

## Special Exhibition

16 February 2018 – 27 January 2019

### **Mozart on the way to immortality. Genius and Posterity**

*An exhibition compiled from the Austrian National Library in the Mozarthaus Vienna*

**Mozart – the name stands for musical perfection and for an outstanding genius. Yet how did Mozart become world famous and how did his fame spread? Poems, homages, work editions, legends – this all formed the image of Mozart after the premature death of the composer. This exhibition is mounted by the Austrian National Library in the Mozarthaus Vienna and presents exceptional objects from its collections, including the autograph manuscript of Frédéric Chopin's Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano' from Mozart's opera Don Giovanni, on display to the public for the first time.**

An astonishing development occurred in how the public regarded Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart after his death on 5 December 1791: until then Mozart had had the reputation of a successful and popular contemporary, but from then onwards the image of a genius of time-transcending grandeur evolved. During his lifetime Mozart had in some cases been awarded the status of the extraordinary, especially by his great contemporary Joseph Haydn. It was Haydn who, in 1786, said to Mozart's father Leopold that his son was "the greatest composer I know in person and by name" and in a letter dated 20 December 1791, shortly after Mozart's death, Haydn wrote to Marianne von Genzinger, "... I'm looking forward like a child to coming home to embrace my good friends, but I regret not being able to embrace the great Mozart, how I wish that it were otherwise and that he had not had to die. Not in a hundred years will posterity again see such talent." Almost a year later, on 29 October 1792, Ferdinand Graf Waldstein wrote in the album of the young Ludwig van Beethoven, who was about to set off for Vienna, "Mozart's genius is still grieving and lamenting the death of his pupil. It found refuge in the inexhaustible Haydn, but no occupation; through him it wanted to be unified once again with someone. By constant diligence you will receive Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands."

The aim of the exhibition is to show this process of how people became aware of Mozart's greatness and make it possible through a variety of aspects to experience and comprehend the unbroken, indeed increased popularity of his oeuvre after his death. Both in the necrologies as well as in the early biographies an image of a composer is revealed whose creativity is not to be regarded as a closed chapter, but which gains increasing significance for the present and future. Examples are *Mozarts Leben* (Friedrich Schlichtegroll, Graz 1794), *Mozarts Geist* (Theodor Arnold, Erfurt 1803), the *begründete und ausführliche Biographie* – the founded and detailed biography of Mozart by Johann Alois Schlosser (Prague 1828), as well as articles in the Leipzig *Allgemeinen musikalischen Zeitung*. The places where these publications were printed demonstrate that the interest in Mozart's oeuvre had already taken on a European dimension. This portrayal is continued with further biographical documents, whereby there was much interest in Mozart's grave and the theory that he was poisoned. Mozart's death was the object of many, mostly romanticized portrayals, and rumours that he might have been poisoned would not go away, and even his grave was the object of much conjecture and speculation. The fact that it is not known for certain where exactly Mozart's last resting place is located, heightened the mystery surrounding the composer and contributed to the creation of legends.

Mozart's last work, the *Requiem*, left behind as a fragment which Constanze Mozart commissioned Franz Xaver Süssmayr to complete, is surrounded in particular by legends and conjecture. The writer on music, Gottfried Weber from Mainz, vehemently doubted the authenticity of this work, whereas Maximilian Stadler in Vienna defended the authenticity of Mozart's final work. The Vienna Court Library acquired the original manuscripts of the work during the period 1831 to 1838, as established by several

documents, and it thus became clearer what share Mozart and Franz Xaver Süssmayr had each had in the composition of the work.

*The Magic Flute*, like the *Requiem*, also dates from the last year of Mozart's life. Its first performance on 30 September 1791 was followed, long after Mozart's death, by a performance series lasting several years and in many other European cities. The huge success prompted Emanuel Schikaneder, the librettist, to write a 'second part' of *The Magic Flute*, which was set to music by Peter von Winter. Leading composers of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century contributed much to the high esteem for Mozart by posterity. Joseph Haydn was not the only one who expressed his admiration for Mozart on several occasions, Ludwig van Beethoven also included Mozart among his idols. In a publication by Maximilian Stadler (1826) he is quoted as saying, "...I have always been one of Mozart's greatest admirers and will continue to be so until my last breath."

A somewhat remote yet meaningful indication of the popularity and significance of the name Mozart is the phenomenon of the falsely ascribed works. After Mozart's death a huge number of works by less eminent composers were distributed under the name 'Mozart' as manuscripts or in print so as to heighten interest and sales. Not least Mozart's widow Constanze made use of the appeal of the name of her deceased husband: she presented her son Franz Xaver to the public under the name 'Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart fils', and his compositions also appeared under this name.

The phenomenon of increasing interest in Mozart's creativity is shown not only in the wide variety of biographies but also in the many first prints of his works that appeared in the years after his death. This concerns the first editions of *The Magic Flute* and of the *Requiem*, as well as many other works which were printed in the period between 1791 and 1810. Mozart was the point of reference of variations and homages, whereby the exhibition shows an original manuscript of a particular kind: the variations on 'La ci darem la mano' from *Don Giovanni* by Frédéric Chopin, who wrote this work at the age of 17 years and presented it in Vienna for the first time.

The growing awareness of the significance of Mozart is also reflected in poetry and the fine arts. Mozart was revered in many poems, and authors of the status of E. T. A. Hoffmann – who took on the name Amadeus due to his admiration for Mozart – ensured a high level of Mozart reception. In contemporary graphic art Mozart also played an important role, whereby romantically glorified portrayals of the death scene were especially popular. This development culminated in 1842, when the first monument for Mozart was constructed in Salzburg.

The curators: Andrea Harrandt and Thomas Leibnitz



Janos Blaschke: Mozart, 1807 © ÖNB, Picture Archives and Collection of Prints (left)

Johann Ritter von Lucam: The Question of Mozart's Grave, Vienna 1856 © ÖNB, Music Collection (middle)

Albert Henry Payne: Monument on the Mozartplatz (sketch), 1842 © ÖNB, Picture Archives and Collection of Prints (right)

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MOZART'S PATH TO IMMORTALITY. Genius and Posterity

An exhibition of the Austrian National Library in the Mozarthaus Vienna

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