

PART III

Reception

13 Mozart in the nineteenth century

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... if ever Mozart became wholly comprehensible to me, he would then become fully incomprehensible to me. – SØREN KIERKEGAARD, *EITHER/OR* (1843)

I

Implicit in one of the more commonly held beliefs about our understanding of artworks and their creators is an oddly skewed relationship between proximity and distance. According to this view, early critics find themselves in the position of a spectator who, standing just a few inches away from one of Monet's paintings of Rouen cathedral, sees only daubs of paint and vague shapes. Just as the outline of the cathedral emerges only when the viewer takes a few steps back, so the image of the artist and his works is supposed to gain in clarity the farther we withdraw from it in time. This theory of reception has been applied most consistently to figures whose works were first deemed to be particularly challenging and thereafter enjoyed a more or less continuous afterlife. Mozart was such a figure. Recognized by his contemporaries as a prodigious though intractable talent, venerated as a 'classic' by later generations, he continued to pose interpretive challenges even for the most perceptive musicians of the mid- and late nineteenth century. 'We are beginning to understand Mozart', Berlioz wrote in 1862,¹ and, indeed, we are still coming to terms with Mozart today. With increased understanding, however, comes loss – of the sense for precisely those idiosyncrasies that made Mozart's music such a challenge for early audiences. The study of Mozart reception in the nineteenth century is tantamount to a search for lost images, an activity that may ultimately lead us to reconsider our own assumptions about the composer and his works.

As indicated in the selective list of milestones given as table 13.1, there is no dearth of material for this recovery operation. During the course of the nineteenth century, the image of Mozart was refracted through a diverse array of media. While biographers such as Georg Nikolaus von Nissen and Otto Jahn sorted out the details of his life, and critics and theorists including E. T. A. Hoffmann and Gottfried Weber focussed on individual works, practitioners of the relatively young discipline of musicology (Franz Brendel, Friedrich Chrysander, Ludwig Köchel) placed the works within a chronological framework and a historical context. Through the media of

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Table 13.1. *Milestones in nineteenth-century Mozart reception*

1793: Friedrich Schlichtegroll, <i>Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1791</i>
1798: Friedrich Rochlitz, 'Anekdoten aus W. G. Mozarts Leben', published in <i>Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung</i>
1798: Franz Niemetschek, <i>Leben des K. K. Kapellmeisters Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart</i>
1801: Friedrich Rochlitz, <i>Don Juan</i> (adaptation of Da Ponte's <i>Don Giovanni</i> libretto as Singspiel text)
1801: <i>Die Zauberflöte</i> given as <i>Les Mystères d'Isis</i> (adaptation by E. Morel de Chédeville and Ludwig Wenzel Lachner)
1804: performance of the Requiem, K. 626, under Luigi Cherubini, for 'premature' funeral ceremony for Haydn held at Paris Conservatoire
1806: seventeen volumes of the Breitkopf and Härtel 'complete' edition appear by this date (including keyboard sonatas, keyboard and violin sonatas, twelve string quartets, twenty piano concertos, full score of <i>Don Giovanni</i>)
1807–9: first published scores of Mozart's orchestral works, including Symphonies Nos. 38–41
1810: E. T. A. Hoffmann counts Mozart among the 'Romantics' in his review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (material from review appears in Hoffmann's 1813 essay on Beethoven's instrumental music)
1813: E. T. A. Hoffmann, 'Don Juan' (story)
1828: posthumous publication of Georg Nikolaus von Nissen's <i>Biographie W. A. Mozarts</i>
1841: opening of Mozarteum in Salzburg
1841: first Viennese Mozart festival (others follow in 1856, 1879, 1891)
1842: unveiling of Ludwig Schwanthaler's Mozart statue in Salzburg
1843: Alexander Ulibishev, <i>Nouvelle Biographie de Mozart</i> (German editions 1847, 1859)
1843: Søren Kierkegaard, <i>Either/Or</i>
1845: Edward Holmes, <i>Life of Mozart</i> (first major biography of Mozart in English)
1855: Eduard Mörike, <i>Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag</i> (novella)
1856: first Mozart Salzburg festival
1856: Otto Jahn, <i>W. A. Mozart</i>
1862: Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, <i>Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amadé Mozarts</i>
1863: first edition of Ludwig Nohl's popular biography, <i>Mozarts Leben</i>
1860s: Alexander Dargomizhsky, <i>The Stone Guest</i> (opera based on Pushkin's play, musical setting completed by Cesar Cui, orchestrated by Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov)
1877: appearance of first volumes of the 'definitive' Breitkopf and Härtel collected edition, more or less complete by 1883, all gaps filled by 1905
1887: 500th performance of <i>Don Giovanni</i> at Berlin Court Opera on 29 October
1887: Tchaikovsky, Suite No. 4 for Orchestra, 'Mozartiana', Op. 61 (consisting mainly of adaptations of Mozart's keyboard works)
1897: Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, <i>Mozart and Salieri</i> (opera based on Pushkin's play)

