

15 Berlioz and Mozart

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“J’adore Mozart” wrote Berlioz in 1856.¹ Ten years later, at a time when he took pleasure in *not* going to operas any more, he attended eight performances of *Don Giovanni* at the Théâtre Lyrique, where he was seen to “cover his face and cry like a child.”² Yet neither Berlioz himself nor his biographers are ever inclined to include Mozart among the select pantheon of historical figures who inspired him most deeply, the names being more usually Shakespeare, Goethe, Virgil, and among musicians Gluck, Beethoven, sometimes Weber, sometimes Spontini. Mozart never displaced Gluck in Berlioz’s mind as the greatest of eighteenth-century composers, a preference which very few would admit to in the present century when an admiration for Mozart has been a solid *donné* among professionals and amateurs alike. Where did Mozart stand in his critical perspectives, and what part did Mozart play in his work as conductor and composer?

The matter was admirably summed up by Berlioz himself in chapter 17 of the *Mémoires*, which is devoted entirely to his regard for Mozart. Written probably in 1848, or soon after, it describes the fiery passions of his student years: “I have said that [...] I was taken up exclusively with the study of great dramatic music. I should rather have said, of lyric tragedy; and it was for this reason that I regarded Mozart with a certain coolness.” Gluck was performed in French at the Opéra while Mozart was sung in Italian at the Théâtre Italien, and that was sufficient to assign him to the enemy camp. The only Mozart opera to be heard in French at the Opéra was *Les Mystères d’Isis*, a garbled version of *Die Zauberflöte* which Berlioz always held up as an example of a work of art travestied by a meddling posterity. Berlioz’s most regular attitude to Mozart in his early years was not as a master whose works inspired his own creative flame but as a figure whose heroic integrity had to be defended against the impostures of interfering editors. And although the *Mémoires* indicate that “the marvelous beauty of his quartets and quintets and one or two of the sonatas” later converted him to the earlier master’s celestial genius, his experience of Mozart was, like that of many of his contemporaries, distinctly incomplete.

[211] The two works that he most consistently admired were *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte*; he also valued *Le Nozze di Figaro*, one of the few

operas he ever conducted, and he included his rather lukewarm notice of *Die Entführung* in the collection *À travers chants* in 1862. It is uncertain whether he ever heard a performance of *Così fan tutte* or more than a few extracts from *Idomeneo* and *La Clemenza di Tito*. Of the choral works both the *Requiem* and *Ave verum corpus* were frequently performed in his time, and the last four symphonies featured regularly in the more classically oriented concert series such as that of the Société des Concerts. He had very little to say about the instrumental music – nothing about the piano concertos, for example – and regarded Mozart as primarily a composer for the stage. He often repeated the anecdote that Mozart failed to win a commission from the Paris Opéra, partly as an illustration of the crassness of administrators in the face of genius, partly, one suspects, in disappointment that Mozart did not leave posterity a French opera, like those of Gluck, where his expressive style might have been allied to classical French drama.

Knowledge of Mozart's life and character remained largely anecdotal in Berlioz's time. The volume of Michaud's serial *Biographie universelle* which contained the entry on Mozart came out after Berlioz left La Côte-Saint-André, so that Gluck had the alphabetical advantage of inflaming the boy's imagination in his father's library. The sole works in French available to Berlioz were Winckler's *Notice biographique sur Jean-Chrysostyme-Wolfgang-Théophile Mozart* (1801, based on Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog* of 1793) and C. F. Cramer's *Trente-deux anecdotes sur Mozart* (1800, translated from Rochlitz's articles about Mozart in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of 1798). The Mozart section of Stendhal's *Vies de Haydn, de Mozart et de Metastase*, published in 1814, was a shameless theft of Cramer's book. Nonetheless Mozart occupied a remarkably honored place in critical opinion under the Empire and was already perceived to have a certain canonic quality.³ Nearer 1830, Fétis's adulation of Mozart in the *Revue Musicale* raised public consciousness of the instrumental music, and the craze for Hoffmann's stories chimed with the success of *Don Giovanni* on the French stage.⁴

When Oulibicheff's *Nouvelle Biographie de Mozart* appeared in 1843, Berlioz reviewed it generously,⁵ complaining only that Oulibicheff's enthusiasm for Mozart compelled him to denigrate Beethoven. Another biographer, Edward Holmes, whose *Life of Mozart* came out in 1845, became one of Berlioz's most eloquent admirers and a staunch friend at a time when his view of Mozart seems to have broadened. But few – and Berlioz was no exception – were ready to bestow upon Mozart the halo of universal genius that has adorned him since the beginning of the twentieth century, for few were willing to look beyond the romantic, and especially demonic, qualities of *Don Giovanni*, which meshed so well with the

image of the misunderstood prodigy cut down in his prime and pitched into an unmarked grave.

