

Graduating Thesis

Mozart's Music

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What a wondrous theme is music! As the spirit of the Almighty is ever with us, so music follows us from the cradle to the grave. The infant, while being lulled to sleep on the mother's breast, tries to sing in unison with the voice it loves so well. The child in Sabbath school and school room delights in vocal exercise. When love's gentle emotions first take possession of the heart the story is told through the medium of melody. Watch the soldier when he hears the bugle's call. How it speaks to him of command, security or danger. Sing the old war songs to the veteran and it recalls to him the dreadful strife, the weary marches or the loss of a beloved comrade, touching him until with tears streaming down his cheeks he becomes aroused and chimes in or settles into quiet reflection. Though these are effects

of this wondrous theme on the common soul, philosophers and scientists have failed to discover its true inward nature or fully penetrate its mysteries.

The world has had its geniuses in all things but as a musical genius the nearest to perfection was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. He alone wrote and excelled in every realm of musical composition. He was familiar with all, and everywhere scattered his marvels in dramatic religious and symphonic compositions oratorios, chamber music, songs, concertos and psalms.

When yet a small boy he was taken by his father to many countries of Europe where he came in contact with the refined tone of the higher classes of the time, and listened to the music of the different people, thus discovering the manner in which every heart understands the language of the human soul. These travels proved a great

advantage to his art. The magnificent landscape scenery awakened his natural sense of the beautiful. The churches, palaces and varied impressions he received from life and art are the principle causes of his music being so directly attractive, harmoniously beautiful and universally intelligent. Italy, the mother country of music was at the time of Mozart's travels the Eldorado and did much to overcome his natural difficulties which the rough north had given him and to bring his artistic views to maturity. During his visits he was always kindly entertained and whenever the opportunity presented itself he never failed to display his own talents. He was ever anxious to hear and study the works of his predecessors, gaining from them material which his marvelous powers would beautifully instill in his own best works.

Mozart has often been compared

with Shakespeare, Goethe, Beethoven and Haydn. As a melodist, at which he is pre-eminently great, he is allied to Gluck by his sincerity and power of expression, yet his truest parallel is Raphael. In the works of both we admire the same marvelous beauty and ideal truthfulness and the same intense delight in creation. His language charms and enchants. He amplified, embellished and deepened it until it reached perfection. His style is so spontaneous, frank and characteristic that it is said there is but one Mozart. His music is indeed wonderfully balmy, and his rich melodies pour along with almost ravishing sweetness into a brilliant unbroken stream which often overflows its banks so abundant is it. It is peculiarly the music of springtime though it lacks the majesty and emotional depths which were reached by some of his successors. Old and antiquated as

his music is, especially as compared with the new schools, its ever freshness, grace and beauty have made it immortal, and he is the only one of his contemporaries whose operas still hold the stage with unimpaired strength.

In his brief life he composed more than fifty great works besides hundreds of minor ones. Though of the deepest religious nature he would often write on frivolous subjects but the words were generally so trifling that the whole soon perished. His operas demonstrated his inexhaustable resources and poetic power of expression in respect to truth. In this dramatic respect the Figaro and Don Giovanni without question occupy first place. They are a part of modern humanity in general.

The first real master-piece of our artist is Idomeneus. In this it is easy to see the great and grave situations of human characters, and Mozart knew well how to do them justice.

It combines the freshness of youth with a great variety of invention and vitality and in every respect bears the characteristic richness and perfection. The whole has, however, according to the Italian Opera of the time, been broken into small fragments to satisfy the undramatic taste, yet it is still overflowing with beauty. It is only when Mozart concedes to the narrowness of singers that any part of this work seems incompetent. That the Idomeneo lives to-day only in concert halls is due to the Italian words which interrupt the acting at almost every step.

The Figaro received from him more attention than even the Idomeneo. He put all his individuality into it. It was the first subject that occupied all his mind and soul and at the same time afforded him an opportunity to show the real brilliancy of his wit and musical capacity. Its few weaknesses are concealed by its excellencies. The picture of life given

seems to belong to one particular period but after all reveals to us human nature in all its phases. It is attractive and cheerful and for the time in which it was written, not too daring. He gave to the female characters the utmost goodness of heart and purity of soul. Even from some of the haughty giddiness of some of the characters he leaves us entirely satisfied with the presentation of such human weaknesses. The people never tired of the *Tigaro* no matter what the arrangement was. Portions of it were re-echoed in the streets, gardens and home with universal delight.

The *Don Giovanni* represents the indestructable instinct of life. The hero is given up to the fullest enjoyment regardless of consequences. The work made its way to France through Italy and Spain, and aroused for the first time the feeling that there hangs a necessary and tragic sentence over the mere sensual life which will always

remain dark to the living themselves and which therefore fills the proudest life with a certain melancholy. The music in this work seems to breathe knowledge of the permanent duration of human life.

His Requiem was left in an unfinished state though he gave instructions and made suggestions even upon his death-bed. It was literally his swan song. No work has ever given rise to more romantic stories or more bitter discussion. It was a popular belief for some time that the Requiem was commissioned by a dark mysterious stranger whose appearance impressed Mozart with the conviction that he (Mozart) was writing his own death song upon the order of some supernatural power. After the death of Mozart the work was completed by Süßmayers, one of his favorite pupils, and who claims the honor of filling in certain parts of the instrumentation. The Lacrymosa, one of the most beautiful movements in

the work is credited with having only its first eight measures written by Mozart, yet it is impossible to study the whole without coming to the conclusion that it was the production of Mozart's mind. The movements of the Requiem vary greatly in character, the first being a slow, mournful theme which gradually brightens and reaches a splendid burst of exaltation, after which it closes with a slow and complicated movement. The next is written for a chorus and is very dramatic in character. The orchestral parts are constantly agitated until reaching intense energy the whole presents a vivid picture, in tones of terror, of the last judgement. With rare skill is this last appeal of humanity woven out of the thunder clashes in the music. This is followed by a movement written as a quartet for solo voices. The parts are combined with marvelous skill, relieved here and there by

solos of purely melodic style. The whole is an astonishing piece of scientific combinations, yet never for a moment does it lose its deep religious significance. The Lacrymosa, as stated above is the most elegant and poetically conceived movement in the Requiem. It begins in a delicate and graceful manner which gradually broadens until it develops into a crescendo of immense power. The work closes with a fugue of the opening Kyrie with an accompaniment of mournful majesty. The whole work from this opening Kyrie to its repetition in the finale shows this to be a matchless requiem of divine beauty.

Disappointment after disappointment had deeply effected Mozarts soul yet his mind soared into regions beyond this life where compensations for its irregularities would be found. The golden light of consolation fills his work and a spirit of reconciliation animates his

music. We only need recall the two "fantasias" for four hands to reach the sunny heights of his genius, and see how he dived down into his own hard life and how again he was lifted up to that eternal spring from which his sublime art proceeded.

The Magic Flute is a reflection of life such as he had seen in his own soul for years. In parts of it we hear the heart-felt love notes of his youth, and we also conceive the ideal charm and transformation of all the other powers. Like the Requiem it is an expression of a craving for God—the highest good for the human soul.