

Mozarthaus Vienna Special Exhibition



Mozarthaus Vienna
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Antonio Salieri. The Facts

An exhibition from the archives of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna in Mozarthaus Vienna

31.01.2014 – 11.01.2015

Peter Shaffer's play and Miloš Forman's film "Amadeus" brought the world-famous composer Antonio Salieri to public attention again. Although neither Shaffer nor Forman intended to write a biography of Mozart or Salieri, their version of Salieri became the accepted one. The exhibition compares this with the real Salieri – in all the facets of his life and work. Naturally, his relationship with Mozart is dealt with, but it also looks at Salieri as the teacher of an entire generation of composers, notably Beethoven and Schubert, but also Mozart's own son. He was seen as an authority and father figure, two characteristics that were instrumental in his founding of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna and its conservatory. He was a sociable person with a wide circle of friends – something that might surprise visitors, along with the fact that his position as court kapellmeister was more of an administrative than an artistic one. His arrival in Vienna, his rise, his position, and his compositions and contribution to the Vienna music scene are documented in detail. These are the subjects of an exhibition that will offer interested visitors a wealth of new material. It also features beautiful, valuable and informative objects that will leave an unforgettable impression.

Antonio Salieri: The Composer

Salieri was always a faithful servant of his master, the Viennese imperial court. This can also be seen in the scope of his work. Most of what he composed was what the court demanded: operas and other theatrical works, *harmoniemusik*, patriotic compositions and sacred music. He wrote practically no piano or chamber music — genres for which there was a great demand and good market — or orchestral works to be performed in public. Five of his six instrumental concertos (a genre for which there was no use in court) were composed before his employment at court. Apart from the operas written for the Italian opera houses and for Paris and the works for the Tonkünstler-Societät and the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien — two music institutions in which Salieri had a personal involvement — he seldom composed works for performance outside or on commission. He wrote lieder, canons and small, unaccompanied multi-part songs for his own amusement or for making music with his friends. Salieri's style did not remain static. He followed the development in his lifetime from preclassical to early romantic music and even added a number of exemplary, pioneering details of his own. He was the first person to cultivate unaccompanied polyphonic songs as a musical genre and did so to a remarkable extent. Today this genre is associated first and foremost with Salieri's student Franz Schubert. There is no indication that Salieri sought to promote or sell his works to further his own artistic ambitions or for financial reasons. Typically for the time, his operas became known through copies or printed works produced ad hoc, often by chance, or through the initiative of others. Only a few patriotic political or vocal compositions were published. This apparent disinterest by Salieri in the marketing of his works is entirely consistent with his amply demonstrated modesty and reserve.

Antonio Salieri: Imperial court Kapellmeister

This position was much less appealing for an artist than might be imagined today. The holder conducted the court orchestra at (public) religious services and in the few (private) court concerts. He chose the repertoire for both and composed new works for religious services. Otherwise his tasks were mostly administrative: recruitment and payment of members of the court orchestra, acquisition and proper archiving of sheet music, maintenance and acquisition of instruments, control of the acceptance of composition dedications to members of the imperial family and the like. The court kapellmeister was a member of the staff of the *Obersthofmeisteramt* [Lord Chamberlain] and was subordinate to the *Hofmusikgraf*. The imperial and royal court opera was an independent institution. As director of the Italian opera at the imperial court from 1774 to 1776 and again from 1783, Salieri had an influence on opera performance. As court kapellmeister, however, he had no such power. Mozart's Italian opera performances and commissions in Vienna (*Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, insertion arias in the operas of other composers) were instigated by the court theatre director Count Orsini-Rosenberg and the opera kapellmeister Salieri, but not the court kapellmeister.

Antonio Salieri: Main students

Alongside Beethoven, Schubert was one of the most prominent of Salieri's 60 students. He taught Schubert for many years in the city choir school and gave him private lessons in counterpoint and Italian vocal composition. In 1821 Schubert "respectfully dedicated" the first edition of his Goethe lieder to his esteemed teacher, "the well-born Antonio Salieri, imperial and royal court kapellmeister".