Don Giovanni shared a distinction Berlioz accorded to *Der Freischütz*, *La Vestale*, *Fidelio*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and *Les Huguenots*; when those works are being played, the imaginary orchestral players in his *Les Soirées de l'orchestre* concentrate on their duties and do not swap stories and idle chatter. But his profound admiration for *Don Giovanni* was by no means uncritical; he could never accept Donna Anna's second act aria "Non mi dir" and devoted much of the Mozart chapter of the *Mémoires* to explaining why:

It is an aria of intense sadness, full of a heartbreaking sense of loss and sorrowing love, but towards the end degenerating without warning into music of such appalling inanity and vulgarity that one can hardly believe it to be the work of the same man. [...] I could not readily forgive Mozart for such a blunder. Today I feel that I would give some of my own blood to erase that shameful page and a few more of the same kind which one is forced to recognize among his works.

Far from softening the fury of his attack, he later felt it should to be intensified, adding as a footnote: "Even shameful seems to me too light a word. Mozart in this passage has committed one of the most odious and idiotic crimes against passion, taste, and common sense of which the history of art provides an example." In 1857 Delacroix noted sourly in his journal how Berlioz had quite spoiled a dinner party at Pauline Viardot's by going on at great length against *fioriture* in opera, picking on "Non mi dir" as a prime culprit.⁶

He was never in any doubt, however, that the opera was a great masterpiece. He may well have consulted the full score of the opera published in Paris by Frey in about 1820 and thus been familiar with the work before he heard it performed in French at the Odéon in December 1827 (soon after the English Shakespeare season) as an adaptation of Molière's *Le Festin de pierre*.⁷ The crucial revelation for Parisians was the Opéra production of 1834, less thoroughly mangled than its 1805 production, but nonetheless considerably reshaped to suit the tastes and exigencies of the time and a marked success in the repertory.⁸ It was preceded by a performance in Italian at the Théâtre Italien only a few weeks before, with Tamburini as the Don, Rubini as Ottavio, and Grisi as Donna Anna. This was attended by Berlioz in his capacity as critic for *Le Rénovateur*, and here he laid out his admiration in the plainest terms:

Everything is so wonderfully beautiful in this score! The forms are so pure, the contours so rounded and so graceful, and the style so Raphaellesque! [...] The partisan of the old Italian school will show you how Mozart's melodies

are very close to the style of that glorious era. The Gluckist will quote you twenty passages where declamation outweighs melodic feeling, and will even prove that in the first bars that the Commendatore's statue sings from his plinth Mozart reveals a distinct reminiscence of *Alceste*. The classicist will claim Mozart as his own by focusing on the purity of the harmony and the restraint with which the composer handles the orchestra, while the romantic, enchanted by the fantastical nature of the subject, the boldness of the drama, and the *truth* with which the composer has expressed them, will find in it further proof in support of his artistic religion. But everyone will agree in proclaiming the German composer's work to be sublime.⁹

The review Berlioz wrote of *Don Juan* in March 1834 was the first full-scale review he ever wrote of a major Opéra production.¹⁰ He offered no scene-by-scene analysis but launched into panegyric:

The success of *Don Juan* at the Opéra is an event of the highest artistic interest. It proves beyond a doubt that the public can now absorb deeply thought-out music which is conscientiously written, tastefully orchestrated, and always expressive, dramatic and true, without getting bored. This music is free of catchy tunes, it bears the stamp of the most exalted poetic ideas, it is free and proud, never servilely bowing to the gallery, and it seeks only enlightened approbation, scorning the applause of ignorant crowds.