performance and publication, Mozart's compositions were treated as venerable documents of a bygone age (Mendelssohn's 'historical' concerts, held in Leipzig between 1838 and 1847, and the Breitkopf and Härtel collected edition of 1877–1905 were informed by a similar spirit of preservation), or, at the other extreme, as mere blueprints to be realized in accordance with the tastes of a particular audience (for example, the Chédeville–Lachner adaptation of *Die Zauberflöte* as *Les Mystères d'Isis*). Mozart's works provided the stimulus not only for the efforts of later composers (Tchaikovsky's Suite No. 4, 'Mozartiana'), but also for prose fiction (Hoffmann's 'Don Juan' and Mörike's *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag*) and philosophy (Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*). The greatest musical dramatist of the eighteenth century, Mozart himself became the subject of numerous dramas, among them Pushkin's

Mozart and Salieri, which in turn served as the basis for Rimsky-Korsakov's opera of the same name. Memorialized in the lavish festivals of the mid- and late nineteenth century, depicted as a toga-clad colossus by the sculptor Ludwig Schwanthaler, Mozart was reduced to a domestic ornament in the form of the bric-a-brac on display in the souvenir shops of Salzburg and Vienna.

While all this diversity suggests that the search for a single nineteenth-century image of Mozart would be a futile enterprise, we can at least get our bearings by turning first to biography. In the one hundred years or so after his death, Mozart was the subject of numerous biographical accounts, beginning with Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog* (obituary) of 1793. More a collection of anecdotes peppered with random observations on the works than a genuine biography, this account focusses on Mozart's earlier years, drawing on material derived in part from Mozart's sister, Nannerl. As argued recently by Maynard Solomon, Schlichtegroll's chronicle bequeathed to the nineteenth century the still prevalent myth of Mozart as the 'eternal child', the 'playful embodiment of love and beauty'.² With Niemetschek's volume of 1798, we enter the realm of Mozart biography proper. The work of a writer who worshipped his subject to the point of idolatry, it introduced a hagiographical strand in Mozart reception that was not seriously questioned until well into the twentieth century. Weighing in at over nine hundred pages, Georg Nikolaus von Nissen's posthumously published biography is a rather chaotic affair, though it is still useful as a compendium of documentary material once in the possession of Mozart's widow Constanze, who married Nissen in 1809.³ The Russian civil servant and musical enthusiast Alexander Ulibishev transformed what he called Nissen's 'mortally tedious recitation of minutiae' into a readable narrative in the first volume of his *Nouvelle Biographie de Mozart* (1843), and then proceeded, in its second and third volumes, with detailed analyses of the operas from *Idomeneo* to *La clemenza di Tito*, the Requiem, and instrumental works including the late string quartets, string quintets and symphonies. One of the earliest forays into psychobiography, Ulibishev's work built on the typically Romantic premise that an artist's creative output offered a window onto his soul, a notion that led him to view Mozart's compositions in general, and his operas in particular, as revelations of his innermost being.⁴ The interdependence of Mozart's life and his art was also a theme in Jahn's monumental biography of 1856, although given the author's training in philology it is hardly surprising that the former receives far more attention than the latter, and that his portrait of Mozart is more cautiously drawn than Ulibishev's. Taking as his premise the notion that Mozart's chief virtue was his 'universality' – his transformation of 'every human feeling into a work of art'⁵ – Jahn produced a book that was destined to enjoy a distinguished afterlife of its own. The

fifth edition, updated and expanded by Hermann Abert, appeared as late as 1919–21.