- Ludwig van Beethoven
- Luigi Cherubini
- Carl Czerny
- Johann Nepomuk Hummel
- Franz Liszt
- Giacomo Meyerbeer
- Franz Xaver Mozart, known as W. A. Mozart Jr.
- Franz Schubert
- Franz Xaver Süssmayr

Antonio Salieri and Mozart

Leopold Mozart's jealousy of Antonio Salieri was not echoed by his son. When the Russian Grand Duchess Maria Fyodorovna decided to take singing lessons from Antonio Salieri rather than Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who had just arrived in Vienna, he suspected an intrigue on Salieri's part, but this is the only occasion on which he felt badly done by in Vienna by Salieri. A few critical comments about him in Mozart's correspondence are nothing in comparison with the negative remarks about other composers found in his letters and those of other composers of the time.

All known sources speak of a good relationship between the two composers. They even wrote a cantata together in 1785 (KV 477a), which has unfortunately disappeared. There is much evidence from Salieri that far from standing in Mozart's way he fully recognised and appreciated him. In 1789, for example, as Kapellmeister of the Italian opera ensemble, he included Mozart's *Figaro* in the imperial and royal court opera repertoire instead of one of his own works. In 1790 he withdrew as composer of Lorenzo da Ponte's libretto *Così fan tutte* in

favour of Mozart, in spite of having already started to work on it. The same year he selected sacred music by Mozart for the coronation and homage to Emperor Leopold II. Another sign of the good relationship is the fact that Constanze Mozart sent her younger son Franz Xaver, known as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Jr., whom she was styling as his father's successor, to Antonio Salieri for lessons with a view to achieving this aim. She hoped that Salieri's testimonial would help him to launch his career. A generation after Mozart's death tensions arose between the "Italian" and "German" musical styles. These aesthetic disputes, which were also a question of shares of the market, were traced back to an earlier era, and Mozart (for German music) and Salieri (for Italian music) designated as the principal protagonists. They were set up as polar opposites, something that affected Antonio Salieri while he was still alive. Before he was overtaken by dementia, he was able to discredit the rumour that he had killed Mozart.

Shortly after his death, however, the idea of "Salieri, Mozart's enemy" and the tension between the Italian composer and the German genius Mozart was being turned into a literary topos. Since 1832 it has been the subject of musical dramas (Pushkin's play *Mozart and Salieri*, set to music by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov in 1897, and Lortzing's singspiel *Scenes from Mozart's Life*) and of plays and films, most recently in the internationally successful 1979 play *Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer and the film of the same name by Miloš Forman, which came out five years later. Although Shaffer and Forman explicitly stated that their works were not directly about Mozart's life but about the tragic discrepancy between genius and mere competence, both the play and the film continue to influence the abiding public image of Mozart and Salieri.

Christoph Willibald Gluck. 300th anniversary.

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With its exhibition of selected objects from the archives of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, Mozarthaus Vienna recalls this composer, who occupied Mozart throughout his life and with whom he had good personal contact. Gluck was also an influential model for Salieri and both benefitted in their way from Gluck's opera reforms. But his ideas for opera and his exemplary implementation are not the only reasons for Gluck's importance. He was a central component of the Viennese music scene with an influence that extended throughout Europe, one that is not wholly appreciated today. Good reason to recall him through music manuscripts, first editions and other recollections, all the more so as he preceded Mozart as imperial kapellmeister.