With Dérivis as the Commendatore, Levasseur as Leporello, Falcon as Anna, Gras-Dorus as Elvira, and Cinti-Damoreau as Zerlina, it had a fine cast. The fact that the tenor Nourrit sang the baritone title role elicited little comment from Berlioz. He was more preoccupied by interpolations in the score, the most offensive of which was the ballet sequence introduced before the supper scene, using various instrumental works by Mozart grossly reorchestrated with bass drum and ophicleide. The *Dies irae* from the *Requiem* was sung just before the final scene to accompany an extraordinary tableau in which a procession of young girls dressed in white bring forward Donna Anna's bier. The black-veiled corpse of Donna Anna half rises from the bier, while Don Juan goes insane. The final scene in Mozart's score was not sung at all. In his second notice of the production, in November 1835, Berlioz was deeply impressed by the impact of the chorus as Don Juan is driven to destruction. By 1839, with the same production still on show, Berlioz was convinced that if he were alive Mozart would rather it were not played at all.¹¹

Rage at what Mozart's score suffered at the hands of meddling interference springs from the pages of Berlioz's letters and feuilletons in the following years. The *Don Juan Quadrille* concocted by the showman-conductor Musard drew some bitter jibes, exacerbated by the similarity of their names when pronounced in French and by the fact that Musard was making a fortune while Mozart died a pauper. Berlioz repeatedly

complained that the Serenade should be accompanied by a mandolin, and not by two guitars, or pizzicato violins, or any other substitute. In London in 1848 (and again in 1851) he was horrified by Costa's reorchestrations of *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro* with extra trombone parts, plenty of bass drum, and even an ophicleide in the supper scene. But he found Henriette Sontag an enchanting Zerlina: "It is impossible, I think, for the liveliest imagination to conceive a more complete realization of Mozart's ideal."¹² A revival of *Don Giovanni* at the Théâtre Italien in 1863, with Adelina Patti as Zerlina, was apparently "shameful,"¹³ but when the Théâtre Lyrique mounted it in 1866 (almost simultaneously with less successful revivals at the Opéra and the Théâtre Italien), Berlioz finally found a production that gave him infinite pleasure, with its superb array of female singers: Charton-Demeur as Donna Anna, Nilsson as Donna Elvira, and Miolan-Carvalho as Zerlina.

The Mozart opera that pleased him second only to *Don Giovanni* was *Die Zauberflöte*.¹⁴ Once again he found fault with certain sections of the work and again felt the need to defend its integrity against the invasion of arrangers. As *Les Mystères d'Isis* it enjoyed enormous success at the Opéra almost continuously from 1801 to 1827. This was a pastiche arranged by the Bohemian composer Lachnith, using extracts from *Don Giovanni*, *Figaro*, and *La Clemenza di Tito*, even a tune from a Haydn symphony, along with selected sections of *Die Zauberflöte* itself.¹⁵ Berlioz was first able to see it in the summer of 1823, with Mme Branchu in the cast. He was impressed by its "religious splendors"¹⁶ and always tended to think of it as a quasi-spiritual work. But studying the score in the Conservatoire library he discovered how profoundly garbled the current version was and thereafter always denounced Lachnith as an assassin.¹⁷ He was delighted when a company visiting from Aachen played the opera in German in its original form at the Théâtre Italien in May 1829 – original, that is, allowing for the insertion of "O wie ängstlich" from *Die Entführung* by the tenor, Haitzinger. Being then firmly entrenched against the vocal excesses of Italian opera, Berlioz found the Queen of the Night's music unacceptable and always coupled it with "Non mi dir" as an example of Mozart's occasional but fatal lack of judgment. One discovery that surprised him was the overture's brilliant demonstration of the effectiveness, even expressiveness, of fugues, the procedure he consistently decried in its stricter forms.¹⁸

He heard the opera in Hamburg in 1843, with the great bass Reichel singing Sarastro, and again at Covent Garden in 1851, with Mario as Tamino, Grisi as Pamina, Viardot as Papagena, and Formes as Sarastro. His review of that performance contains the most eloquent Mozart criticism he ever wrote. Not even in his writings on Gluck does admiration

find so poetic expression as this. He differentiated three styles in the opera: the passionate, the comic, and the antique-religious, and of these it is the antique-religious that moved him most:

