

Mozart, Catholic Faith, and Freemasonry

by Forrest Guittar

The Mozarts were devout Catholics, and therefore, religious studies and attendance at Mass would have been a regular part of Wolfgang's life. The impression one receives after reading the family letters is not one of trite religiosity, but of genuine belief and reliance on a merciful God (sprinkled with a good amount of personal effort). Let us consider but a few of the many possibilities to be drawn from their own words.

Oct. 23, 1777 - Leopold (Wolfgang's father) writes to his wife:

But what can I now wish you that I do not always wish you? And that is, the grace of God, that it may follow you everywhere, that it may never leave you. And this it will never do, if you are diligent in fulfilling the duties of a true Catholic Christian.¹

Oct. 25, 1777 - Wolfgang to Leopold:

Papa must not worry, for God is ever before my eyes. I realize his Omnipotence and I fear His anger; but I also recognize His love. . . . He will never forsake His own. If it is according to His will, so let it be according to mine.²

Dec. 18, 1777 - Leopold to his wife:

Is it necessary for me to ask whether Wolfgang is not getting a little lax perhaps (about confession?) God must come first! From His hands we receive our temporal happiness; and at



the same time we must think of our eternal salvation.³

Wolfgang responds:

But one thing upset me a little bit—your inquiry as to whether I wasn't perhaps getting a little lax about confession. I have nothing to say to this; but just let me ask you one thing, and that is, not to have such a bad opinion of me.⁴

In other correspondence Leopold expressed his concern that when he died he would have worry over his son's eternal soul. Wolfgang replied that such worry was unnecessary. He also wrote:

I put my trust in God. In my prayers I ask Him for what I believe will be most useful to me and all of us, but I always add "Lord, may Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven."⁵

A greater insight into Mozart's personal faith is found in correspondence regarding the death of his mother in Paris, 1778. To his father, Mozart wrote:

For a long time now I have been hovering day and night between hope and fear—but I have resigned myself wholly to the will of God, who orders all things for our good Let us put our trust in God and console ourselves with the thought . . . as He knows best what is profitable and beneficial to our temporal happiness and our eternal salvation.⁶

After writing to his father, he wrote to his friend, Abbe Bullinger:

O my friend! Not only am I now comforted, but I have been comforted for some time. By the mercy of God I have borne all. . . . When her illness became dangerous I prayed to God for two things—a happy death for her and strength and courage for myself; and God in His goodness heard my prayer and gave me those two blessings in richest measure.⁷

Later he would add:

After you have at first given way to tears and anguish, you will eventually resign yourself to the will of God and worship His unsearchable, unfathomable and all wise providence . . . for how much happier is she now . . . the thought that she is not lost to us forever — that we shall see her again.⁸

Kenyon puts it this way: "Leopold no more doubted his religion than an Englishman doubts the importance of international trade."⁹ Neither did his son. Wolfgang never did or said anything which indicated his

Guittar is Director of Music Ministries at Sandy Springs Christian Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

dissatisfaction or doubt with the established religion. His typical attitude was: *What God does not want, I do not want*. Yet he held a level of contempt for *church-men*. Leopold's admonition resounded in his son's ears:

You owe that to the extraordinary talents you have received from a most merciful God, and it depends only upon your good sense and way of life whether you wish to die as an ordinary musician forgotten by the whole world or as a famous Kapellmeister of whom posterity will read.¹⁰

Wolfgang replied:

I am a composer, and was born to be a Kapellmeister. I am not and cannot bury my talent for composition, which God in His kindness has so richly endowed me (I may say this without vanity).¹¹

While some of Mozart's church music reveals him as a great composer, it also reveals him as a

devout Christian. Yet Mozart was not all piety, as the following will reveal:

I, Johannes Chrystostomus Amadeus Wolfgangus Sigismundus Mozart, hearby plead guilty and confess that yesterday and the day before (not to mention on several other occasions) I did not get home until midnight . . . I did frequently, without any difficulty, but quite easily, perpetrate rhymes, the same being, moreover sheer garbage . . . I should not have behaved so godlessly . . . At the same time I must admit that I thoroughly enjoyed it. I confess all these sins and transgressions of mine . . . and in hope of having to confess them very often, I firmly resolve to go on with the sinful life I have begun.¹²

Nettl proposes that "In Wolfgang's case it is the psychology of his character that makes us understand that no faith could be as dear to him as the Catholic faith. Only the Catholic form of worship with its

breathtaking splendor of its festivities, its sensuous impressiveness . . . could meet the demands of his imagination."¹³

As time passed, fewer religious references are to be found in Mozart's correspondence. This is related to several factors, and particularly his affiliation with Freemasonry. Braunbehrens makes the statement that "Mozart was clearly a devout Christian but a halfhearted Catholic, increasingly influenced by Enlightenment thought and the Christian-humanistic views of Freemasonry rather than by church tradition."¹⁴ Einstein considers Mozart's Catholicism and Freemasonry two concentric spheres, with the later gaining greater influence.