Among the more intriguing aspects of nineteenth-century Mozart reception is the permeable boundary between factual and fictional portrayals of the composer and his milieu. As Royce Wates observes in a recent article, Mörrike's *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag* is situated at the intersection of biography and world literature. A great favourite with nineteenth-century readers, the novella derived from Ulibishev's biography the notion that Mozart was inspired by voices from beyond. At the same time, Mörrike's tale had an unmistakable impact on the biographical studies of Jahn – even though he was loath to admit it – and Abert, who embraced Mörrike's interpretation of the encounter between the title character and the Commendatore in Act 2 of *Don Giovanni*.⁶

While there is no denying the symbiotic relationship between empirical and poetic elements in nineteenth-century images of Mozart, it is equally important to keep in mind the differences in intent between the media associated with these qualities. Although Hoffmann's 'Don Juan', a typically Romantic blend of fact, fantasy and music criticism, obviously centres on Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the writer's principal aim is not so much to offer a critique of the opera as to make a statement about the incursion of inexplicable, otherworldly forces on the 'real' world, and to explore the similarities between the dream-state and the process of critical reflection.⁷ Similarly, Kierkegaard had much to say about *Don Giovanni* in *Either/Or*, although generally in the context of explaining his theory of the 'musical erotic' – a concept that by the philosopher's own admission he owed 'to Mozart alone'.⁸ In both cases, Mozart's opera is a means towards an end, the stimulus for poetic and philosophical reflections on broader themes. In contrast, despite the fact that biographers and historians will often invoke the techniques of imaginative and philosophical prose, they will also tend to focus on Mozart's life and works as ends in themselves.

The realization of Mozart's works in performance raises another significant issue of reception. In speaking of the reception of 'Mozart's' works, we need to remember that the works were at times presented in radically altered versions. For obvious reasons, this is especially true of the operas. Sung in German instead of the original Italian, its recitatives replaced with spoken dialogue, Mozart's opera seria *La clemenza di Tito* would have been known to early nineteenth-century audiences in Vienna and central Germany as *Titus der Grossmütige* or *Titus der Gütige*. *Don Giovanni* underwent a similar transformation from *dramma giocoso* to Singspiel. The most frequently performed of Mozart's operas in the nineteenth century, it was translated into German about twenty times between 1788 and 1900, although the most popular of these versions by far was that of the critic Friedrich Rochlitz. Completed in 1801 and based on Friedrich Ludwig Schröder's translation

of 1789, Rochlitz's *Don Juan* divides the original pair of acts into four, such that two of the opera's crucial moments – the entrance of Zerlina and Masetto, and the appearance of the Commendatore's statue in the churchyard scene – occur at the beginnings of the 'new' Acts 2 and 4 respectively. In this way, Rochlitz, like Schröder, underscored the dramatic contrasts implicit in the original, and, by omitting the light-hearted epilogue (a practice adumbrated in Süßmayr's 1798 production of Schröder's version), he in essence converted Mozart's comic drama into a tragic one. As Wates has shown in a perceptive discussion of *Don Giovanni*'s metamorphosis into a Romantic tragedy, Rochlitz's libretto had a decisive influence on Hoffmann's and Mörike's conceptions of the opera, and may even have inspired the design of Liszt's *Don Juan Fantasy* (1841). Indeed, it was in this form – as a Romantic-tragic Singspiel – that *Don Giovanni* would have been known to most of Mozart's nineteenth-century biographers.⁹

Of all of Mozart's major operas, however, probably none was reworked so extensively to satisfy contemporary tastes as *Die Zauberflöte*. Fitted out as a *dramma eroicomico* entitled *Il flauto magico* for a 1794 performance in Prague, it caught the attention of French audiences about a decade later as *Les Mystères d'Isis*. A *dramme lyrique* with exotic touches, this adaptation (also known by the nickname *Les Misères d'ici*) was a far cry from the work premiered at Emanuel Schikaneder's Theater auf der Wieden in 1791. Some of the original music was transposed or otherwise rewritten, and much was cut, although to compensate for the omissions Lachner introduced material from *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *La clemenza di Tito* and even some excerpts from Haydn's 'Drumroll' Symphony, No. 103. Little wonder that a fastidious critic such as Berlioz wrote off this collaborative effort as a 'wretched hotch-potch'.¹⁰ Still, with 134 performances in the twenty-six years after its 1801 premiere, it is not difficult to understand why *Les Mystères* fared so well with the French public. A reflection of the craze for the exotic stimulated by Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, it is but one of the many instances where the nineteenth century remade Mozart in its own image.