This style is all found in the second act, with five numbers – five miracles – for which any admiration is merely pale and inadequate. These are the instrumental March, Sarastro's air with chorus "O Isis und Osiris," his second air with two verses "In diesen heil'gen Hallen," the moralities sung by the two men in armor to a chorale accompanied by the orchestra in fugal style, and lastly two choruses of priests. This, as I say, is of incomparable beauty and immensely elevated in style and thought. Everything about it is superb: expression, melody, harmony, rhythm, orchestration, and modulation. No one before Mozart came even close to such perfection in this manner, and I fear that no one has done so since. It would be folly to attempt it. These are the Egyptian pyramids of music; they exist, they defy time and feeble imitations. Most to be admired is the sovereign majesty, the lordly calm of Sarastro, whom everyone in the temple of Isis must obey. No high priest of any ancient religion ever equaled this in grandeur, serenity, force, and tenderness all at once. He sings of the goodness of the gods and the charm of virtue, and everything responds sympathetically to his voice; even the monument he inhabits seems to respond with mysterious echoes. One can imagine walking with him in the holy courts of heaven, breathing unknown scents in an atmosphere flooded with new and sweeter light; the earth and its sorrowful passions are forgotten. Sarastro himself falls into a state of sublime ecstasy as he sings. The grandeur of his voice gets more and more monumental in its calm gravity; the sound dims and dies; a profound silence falls, full of mystery all around; everything is wrapped in contemplative silence. We are at the doorway to the Infinite.¹⁹

Other aspects of the opera pleased him less. He regarded Schikaneder's libretto as stupid and absurd (like many before and since); he objected not only to the Queen of the Night's roulades but also to two bars of elaboration in Pamina's "Ach ich fühl's"; he found the music for the Three Ladies and the Three Boys too ordinary, and somewhat surprisingly felt that the orchestra intrudes too much on the vocal line. But he was delighted by Papageno's music and by much in Tamino and Pamina's roles.

As part of its wide-ranging Mozart series in the eighteen-sixties, the Théâtre Lyrique gave one hundred and seventy-two performances of *La Flûte enchantée* between 1865 and 1868. Berlioz certainly went to see it, although he had given up writing reviews and made no mention of it in his correspondence. Not as crudely manhandled as *Les Mystères d'Isis*, this version nevertheless strayed freely from the original text, which would have distressed him. Equally saddening for Berlioz was to see some discarded sets from *Les Troyens à Carthage* recycled to represent the Egyptian temple. Berlioz observed sourly to his neighbor in the theatre that the

public applauded these sets in *La Flûte enchantée*, though they had not applauded them in *Les Troyens*. “They are a remarkable people, the Parisians,” he was overheard to say.²⁰

Since it lacks the dramatic force of *Don Giovanni* and the solemnity of *Die Zauberflöte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* never made quite the same impression on Berlioz. He heard it at the Théâtre Italien in 1823 and assigned it, perhaps unthinkingly, to the Italian school. He heard it again in 1826, this time in French at the Odéon. In 1839, when it was revived at the Théâtre Italien, he wrote a notice which included some fine sentiments:

It is a long time since we have heard music at the Théâtre Italien as pure, expressive, witty, clever, and natural as this. Never have I felt such admiration for the creative power of Mozart’s genius nor for the constant lucidity of his mind. There is something despairing, I was almost going to say vexing, about this unfailing beauty, always calm and sure of itself and forcing us to acknowledge our obeisance from beginning to end of a very long work.²¹

He saw *Figaro* again in Berlin, in 1843, but he was suffering at the time from the “black philosophy” which caused him (as he was well aware) to adopt some perverse opinions: “I might [...] announce that it was time to have done with this adulation of Mozart, with his operas that are all alike and his maddening imperturbability, and that Cimarosa’s *Il Matrimonio segreto* [...] is nearly as boring as *Le Nozze di Figaro*.” This passage in the *Mémoires*, from the Seventh Letter describing his travels in Germany, is alarmingly open to misinterpretation, though we should recognize a pre-echo of the same “maddening imperturbability” in his 1839 review of the opera. In 1867 he remarked to Cui that Mozart’s operas “are all alike. His imperturbable composure (*beau sang-froid*) irritates and exasperates.”²²

