

Mozart

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This Short Talk Bulletin has been adapted from a paper, "The Sixth Liberal Art," prepared by the late Worshipful Brother Fred W. Mindermann, Past Master of Granite Lodge No. 119 of Haddam, Connecticut, for Masonic Research Lodge No. 104, F. & A.M., of Atlanta, Georgia in 1970. It is presented at this time because of the number of recent inquires M.S.A. has received pertaining to Mozart.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg in 1756 and died in Vienna in 1791 at the age of thirty-five. As a child he was known as a prodigy and genius for among his accomplishments he played the piano at three, composed a concerto at five, made his first concert tour of Europe at six, had his first four violin sonatas published at eight, had his first symphonies played in London at nine, and at fourteen he had written two comic operas and one opera seria. Mozart is recognized as the greatest melodic genius of his time and was a composer whose wide range of works included symphonies, sonatas, masses, concertos, chamber music, piano music, and operas among which are "Don Giovanni" and "The Magic Flute." He is remembered as a composer whose music culminated much of what had gone on before and led the way for some that was to follow. In addition, he was a genius in all areas of musical composition, a complete master of form, and a master in expressing human emotions and spiritual feelings.

When only thirteen years of age, he was made concert master to the Archbishop Schwatenbach of Salzburg, who recognized his genius and encouraged his triumphal tour of Europe, where great honors were heaped upon him. The churches and theaters where he performed were filled to overflowing.

The Archbishop's successor, von Collorado, was a man of a different stripe. Unartistic, unappreciative, disapproved of those tours, and even refused permission to leave Salzburg. Mozart resigned in 1772, returned to the service of the Archbishop von Collorado in 1778, and in 1779 was made Court Organist. However, his relations with the Archbishop increasingly worsened, and finally he left Salzburg for good and settled in Vienna. A possible reference to his break with Roman Catholicism and his belief that the highest possible human happiness could be attained in a society governed by brotherly love, friendship, beauty, and wisdom is expressed in the following excerpt from his "Little German Cantata:

"Oh break the fetters of this folly,
Oh tear this blinding prejudicial veil,

Take off the former robe, which long has
Rendered mankind sectarian."

and another excerpt from the "Little Masonic Cantata:"

"Loudly herald our great gladness,
joyous instrumental sound,
Let the echoes of these pillars in
each Brother's heart abound!
For we dedicate this station by our
golden chain of Brothers,
And the truest bond of hearts,
that it shall our temple be."

In 1784 Mozart joined the Lodge "True Harmony of Spirits" and later the Lodge "Charity" and finally the Lodge "New Crowned Hope." The impressions he received were so profound and significant that on the 6th of April in 1785, his father, Leopold Mozart, when on a visit to Vienna, became a member of his son's Lodge, "New Crowned Hope." The song called "Gesellenreise" (Fellowcraft's Journey) was composed at the occasion of the father being passed to the Fellowcraft Degree. See the Masonic significance of the lyrics:

"You, who now are risen higher
unto Wisdom's high abode,
Wander steadfast higher, higher,
Know, it is the noblest road.
Only spirit without blight
May approach the source of Light."

Of all Masonic composers, Mozart appears to be the one who has written the most on all types of Masonic subjects. Included here is music for the actual ritual ceremony, music dedicated to the establishment of Lodges, music depicting personal feelings of the Brotherhood and its meaning, and the Masonic music for his father mentioned in the previous paragraph.

"Oh You, Our New Leaders" was a song written for the installation of the officers of a newly constituted Lodge and was sung at the closing of the ceremonies. The text of the lyrics illustrates clearly the significance of the occasion.

"Oh you our new leaders,
We thank you now for all your faith.
Oh lead us ever on paths of virtue,
That all rejoice in the chain that ties us,
The chain that ties us unto better men
And giveth sweetness to life's chalice,
Gives sweetness to the cup of life.

"And on the rungs of truth
Let us approach the throne of Wisdom,
That we may reach its holiness,
And that we of her crown may be worthy,
Of we with Charity drive out
The jealousy of the profane.

Choir:

"The holy adjuration we also vow:
To strive for perfection of our great temple,
To strive for perfection of our building great,
To strive for perfection of the temple, like you."

One of Mozart's noteworthy Masonic compositions was his Masonic Funeral Music written on the death of the distinguished Freemason, Duke Georg August of Mecklenburg-Strelitz and Count Franz Esterhazy, and played for the first time on 17th November, 1785, in the Lodge 'Zur Neugekrönten Hoffnung' (New Crowned Hope). It is felt that the underlying melody probably stems from "The Lamentations of Jeremiah," a very ancient melody found in Hebrew ritual.

No doubt one of the greatest Masonic works ever written is Mozart's "The Magic Flute." It was first performed in Vienna in 1791. Written at age 35 shortly before his death, it is a combination of simple German folk tunes and classic operatic writing. The plot is one of political satire set against an Egyptian background. It is said that this is the swan song of Austrian Freemasonry, for in 1791 Kaiser Leopold prohibited Freemasonry in Austria. Thus the opera is written as an apology and a confession of fidelity for Freemasonry, as a last farewell to the Mason's ideals of freedom and forbearance.

Since it would be literally impossible for us to analyze the complete Magic Flute for you at this time, we have selected one of the most popular arias which I am sure you can associate with Masonic ritual. Behind this aria, "Oh Isis and Osiris" lies the following story: Sorastro addresses the priests in tones of utmost solemnity, telling them of the young initiate who waits at the North Gate seeking to throw off the veil of Night and enter into the realm of Light. He assures them of Tomino's ample specifications and promises that if the youth dies in the course of his initiation he will speed to the courts of Isis and Osiris, there to enjoy divine bliss. As the Orator-Priest and one of his colleagues go to conduct Tomino within, Sorastro and the rest sing a solemn prayer to their tutelary deities.

"Oh Isis and Osiris, Favor
This noble pair with Wisdom's light!
Grant them your aid in their endeavor,
Lead them to find the path of right !
Let them be strong against temptation,
But if they fail in their probation,

Do not their virtue need deny,
Take them to your abode on high."

It is interesting to note here that the melody of this song is one that is found in the initiation rites of a popular American Music fraternity.

Masons in Europe, and especially in Austria, hold the memory of Brother Mozart in greatest reverence. The foremost Masonic Research Lodge in Vienna is the "Soroastro Club," taking the name from the principal character in "The Magic Flute," the High Priest of the Temple of Isis. Truly "To live in the hearts of those we leave behind is not to die. "

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