II

In his magisterial history of nineteenth-century music, Carl Dahlhaus observes that the reception of Mozart in the century after his death was 'discontinuous' in that a 'romantic stylisation' of the composer in the writings of E. T. A. Hoffmann and other like-minded figures gave way to a 'classical stylisation'.¹¹ This is a subtle variation on the widespread view that Mozart was first received as a Romantic and subsequently reinterpreted as a Classic. Actually, the situation was considerably more complex. Many of Mozart's early critics understood him as neither a Romantic nor a Classic,

but as a difficult composer who made few concessions to the masses. The enthusiastic reception of *Die Zauberflöte* did not significantly alter the prevailing opinion that Mozart's music was intended primarily for *Kenner* (connoisseurs) as opposed to *Liebhaber* (amateurs). As Niemetschek put it in his 1798 biography: 'The true beauty of [Mozart's] music is best appreciated only after several hearings, or serious study.' Indeed, the fact that his music made such demands on the listener constituted 'the real touchstone of [its] classical worth'.¹²

For many critics, even the ones who otherwise had only high praise for his music, Mozart placed such a high premium on originality of expression that he often offended the sensibilities of his audience. Invoking the comparison between Mozart and Raphael that would become one of the leading themes of early nineteenth-century Mozart reception, Rochlitz conceded that while both artists fashioned their ideas into 'beautiful limbs of a single, beautiful body', not all of their works achieved 'the highest, the purest and the most perfect'. As for Mozart, Rochlitz claimed that 'many of his fully textured compositions are congested, his modulations not infrequently bizarre, his transitions rough... seldom is he delicate without emitting painful, tension-laden sighs'.¹³ A pair of Italian writers cited by Nissen went even further in describing Mozart's vocal melodies as 'forced and sluggish', his harmony as 'harsh and affected', and the overall hue of the operas as 'murky and confused'.¹⁴

All of these features – originality at any cost, congestion, bizarrerie, harshness, tension, affectation, murkiness – had been subsumed under the notion of the 'characteristic' by the philosopher and critic Friedrich Schlegel in the mid-1790s. Occupying the end of the aesthetic spectrum at the farthest remove from 'beauty', the characteristic, in Schlegel's view, represented the primary tendency in modern art. 'Even in music,' he observed, 'the characterization of individual entities has become increasingly prevalent.'¹⁵ This is not to say that Mozart's early critics copied directly from Schlegel, but rather that their efforts to come to terms with the idiosyncratic features of his music resonated with the leading aesthetic attitudes of their time. And just as Schlegel gave a positive spin to the negative aspects of 'characteristic' art in his developing theories of Romanticism, so too were the more striking elements of Mozart's style co-ordinated with the aesthetic of the 'sublime' (which was often invoked in discussions of the Requiem, the 'Jupiter' Symphony and *La clemenza di Tito*),¹⁶ and soon thereafter with the Romantic ideology.

The primary exponent of the 'Romantic' Mozart was E. T. A. Hoffmann, who in his oft-quoted 1810 review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony extolled the magical and supernatural qualities of Mozart's instrumental music:

Dread lies all about us, but withholds its torments and becomes more an intimation of infinity. We hear the gentle voices of love and melancholy, the nocturnal spirit-world dissolves into a purple shimmer, and with inexpressible yearning we follow the flying figures kindly beckoning to us from the clouds.¹⁷

Commenting on *Don Giovanni* in a later essay, Hoffmann derided those early listeners ‘who called the great composer a lunatic who could only write confusing rubbish . . . without rhyme or reason’. For Hoffmann, such views betrayed a crude insensitivity to the ‘fiery imagination, deeply felt humour, and extravagant abundance of ideas’ that made Mozart the ‘Shakespeare of music’.¹⁸ Nor was Hoffmann alone in validating the ‘characteristic’ side of Mozart’s art through a comparison with the great English playwright. In his ‘Letter Concerning Mozart’ of 29 August 1814, Stendhal pointed to the ‘sublime fusion of wit and humour’ in the works of both figures, noting further that the churchyard scene in Act 2 of *Don Giovanni* represented ‘the equivalent, in music, of “terror” as conceived by Shakespeare’.¹⁹ Similarly, in the opinion of Carl Maria von Weber, the supposed peculiarities of Mozart’s stageworks were a natural consequence of his ‘total grasp of dramatic truth’ and his ‘delineation of character by declamation’.²⁰

Before long, the Romantic-characteristic view of Mozart was displaced by a rather different constellation of aesthetic markers. By the mid-nineteenth century, allusions to the bizarre and eccentric elements of Mozart’s style were few and far between. In linking his music with the entire spectrum of qualities that aestheticians associated with the ‘beautiful’ – perfection, order, symmetry, restraint, harmonious unity, universality, timeless value – critics found in Mozart’s works a supreme embodiment of musical classicism.