In 1848 he conducted two performances of *Figaro* at Drury Lane Theatre, London, though without any special excitement to be doing so. He was proud not to permit the kind of “trombonization” that Costa inflicted on Mozart’s operas a few yards away at Covent Garden. A performance at the rival house, Her Majesty’s Theatre, in 1851, was again “trombonized and ophicleided,” but at least it had two performers who enchanted Berlioz: Cruvelli as Cherubino, and Sontag as Susanna. The latter drew some evocative writing from Berlioz:

When in the garden scene at night Mme Sontag sang that divine monologue for a woman in love, which I had only ever heard crudely done [“Deh vieni!”], in her *mezza voce*, so tender, soft, and mysterious all at once, this secret music (which I nonetheless understood) seemed to me a thousand times more bewitching. “That’s it!” I thought to myself, being careful not to exclaim aloud, “that’s the perfect faithful rendering of Mozart’s admirable

piece! That's the true song of solitude, of ecstatic reverie, of the night's mysteries; that's how a woman's voice should murmur in such a scene; that's true subtlety in singing, the half-shade, the true *piano* and *pianissimo* that composers can get from an orchestra of a hundred players or from choruses of two hundred voices, but which they cannot get from most singers, whether competent or incompetent, Italian or French, intelligent or stupid, human or divine, either for gold or jewelry, or by flattery or threat, or with kisses or blows."²³

He included this aria in a concert he gave in Baden in August 1858, sung by Anne Charton-Demeur, and again in one of his last concerts, in St. Petersburg on 28 November 1867, sung by Anna Regan. The last staging of the opera he saw was a very successful version given at the Théâtre Lyrique in May 1858, with Beaumarchais's text versified by Barbier and Carré and the music more or less intact. Berlioz devoted very little space to it in his review.

To the remaining Mozart operas he paid little attention. He seems not to have attended either of the two productions of *Così fan tutte* given in Paris in his time, the first at the Théâtre Italien in November 1862, the second four months later at the Théâtre Lyrique in an unsuccessful rehash fitted approximately to Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* by the indefatigable Barbier and Carré. Berlioz was in Germany when it opened and may not have troubled to see it on his return. But he at least knew the magnificent quintet from Act I since he conducted it in a concert in London on 6 July 1855 with the stellar line-up of Grisi, Bosio, Mario, Tamburini, and Lablache.

His notice of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, when it was staged at the Théâtre Lyrique as *L'Enlèvement au sérail* in 1859 on a double bill with Weber's *Abu Hassan*, was contemptuous of its feeble libretto and juvenile music, making exception only for the Constanze–Belmonte duet near the end ("Meinetwegen sollst du sterben").²⁴ He was nonetheless angry at the reorganization and adaptation the opera had undergone and stood up for the composer's integrity once again.

Parts of *Idomeneo* were used in a pastiche entitled *Louis XII ou la Route de Reims*, staged at the Odéon in 1825, but that Berlioz heard it or knew what it was is unlikely. Fragments from the opera were quite frequently performed by the Société des Concerts in the years 1836–1849 without provoking much response from Berlioz's pen; he seems not to have grasped the opera's manifest debt to Gluck, or at least not to have commented on it in print. He heard the overture and the opening aria in a concert in January 1863.

La Clemenza di Tito provided substantial sections of *Les Mystères d'Isis*, so Berlioz was probably as well acquainted with it as with *Idomeneo*.

He included an aria (which?) in a concert he conducted in Paris on 24 April 1842, and in his lengthy essay on *Fidelio* written in 1860 he stepped aside briefly to rebuke Mozart for allowing the basset horn to indulge in over-elaborate concertante figures in Vitellia's aria "Non più di fiori" at a moment when the singer is contemplating her own death.²⁵

Berlioz had the opportunity to see *Der Schauspieldirektor* in Paris in 1856, but since it was rewritten by a couple of boulevardier wordsmiths and mounted by Offenbach, he stayed away.²⁶