Christoph Willibald Gluck

Gluck was born three hundred years ago, on 2 July 1714, in Erasbach bei Berching in the Upper Palatinate. In 1731 he moved to Prague to study at the university. He failed to complete his studies but acquired his first experience of music there. In the mid-1730s he moved to Vienna, where he was supported by Prince Philipp Lobkowitz. In 1737 Prince Antonio Maria Melzi met him at Palais Lobkowitz and invited him to join his orchestra in Milan. He studied there for four years, until 1741, with Giovanni Sammartini, and his first opera was performed that year in Milan. After spells in Venice and other Italian cities, London, Dresden, Vienna, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Prague and Naples, the next record of him in Vienna dates from 1750. On 15 September of that year he married the daughter of a Viennese merchant, so he must have been there for longer. Vienna became Gluck's second home. In 1752 he joined the orchestra of Prince Joseph Friedrich von Sachsen-Hildburghausen, who lived in Vienna. Two years later he received a commission from the imperial court to compose "theatre and concert music". He was subsequently appointed court composer and court chamber musician. With the support of the French queen Marie Antoinette, who as an archduchess had had singing lessons from Gluck in Vienna, he was commissioned by the royal opera in Paris to compose six operas. He wrote five of them between 1774 and 1779 but suffered a stroke in 1779 that made him unable to compose the sixth. He passed on the commission to Antonio Salieri, who put to music the libretto *Les Danaïdes* that had been intended for Gluck. This opera was performed for the first time in 1784. In 1787 Gluck suffered a second stroke and died on 15 November in his house at Wiedner Hauptstrasse 32 in Vienna's 4th district, which is preserved to this day.

Gluck's operas mark the transition from Baroque to Classical music. He wrote great works in the Italian and French operatic styles, which also featured his pioneering reforms that were much discussed among his contemporaries. He is also one of the founders of the German singspiel. In addition, he wrote influential symphonies, chamber music and lieder. Most of his liturgical music has unfortunately disappeared. Gluck enjoyed great fame during his lifetime and afterwards. His renown has faded somewhat today, but the 300th anniversary of his birth provides an opportunity to again give him the regard he deserves.

Mozart and Gluck

Leopold Mozart, a lifelong admirer of Gluck, got to know the composer's most recent works during his family's first stay in Vienna. His son no doubt learned of Gluck's work through his father as well. In Salzburg in early 1773 Mozart arranged four pieces for wind instruments by Gluck — either on his own or together with his father. In Vienna in 1782 he wanted to write piano variations on a theme from an aria from Gluck's opera *Alceste*, but he managed only a piano arrangement of the theme. In 1784 he composed piano variations on the arietta *Unser dummer Pöbel meint* from Gluck's *La rencontre imprévue*. Just as Mozart knew of Gluck's operas and had seen them performed, Gluck was also interested in Mozart's opera composition. As Mozart wrote proudly to his father, Gluck had been "very complimentary" about his singspiel *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. When Gluck heard Mozart's 'Paris' Symphony and a concert aria in 1783 during one of Mozart's concerts, he "could not praise them enough", as Mozart once again wrote in a letter to his father. Gluck is in fact mentioned frequently in the Mozart family correspondence. Two dinner invitations by Gluck to Mozart and his wife in 1782 and 1783 demonstrate that Gluck and Mozart were also on friendly terms in Vienna.

They were both holders of the papal Order of the Golden Spur, although Mozart's was of a higher class than Gluck's. As such they were both entitled to use the title *Ritter*. Gluck made liberal use of this privilege, in contrast to Mozart, who never did.

[The special exhibitions are included in the admission price for Mozarthaus Vienna!](#)

For Photos please visit www.mozarthausvienna.at under the section Press.

Mozarthaus Vienna: opening hours and admission prices

Mozarthaus Vienna with the Wien Museum Mozart apartment, a member of the Wien Holding group (A-1010 Vienna, Domgasse 5), is open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Information on the museum, special exhibition and event programme in German and English is available at www.mozarthausvienna.at.

Admission prices: €10 full price ticket, €8 reduced (students, senior citizens), €7 groups (10+ persons), €3 children up to 14 years, €20 family ticket (2 adults and up to 3 children).

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