The assimilation of Mozart’s music to an aesthetic of the beautiful was neither abrupt nor absolute. On the contrary, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers (including Rochlitz and Niemetschek) often referred to the consummate beauty and classical worth of his compositions, although generally within a framework that accorded greater emphasis to the ‘characteristic’ side of his art. Rather than a decisive shift in orientation, it would therefore be more accurate to speak of a gradual transition between complementary aesthetic attitudes. The coexistence of both outlooks in the 1820s and 1830s is evident in the controversy over the slow introduction to the first movement of Mozart’s ‘Dissonance’ Quartet, K. 465. In claiming that Mozart could not possibly have intended the harmonic audacities in the quartet’s opening bars, which were almost surely misprints, the critic and theorist François-Joseph Fétis assumed that Mozart was chiefly a vessel for the beautiful in music. In contrast, Gottfried Weber’s efforts to analyse the passage as it stood betrays a willingness to accept the ‘characteristic’ as a vital component of Mozart’s stylistic palette.²¹

The image of Mozart as the reigning god of musical classicism was firmly in place in Robert Schumann's writings of the 1830s. In a diary entry of July 1831, Schumann defined the 'classic' as an aesthetic stance in which one force is absorbed into its opposite:

Classic is the genial in the garb of the folkish, the unfathomable in the guise of the comprehensible . . . the boundless charmingly confined, the weighty made light, the dark in luminous clarity, the corporeal spiritualized, the real ennobled by the ideal.²²

Three years later, in a review of Hummel's *Studien*, Op. 125, Schumann applied the same aesthetic to Mozart and his followers:

Cheerfulness, repose, grace, the main features of ancient works of art, are also those of Mozart's school. Just as the Greeks gave their thundering Zeus a merry expression, so too does Mozart withhold his lightning bolts.²³

Although Schumann thought that Mozart's music was imbued with a classical spirit, he never explicitly assigned the composer to a Classical era, nor did he set Mozart in opposition to Beethoven or to Schumann's 'Romantically' inclined contemporaries. This polarized view first gained currency in the late 1830s with critics and historians who fell under the sway of Hegel's philosophy. Amadeus Wendt, for instance, invoked a typically Hegelian strategy to differentiate Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, arguing that form overwhelms content in Haydn's music, form and content achieve a state of equilibrium in Mozart's works, and content supersedes form in Beethoven's output.²⁴ In his *Geschichte der Musik in Italien, Deutschland und Frankreich* (1852), Franz Brendel situated Mozart within a historical framework modelled on Hegel's division of the history of art into 'symbolic', 'Classic', and 'Romantic' phases. Brendel likewise recognized three epochs in music history: a period of 'sublime' style, culminating in the 'combinatorial' art of Bach; a 'beautiful' or 'objective' phase represented by Gluck, Haydn and Mozart; and finally a 'subjective' period inaugurated by Beethoven. As the 'universal genius who bound together all the disparate tendencies [of his time] into one grand organic whole', Mozart emerges in Brendel's panoramic outlook at 'the most beautiful moment in the entire span of [Western musical] history'.²⁵

References to Mozart's cultivation of the 'beautiful', his 'classical' status and the 'universality' of his genius constitute the central strands in accounts of his music from the mid- to the late nineteenth century, although writers were hardly unanimous in their understanding of these terms or in the relative weight they placed upon them. For Ulibishev, Mozart's classicism consisted principally in his transcendence of the time and place in which his works were conceived. Commenting on the six quartets dedicated to Haydn,

which he located at the beginning of Mozart's 'classical' period, Ulibishev maintained that 'everything in them is as fresh as if written yesterday, and will remain so for evermore'.²⁶ Jahn claimed that Mozart derived his 'greatest joy' from the 'production of the beautiful', but equated the composer's genius with his 'universality', that is, his uncanny power of transforming 'inner experience' into 'musical expression'. Moreover, Mozart's universality 'cannot be separated from the harmony of [his] artistic nature, which never allowed . . . his intention and his means to come into conflict'.²⁷