Of the two choral works in general circulation Berlioz deeply admired the motet *Ave verum corpus* but had reservations about the *Requiem*, although he recognized it to be a masterpiece. The fugal *Kyrie* was naturally not to his taste, and the *Tuba mirum*, with its single trombone where only a thousand could convey a sufficiently overwhelming vision of the Last Judgment, struck him as puny and inadequate.²⁷ The *Requiem* was often heard at funerals, at Choron's and Chopin's for example, and for the return of Napoléon's ashes to Paris in December 1840. The *Ave verum* he cited complete in the *Grand Traité d'instrumentation* as a fine example of writing for voices in the middle register, and he included it in his concerts at least five times, including his monster concerts for the 1855 Exposition Universelle and in two of his final concerts in Russia in 1867–1868. In taking issue with his friend Joseph d'Ortigue's view that religious music should aspire to the nature of plainchant and not be infected by expressiveness, he used the *Ave verum*, "that sublime expression of ecstatic adoration," as evidence that the composition of true sacred music did not have to confine itself to the old church modes.²⁸ "God dictated it, an angel wrote it down," he wrote.²⁹

It is in the area of instrumental music that Berlioz's regard for Mozart is most ambiguous. Despite his admission in the *Mémoires* that his eyes were eventually opened to the "marvelous beauty of the quartets and quintets," he had nothing to say about those works, nothing to say about the concertos, and little comment on the symphonies. He conducted the *Jupiter* Symphony just once, in London, on 24 March 1852. Ganz, citing unnamed sources, reports that in the "swift movement of the fugal finale the players reached the 'acme of execution'. Berlioz's interpretation was faultless in clarity, balance of phrase and rare nobility of style."³⁰ Since he was insistent on clarity and precision as essentials of the art of conducting – in contrast to the more impulsive style advocated by Liszt and Wagner – it is surprising that he did not conduct more Mozart, where these qualities must have been most helpful and effective. He proposed to include the C-Minor Piano Concerto, K. 491, in his first St. Petersburg concert in 1867, but in fact did not do so.³¹ The last four symphonies appeared regularly in the programs of the Société des Concerts in the years when Berlioz

reviewed them, so he was familiar with them, even though he had little critical insight to offer. In 1839, after a performance of the *Prague* Symphony, he could only feel the immense distance which separated this work from the “sublimities” of Beethoven.³² The G-Minor Symphony was “an admirable masterpiece,” although the minuet he took to be some kind of crude joke, and the finale of the E-flat Symphony he regarded as definitely inferior to the rest.³³

He was aware of seventeen symphonies, but only considered the last three to be worth playing.³⁴ In 1844 he wrote dismissively that in his symphonies Mozart, like Haydn, made no attempt to break out of old formulae, with the “more or less clever succession of pretty phrases, little melodic fancies and some witty and piquant orchestral touches. These works are simply there to divert the ear. There is never the least tendency towards what we call poetic ideas. [. . .] Their sense of expression was unawakened and seems to have come alive only when they were setting words to music.” Their orchestration too, he noted, was unadventurous.³⁵ Gluck, who never wrote symphonies and sonatas, was innocent of this fatal weakness.

As for Mozart’s juvenile works, he felt Leopold made a great mistake in preserving them.³⁶ On seeing the overture to *Die Entführung* (which Berlioz believed to have been composed at the age of fifteen) he should have said: “My son, you have just written a truly awful overture. You said the rosary before beginning, I’m sure, but you will now go and write another, and this time you will tell your rosary to get the saints to inspire you a bit better.”³⁷ When Joachim said he had deliberately sought to sustain a lengthy dissonance in one of his overtures, Berlioz remarked to the Princess Wittgenstein that he would prefer Mozart’s early piano sonatas, which was *not* intended as a compliment.³⁸

Mozart’s chamber music certainly stood below Beethoven’s in Berlioz’s estimation, and although he had many opportunities to hear it he felt no special resonances with it, at least none that he ever wrote about in his feuilletons or correspondence. Baillot’s series of chamber concerts in the eighteen-twenties and thirties included many performances of Mozart quartets and quintets, and later ensembles continued to do so.³⁹ Berlioz’s strictures against Fétis in the monologues of *Lélio* must certainly refer to Fétis’s “corrections” of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, but he surely also knew that Fétis had rewritten Mozart’s C-Major Quartet (K. 465, the “Dissonance”) in order to remove the dissonances, a matter which was widely discussed at the Conservatoire in 1830.⁴⁰

