms of European polyphony. Powerful aspects of earlier music come to life in this parody procedure, in the use of *musica rhetorica*, in the proximity to the world of the baroque organ. The attentive ear perceives nothing less than the specific continuity of Western music history, and its historicity, in the simultaneous presence of diverse epochs and stages of historical development."<sup>43</sup> All that one

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41 Hans-Joachim Schulze, "So einen Chor haben wir in Wien nicht. Mozarts Begegnung mit dem Leipziger Thomanerchor und den Motetten Johann Sebastian Bachs," in Brigitte Richter and Ursula Oehme, eds., *Mozart in Kursachsen* (Leipzig: Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, 1991), pp. 50–62.

42 Vienna, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, see Uwe Wolf, "Zur Leipziger Aufführungstradition der Motetten Bachs im 18. Jahrhundert," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 2005, 301–309.

43 Hammerstein, "Der Gesang der geharnischten Männer," p. 18: "Ihr ideeller Gehalt weist über die Humanitätsideologie des 18. Jahrhunderts zurück nach Griechenland und Ägypten. In der Chormelodie spannt sich der Bogen über



can do in the face of so impressive an apotheosis is ask a harmless question: What is historical position of this scene in real life, that is, what is its function and purpose in the context of the *Magic Flute's* finale?

The *drei Knaben* have just persuaded Pamina to abandon her unreasonable plans of suicide, provoked by apparent disappointment in love, by singing their hopeful song about the impending dawn of Reason. A frightful panorama reveals itself to the spectator: a wild mountainous landscape, a cascading waterfall, a fire spewing volcano, black fog before a burning red horizon; everywhere bars and locked iron doors. A pyramid rises in the midst of all this, upon which one can read a transparent inscription. "Two armored men," read original stage directions, "lead Tamino in. Upon their helms burns fire." As we know, the text the two are singing to our youthful hero before these "terrible gates" is the inscription on the pyramid, which Schikaneder took almost word-for-word from Abbé Terrasson's *Séthos* novel.<sup>44</sup> Mozart offers his contrapuntal (and thoroughly "uncanny") choral adaptation as a kind of auditory equivalent to this piece of visual phantasmagoria, for which every available piece of stage machinery had to be set in motion. We have no access to an archive of listener expectations that might shed some light on the reactions of the public in suburban Vienna in 1791, but since it is highly probable that no members of this audience had neither experience of Bach's choral arrangements, nor, indeed, in the melodies

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den Protestantismus und lutherische Reformation zum Psalm aus dem Alten Testament. In der Tatsache der cantus firmus-Bearbeitung öffnet sich der Bezug zu ältesten Formen der europäischen Mehrstimmigkeit. Im Parodieverfahren, in der Verwendung der musica rhetorica, in der inneren Nähe zur Orgelwelt des Barock leben mächtige Traditionszüge der älteren Musikgeschichte auf. In dieser simultanen Präsenz verschiedener historischer Stufen und Epochen wird dem lauschenden Ohr die spezifische Kontinuität der abendländischen Musik, ihre Geschichtlichkeit vernehmbar."

<sup>44</sup> See Alfons Rosenberg, *Die Zauberflöte. Geschichte und Deutung von Mozarts Oper* (Munich: Prestel, 1964), p. 100. [Abbé Jean Terrasson], *Séthos* (Paris: Jacques Guerin, 1731); german translation used by Schikaneder: Matthias Claudius, *Geschichte des ägyptischen Königs Sethos* (Breslau: Gottlieb Löwe, 1777/1778); cf. Jan Assmann, *Zauberflöt*, p. 316 endnote 18, pp. 237f.

of the Lutheran choral tradition, nor the baroque implications of this composition idiom, it stands to reason that Mozart's apparent intention to confront his audience at the Theater auf der Wieden with an effective piece of sounding arcana must have been right on the mark. Without denying for a moment that the *Gesang der Geharnischten* is somehow rooted in historical praxis, it is hard to see how this music has something to do with music history as an autonomous category, that is as a concrete homage to Johann Sebastian Bach (what would such gesture be doing here, in this opera, anyway?). On the contrary, this "ancient" idiom seems to be the means to an end, the end being a specific musical and dramatic effect. This effect works as well as it does (and must have worked even better in early performances) primarily because that which is "old"—cited so matter of factly—is recognized as something that has been almost forgotten; it sounds, in the fantastic context of Tamino's initiation, like the hieroglyphics on the pyramid look.

The historical idiom in Mozart's musical language is, of course, not exhausted in caricature, in the creation of the strange and uncanny effects we have observed in these few examples. But compositional gambits like these, which, in the final analysis, contributed to Mozart's refinement of his own compositional craft, are critical clues to history's elusive place in his music. As Peter Gülke observed about another imposing Mozartean pyramid, the finale of the Jupiter Symphony: "Mozart's awareness of the historical implications of the, which reach as far back as Gregorian chant, in this music doesn't matter; what is certain is that he didn't mean to conjure up any ancient spirits by making references to their "archetypes." He wrote history into the music—without historicity."<sup>45</sup> To put in another way: ancient languages are not

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<sup>45</sup> Peter Gülke, "Triumph der neuen Tonkunst". *Mozarts späte Sinfonien und ihr Umfeld* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998), p. 207: "Wie immer Mozart die bis ins gregorianische Repertoire hinabreichende geschichtliche Tiefe bewußt gewesen sein muß, welche sein 'Archetypus' bei sich führte, Schattenbeschwörungen betrieb er dennoch nicht – er vollzog Historie ohne Historizität."

dead languages. The diversity of idioms that is such an outstanding quality of Mozart's musical language would be merely a coincidence, were it not rooted in a solid foundation, in a historical music that speaks to us beyond the borders of historical time.

(Translated from the German by Thomas Irvine)

## English Abstract:

On Ancient Languages: The Historical Idiom in the Music of  
Wolfgang Amadé Mozart

Ulrich Konrad

Ancient languages are those which are no longer spoken. But they still command certain respect, because of the "timeless truths" that they may be used to express. These may just as well be expressed in translation, more comfortably and just as accurately. Mozart used innumerable languages to speak in music. Among these languages, 'ancient languages,' in other words, historical musical 'dialects' were included. Mozart not only applied historical idioms in church music, but expanded to chamber and theatrical music. The ancient languages used in secular genre distinctly articulates through musical convention of a special dramatic effect such as an anachronistic idiom of opera seria in *Don Giovanni* and the chorus with Renaissance and Baroque contrapuntal style in *Magic Flute*. It could be described as a kind of "emphasis of the strange." The use of historical idiom seemed not to be intended as an experience and a concrete homage to Johannes Bach and Handel, but as the rhetorical means to an end which were a specific musical and dramatic effect. Peter Gülke once observed that "Mozart wrote history into music --without historicity." Ancient languages are not dead languages. The diversity of idioms that is an outstanding quality of Mozart still appeals to us, because it is rooted in such a solid foundation.