While mid- and late nineteenth-century critics acknowledged the 'characteristic' elements of Mozart's style, they tended to subordinate them to the higher unity that resulted from the composer's ability to synthesize antithetical tendencies. One of the chief themes in Gounod's descriptive analysis of *Don Giovanni*, for instance, is the union of beautiful form and emotional truth in the opera: 'By this *truth* Mozart is *human*, by this *beauty* he is *divine*.'²⁸ In a review of the same work published on 16 January 1874 in the *Russian Gazette*, one of the most passionate Mozart-lovers of the nineteenth century, Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky, lavished special praise on the combination of 'staggering pathos' with 'bewitching beauty of harmony and modulation' in Donna Anna's recitatives.²⁹ Likewise, Ferruccio Busoni emphasized Mozart's pursuit of the happy medium in several of the aphorisms he wrote on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth:

He is passionate, but keeps to the forms of chivalry.

He disposes of light and shadow, but his light does not pain and his darkness still shows clear outlines.

Idealist without losing touch with the earth, realist without ugliness.³⁰

Mozart himself would probably have found the last of these aphorisms a fair assessment. In justifying the unusual metrical and tonal design of Osmin's aria 'Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen', in Act 1 of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Mozart observed that 'just as a man in such a towering rage oversteps all the bounds of order, moderation and propriety and completely forgets himself, so must the music too forget itself. At the same time, however, 'passions, whether violent or not, must never be expressed in such a way as to excite disgust', and 'music, even in the most terrible situations, must never offend the ear, but must please the hearer, or in other words must never cease to be *music*'.³¹

III

A brief sketch such as this cannot do justice to all the nuances in the nineteenth century's changing outlook on Mozart. It also begs the question as

to what motivated these interpretive shifts in the first place. No doubt the appearance of Beethoven on the musical scene was a decisive factor in the transformation of Mozart from a representative of Romantic-characteristic tendencies into a purveyor of the 'beautiful' in music. Although E. T. A. Hoffmann claimed that the instrumental works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven all 'breathe the same romantic spirit', he qualified this remark by identifying Beethoven as the only 'purely romantic' artist of the trio.³² In an attempt to revive the early nineteenth-century view of a Romantic Mozart, the critic Alfred Heuss argued in an article of 1906–7 on 'the demonic element' in the composer's works that the reception of Mozart in recent times had been affected by the experience of listening to 'new' music. Modern audiences, he observed, do not respond to fine shadings 'unless they are accompanied by a powerful outward apparatus'.³³ Berlioz had come to the same conclusion over seventy years earlier in a review of a performance of *Don Giovanni* at the Paris Opéra. His advice to the listener who found Mozart's orchestration devoid of 'brilliance and energy' was to 'blame those whose abuse of violence has made you insensitive' – and chief among the culprits he had in mind was almost certainly Meyerbeer.³⁴ Brendel struck an almost wistful tone in his diagnosis of Mozart's relationship to mid-nineteenth-century audiences. Mozart, he noted, 'has become estranged from current tastes; he no longer speaks to the content of everyday life'.³⁵ The extent of this estrangement is evident in Eduard Hanslick's review of a Vienna Philharmonic concert that included the Piano Concerto in C major, K. 503. Although in his celebrated treatise on aesthetics, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (1854), Hanslick had extolled Mozart as a paragon of 'absolute' music, in the review he noted dryly that the symmetrical periods and formulaic passage-work in the concerto were so naive in conception that the modern listener, 'accustomed to higher temperatures, cannot really warm to them'.³⁶

If, however, Hanslick and numerous critics before and after him felt that Mozart's works embodied a kind of beauty that was oddly out of step with contemporary sensibilities, it was perhaps because the nineteenth century craved emblems of precisely this sort. As the bearer of messages from a bygone golden age, Mozart's music offered a welcome relief from the crisis-torn present. Mozart had already assumed this role in the early part of the nineteenth century. As the young Franz Schubert confided to his diary after a performance of one of Mozart's string quintets:

beautiful impressions like this . . . reveal to us, from within the dark recesses of life, a light, bright, beautiful distance in which we may confidently place our hope. Oh Mozart, immortal Mozart, how many, oh how infinitely many such beneficent impressions of a luminous, higher life you have imprinted on our souls.³⁷