It remains to consider whether Mozart’s music had any direct or indirect impact on Berlioz’s own. Berlioz himself denied it, in all essentials, but it

is tempting nonetheless to see Mozartian influences at work here and there. One piece by Mozart, the duet “Là ci darem la mano” from *Don Giovanni*, inspired him to compose a set of variations for guitar, published in 1828 but now lost;⁴¹ “inspired” is perhaps misleading, since he was simply using a melody borrowed by every other composer of the day for variations with no affinity implied. In at least two elements of the *Sérénade in Harold en Italie*, we may begin to trace a line to Mozart. The gurgling low sixteenth-notes in the second clarinet that starts at bar 48 of the *Sérénade* may come from a similar passage in the Maskers’ Trio in the first act finale of *Don Giovanni*, especially since Berlioz drew attention to this effect in the *Traité d’instrumentation*, commending that particular use of the low clarinet; something similar had already appeared at bar 61 of the *Quartetto e coro dei maggi* of 1831, coupled with a bassoon. It seems also to be no coincidence that Berlioz should attempt a complex combination of three different meters in the *Sérénade* in the very year, 1834, that he was thinking deeply about the Opéra’s production of *Don Juan*. He drew his readers’ attention, after all, to the sophistication of the first act finale with its three off-stage bands in different meters, a passage which he also gives advice about in his brochure on conducting, *Le Chef d’orchestre*. When he came to review the third act of *Les Huguenots* in 1836 he lauded Meyerbeer’s clever combination of three different choruses – a chorus of soldiers, a chorus of women at prayer, and a chorus of Catholics exclaiming in alarm – and acknowledged that it far surpassed Mozart’s three off-stage orchestras in complexity. Whether indebted to Mozart or Rossini (*Guillaume Tell*) or Meyerbeer, Berlioz remained fond of combining two or more different strata of music that have been heard individually in advance. The three off-stage orchestras in the first act finale of *Les Troyens* should perhaps be seen as legitimate descendants of *Don Giovanni*.

Some observers perceive a Mozartian grace in Berlioz’s last works, especially *Béatrice et Bénédict*. Andrew Porter has compared the duet “Nuit paisible et sereine” with “Deh vieni” (in *Figaro*) and the trio “Soave sia il vento” (in *Così*),⁴² while David Cairns identifies as Mozartian a “general ideal of lucidity, lyrical grace, and wit combined with dramatic expressiveness” rather than in characteristics of style or form.⁴³ The difficulty is that Berlioz was apparently untouched by that side of Mozart’s genius, and I would myself be more inclined to perceive Mozartian characteristics when Berlioz aims at the Gluckian solemnity and religiosity which he so admired in *Die Zauberflöte*. Many pages in the last act of *Idomeneo* anticipate Berlioz’s world, and I believe that in the last part of *L’Enfance du Christ* he modeled the Ishmaelite father’s high moral tone on Sarastro, especially after St. Joseph, like Tamino, has had to knock

on three doors before gaining admittance to the Ishmaelite's house. The closing chorus of *L'Enfance du Christ* might be considered in the spirit of the *Ave verum*. Sarastro is certainly present in the figure of Priam in *Les Troyens*, and the solemnity of the last pages of the opera owes as much to Mozart as to Gluck.

Berlioz's fuller knowledge of Mozart came late in life. In 1862 he told Cornelius "We are beginning to understand Mozart,"⁴⁴ reflecting the fact that throughout his working life Berlioz never had the opportunity to see beyond the adaptations that shielded the true Mozart from public view. Thus although Berlioz persistently championed the integrity of Mozart's work, it was as if the composer's integrity meant more to him than the music itself. It was almost worse that Mozart should be played everywhere but played wrong while Gluck, whose works had never been disfigured to the same degree, was not being played at all. "Mozart," he wrote in 1839, "is far from Gluck in dramatic music, whatever anyone may say, enormously far." "I admire Mozart profoundly, but he *moves* me less than those three composers [Gluck, Beethoven, and Weber]."⁴⁵ Whereas in his earlier years Berlioz did not hesitate to rank Gluck above his younger contemporary, by the end of his life he was no longer quite so sure.