The Mozarts were devout Catholics, and therefore, religious studies and attendance at Mass would have been a regular part of Wolfgang's life.

Freemasonry was alive and well before Wolfgang's birth. Leopold was the grandson and grand-nephew of Masons, and so were many of the influential persons he encountered. Masons, rather than being anti-religious, accepted as members men from all faiths, and professed belief in God (whom they termed *The Supreme Architect*). "They preached human brotherhood and equality, thus participating in the growth of the spirit of liberalism that pervaded the eighteenth century."¹⁵ The period of 1780-1785 was the *golden age* of Freemasonry in Vienna. To understand Mozart requires us to recognize the importance of Freemasonry in his life.

"Proposed: Kapellmeister Mozart."¹⁶ With these words Mozart was set on a path that would have dramatic impact upon his life. On December 14, 1784, he was initiated as an apprentice in the small Beneficence Lodge, and would later move on through the next two levels to that of Master. Interestingly, those who supported and encouraged Mozart's musical developments and

◆ ◆ ◆
**SHARE YOUR MUSICAL EXPERIENCE
THROUGH PERFORMANCE**

Concert Tour Management by Keynote Arts Associates

Domestic and International

Primary emphasis on concertizing

First-hand knowledge of concert sites

Travel itineraries prepared to your specifications

Bands – Choirs – Orchestras

"Musicians Working For Musicians"



Contact: James E. Dash / P.O. Box 1608, Kalamazoo, MI 49005 / 1-800-522-2213

accomplishments most were Masons. Braunbehrens points out that "Mozart was virtually surrounded by Freemasons. At least one in four of the subscribers to his concerts in March 1784 . . . was a documented lodge member, a ratio that is probably fairly typical of the society Mozart moved in. The only surprise is that he waited so long to join himself."¹⁷ Masons demonstrated their enthusiasm and respect for his music. It is reasonable to assume that Mozart was acquainted with Freemasonry even during his Salzburg years. There was a lodge in Salzburg, and two Illuminati lodges as well. Koch suggests that both Leopold and Wolfgang were visiting members, but any such evidence of this has not survived.

When we consider the associations Mozart had with lodge members, we gain a greater appreciation for his desire to pursue membership and the philosophy espoused. He encountered noblemen, artists, writers, and other respectable citizens. The following are but a few of the "Mason connections" we find: DaPonte, Mozart's librettist, who may have suggested the composition of a Masonic opera; Schickaneder of *Magic Flute* connection; Baron von Gemmingen-Hornberg, writer, diplomat, and Lodge Master, whom Mozart had met in Mannheim, and who was the initiator behind his membership; Ludwig Karl Fisher, the first Osmin in *Seraglio*; Joseph Lange, Mozart's brother-in-law; Gottfried von Sweiten, who was introduced to Mozart by von Gemmingen; no less than Prince Nicholas Esterhazy was a lodge member; and of course, Michael Puchberg, whom Mozart probably knew as early as August 1773 through the first husband of Puchberg's first wife. More of him later. Ironically, Mozart appears to have had no intimate friends who were fellow musicians. Johann Christian Bach, Joseph Haydn, and even Hoffmeister, whose loans were repaid with compositions, were more fatherly than friendly.

Mozart, like many, saw no conflict between the tenets of the faith and the ideals of the brotherhood. Unquestionably, freemasonry contributed much to his philosophy, and added to his supportive patrons and friends. "What appealed to Mozart in the movement was undoubtedly the emphasis on friendship; fraternalistic spirit. For he

seemed always to long for confirmation of his status in the world."¹⁸ Nettl also adds to our understanding with this statement: "The secret of Freemasonry is the secret of experiencing true love for all mankind, a positive attitude towards man and life, and a broad affirmation of God."¹⁹ Added to this were the

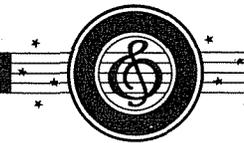
Mozart, like many, saw no conflict between the tenets of the faith and the ideals of the brotherhood. Unquestionably, freemasonry contributed much to his philosophy, and added to his supportive patrons and friends.

Masonic teachings related to overcoming the fear of death, acceptance of its inevitability, and facing it with courage. In comparison, Catholicism and its view of death

brought a fear of hell, of retribution and punishment, of *Dies Irae*.