Mozart's reception by nineteenth-century composers in general and his impact on the history of composition in particular are vast topics in their own right, and well beyond the scope of this survey.³⁸ One point worth emphasizing, in light of the revelatory qualities commonly ascribed to Mozart's music, is the frequency with which later composers drew on the features of his style in their evocations of an alternative world – whether it was to be an exotic, ideal or idyllic one. When Schumann described Felix Mendelssohn as the 'Mozart of the nineteenth century',³⁹ he was surely thinking of his colleague's facility, his unerring sense of formal proportion and the elegant finish of his compositions. At times Schumann himself tried to capture what he called the 'heavenly lightness' of Mozart's style,⁴⁰ especially during the later phases of his career. The bright woodwind textures and colourful 'Janissary' scoring of the music for the Nile Genies in Schumann's fairy-tale oratorio *Das Paradies und die Peri* (1843) are direct imports from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Likewise, the angelic tone of the music for the four boys positioned around Mignon's bier in the *Requiem für Mignon*, Op. 98b (1849) – a setting of a text from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* – stamps the members of Schumann's quartet as close relatives of the Three Boys from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.

In a letter to Nadezhda von Meck dating from the spring of 1878, Tchaikovsky wrote:

maybe it is precisely because, as a man of my times, I am broken and morally sick that I like to seek peace and consolation in Mozart's music, most of which is an expression of life's joys as experienced by a healthy, wholesome nature, *not corrupted by introspection*.⁴¹

Hence, when Tchaikovsky wanted to conjure up a realm of Arcadian bliss in the pastoral duet for Daphnis and Chloë in the Act 2 *divertissement* of *The Queen of Spades*, it is hardly surprising that he did so with a pointed allusion to a theme in *volkstümlich* style from the first movement of Mozart's C major Piano Concerto, K. 503. Although Tchaikovsky succinctly stated the aesthetic of his 'Mozartiana' Suite – based largely on selections from Mozart's keyboard works – as 'the past in modern garb', it is also possible to view this four-movement work for chamber orchestra as an oasis of 'peace and consolation' amidst his more turbulent symphonic compositions.⁴²

While Schumann and Tchaikovsky, like Schubert and Mendelssohn, embraced the 'beautiful' components of Mozart's art, Brahms seems to have had an affinity for the 'characteristic' side as well. His documented remarks on Mozart include stereotypical references to the perfection of *Figaro* and the beauty of the string quartets,⁴³ but they also speak to a broader appreciation of Mozart's stylistic range. In conversation late in his life with the critic and composer Richard Heuberger, Brahms mentioned in passing that

Mozart was more daring in his handling of form than Beethoven, and added: 'It's a good thing most people don't know that'.⁴⁴ Even though Brahms did not give any specific examples, one of the formal strategies he might have cited to support his claim involves an unusual blend of sonata and rondo principles, variously described as a sonata-rondo form in which one refrain statement (the third) has been omitted, or a binary form with a developmentally expanded second half and a protracted coda. Much favoured by Mozart in the finales of his piano concertos and concertante chamber works, this design was adapted by Brahms to every movement of the sonata cycle, and is represented in nearly twenty instances extending from the Serenade No. 1 in D for Orchestra, Op. 11 (1858), to the Sonata in F minor for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 120 No. 1 (1894).⁴⁵ Regardless of the terms we use to designate the form – irregular sonata-rondo or amplified binary – the fact remains that it cannot be adduced as an example of Mozartian perfection, order, symmetry and balance. On the contrary, in employing the design for his own ends, Brahms took as his point of departure one of Mozart's most 'characteristic' approaches to the question of musical form.

In another provocative comment, Brahms once observed that 'Wagner stands much closer to Mozart than most people realize'.⁴⁶ Coincidentally, Wagner came to a similar conclusion in dubbing himself 'the last of the Mozartians'.⁴⁷ This self-appraisal, dating from the period when he was at work on *Parsifal*, is rather surprising in light of his earlier attitude. In *Opera and Drama* (1851) Wagner criticized Mozart for his lack of discrimination in the selection of operatic texts, and in the essay 'Zukunftsmusik' (1860) he complained of 'the perpetually recurring and noisily garrulous half-closes of the Mozartian Symphony', which called to mind 'the clatter of prince's plates and dishes set to music'.⁴⁸ While we will never know in precisely what sense Wagner thought of himself as the last Mozartian, some of his other comments on Mozart at least offer a clue. Pointing to 'the fine humanity' of the Priest's replies to Tamino in Act 2 of *Die Zauberflöte*, he declared Mozart 'the founder of German declamation' in a conversation with Cosima of May 1870, and a decade later traced 'the genesis of the German character' to the same opera.⁴⁹ From this perspective, the declamatory monologues for Gurnemanz in Acts 1 and 3 of *Parsifal* represent a Wagnerian realization of tendencies implicit in Mozart's last opera.

Between October 1878 and January 1879, while he was otherwise occupied with the drafting of Act 3 of *Parsifal*, Wagner devoted a considerable amount of time to the study of Mozart's *Figaro*.⁵⁰ As different as these two works may be, here too we can identify an area of common ground, though a brief detour will first be necessary. In his essay 'Brahms the Progressive', Arnold Schoenberg described the principle of construction in Mozart's operatic ensembles as follows:

[Mozart] begins such a piece with a melody consisting of a number of phrases of various lengths and characters, each of them pertaining to a different phase of the action and mood. They are, in their first formulation, loosely joined together, and often simply juxtaposed, thus admitting to be broken asunder and used independently as motival material for small formal segments.⁵¹

As a typical example of this procedure, Schoenberg cites the section of the Act 2 finale of *Figaro* beginning with the Countess's 'Susanna, son morta'. After presenting the five 'illustrative segments' that form the basis for this exchange between the Countess, Susanna and the Count, Schoenberg notes that this 160-bar dramatic unit in B flat major 'contains an astonishingly great number of segments, all of which are built, almost exclusively, out of variations of these five little phrases in a constantly changing order'.⁵² This approach to musico-dramatic organization, he goes on to say, 'proves to be a vision of the future'.⁵³

Richard Wagner lay in that future. His leitmotifs bear comparison with Mozart's 'illustrative segments' not only because they too forge associative links between musical ideas and different phases of the 'action and mood' but also because of their potential for presentation in an ever-changing order. Wagner often exploited the latter property in the scenes of epic narration that occur with increasing frequency as *The Ring* unfolds, but he also put it to use at moments of great dramatic power. One such instance occurs in Act 2 of *Parsifal*, in the monologue beginning with Parsifal's impassioned invocation of the Grail King: 'Amfortas!' An expression of Parsifal's 'cosmic clear-sightedness' after receiving Kundry's kiss, this gripping passage is based almost entirely on the music of Amfortas's lament from the Act 1 Grail scene – which Parsifal had witnessed, but not comprehended. To underscore Parsifal's self-identification with the ailing Amfortas, Wagner recalls the material of the earlier lament in a chromatically intensified form. And in arranging this material into an entirely new motivic configuration he hit upon an effective means of depicting Parsifal's state of psychic shock. While this hardly suggests that Wagner's methods were directly influenced by Mozart's, it nonetheless reveals an underlying affinity between their respective approaches to dramatic characterization.

Wagner was not alone in coming to terms with Mozart relatively late in life. Schumann arrived at a full appreciation of Mozart only in the 1840s, by which time he had already composed the bulk of the keyboard music and songs for which he is best remembered. When Berlioz claimed near the end of his career that 'We are beginning to understand Mozart', he was speaking just as much for himself as for his contemporaries. This pattern repeats itself on a broader historical scale as latecomers in the history of Mozart reception such as Richard Strauss and Schoenberg demonstrated a renewed sensitivity

to the technical and expressive range of Mozart's music. In contrast to the reactionary adherents of the 'Back to Mozart' movement, for whom the composer was a 'rococo' artist par excellence, Schoenberg focussed on the syntactic irregularities in Mozart's dramatic and chamber works. Strauss in turn prized Mozart's comic operas as psychological studies of the highest order, turning to *Figaro* and *Così fan tutte* as models for *Der Rosenkavalier*, and to *Die Zauberflöte* as a model for *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.⁵⁴ In other words, Strauss and Schoenberg, each in his own way, were powerfully drawn to the 'characteristic' aspects of Mozart's style, and in this they brought the history of Mozart reception full circle.