Mozart rendered a good deal of musical service to the lodges. A number of these are of special note: the *Little Masonic Cantata*, K. 623, has words by Schickaneder; *Masonic Funeral Music*, K. 477, written in November, 1785, was performed at a lodge of mourning in honor of Count Esterhazy and the Duke of Mecklenburg; there are also other works, instrumental music, and a number of songs and hymns. Of particular interest to me is the cantata *Masons Joy*, K. 471, with words by a maternal relative of mine, Franz Petran, a Bohemian secular priest. The response Mozart received personally, as well as to his music, was extremely positive. Typical was that given him for a cantata he wrote in celebration when his lodge was merged with that of Newly Crowned Hope. He says "How madly they have gone on about my cantata! If I did not know that I had written better things, I should have thought it my best composition."²⁰

Mozart's relationship with one mason stands out among the rest — Johann Michael Puchberg. It was



Performance Tours by Invitation

presents

INTERNATIONAL INVITATIONAL FESTIVALS OF MUSIC June 1992

Moscow Choral Arts Festival
Donald Neuen, Conductor

Dublin Festival of Music
Nina Nash Robertson, Conductor

Three Spires Children's Choral Festival
Dr. Yip Wai-Hong, Conductor

Espania - '92 Choral Expo
Dr. Byron McGilvray, Conductor

Scandinavian Choral Festival
Singapore Choral Symposium
Berlin Choral Festival

*Subsidized custom concert tours
by invitation*
(audition tapes required)
Soviet Union/Denmark/Singapore/Taipei

Customized performance tours
Israel/Greece/Europe/
Eastern Europe/Scandinavia
Ireland/England/Wales/Orient

Performance Tours by Invitation

Dale and Joyce Blackburn
P.O. Box 5338 • Fresno, California 93755
209/227-6795 800/488-6795

Performance Tours by Invitation was originated by Dr. Byron McGilvray of San Francisco State University to provide rewarding and unique performing opportunities for outstanding choral groups. Mark Shaull, choral director at Los Altos High School, California, is serving as chairman of a selected board of music educators who develop all festivals and serve as consultants for customized concert tours.

A cultural contact through music.

during the final period of Mozart's life, when the burden of family and ever-increasing debt plagued him, that Mozart turned to Puchberg. The letters to Puchberg are filled with the pleadings of a man unable to withstand the rush of destiny, and unable to meet the daily needs for which a regular position could provide. Much has been made of this Masonic brother's generosity on one hand, and on the other that he did not relieve Mozart of his monetary burdens in one effort. The most appropriate stance probably views the relationship as an attempt to help Mozart by controlling the money received and, by extension, the debt he incurred.

At the end of Mozart's life the clergy all but refused to attend to the dying man (although his Masonic affiliations may have had impact upon their willingness to do so). It would be his Masonic brothers rather than the Catholics who paid tribute to him as a man and as a musician with an elaborate memorial service. The memorial service by his brother masons, held several days following his death, included these words: "With gentleness and patience a mason heart and soul, he lifts our aspirations toward a higher goal."²¹ Thompson reminds us also that it wasn't inconsistent for Christians to also be Freemasons. In 1792 at a lodge Funeral Oration given in Mozart's memory the following words are to be found:

The ability courageously to conquer such repugnant thoughts on death, and to take the great and important step into the unknown fields of eternity with a calm smile, can only be attained by him who has learned in this very place the great art of living in virtue that he may die as a Mason, as a Christian.²² CJ

Notes

- ¹ *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, Third Edition, W. W. Norton & Co., @1966 Executors of the late Emily Anderson, p. 336.
- ² *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, p. 341.
- ³ *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, p. 422.
- ⁴ *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, p. 429.
- ⁵ *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, p. 507.
- ⁶ *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, p. 557.
- ⁷ *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, p. 560.
- ⁸ *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, p. 561.
- ⁹ *Mozart in Salzburg*, Max Kenyon, G. P. Putnam's Sons, @1953, p. 40.
- ¹⁰ *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, p. 475.
- ¹¹ *Mozart in Salzburg*, Max Kenyon, p. 221.
- ¹² *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, p. 373.
- ¹³ *Mozart and Masonry*, Paul Nettl, DaCapo Press, @1957 Philosophical Library, Inc., p. 150.
- ¹⁴ *Mozart in Vienna 1781-1791*, Volkmar Braunbehrens, Grove Weidenfeld, @1986, 1989, p. 178.
- ¹⁵ *Amadeus, A Mozart Mosaic*, Herbert Kupferberg, McGraw-Hill Book Co., @1986, p. 158.
- ¹⁶ *Mozart, A Documentary Biography*, Otto Erich Deutsch, p. 230.
- ¹⁷ *Mozart*, Stanley Sadie, Grossman Publishers, Inc., @1965, p. 240.
- ¹⁸ *Mozart and his Times*, Erich Schenk, translated by Richard and Clara Winston, Alfred A. Knopf, @1959, p. 354.
- ¹⁹ *Mozart and Masonry*, Paul Nettl, p. 4.
- ²⁰ *Amadeus, A Mozart Mosaic*, Herbert Kupferberg, p. 159.
- ²¹ *Amadeus, A Mozart Mosaic*, Herbert Kupferberg, p. 162.
- ²² *The Masonic Thread in Mozart*, Katherine Thomson, Lawrence and Wishart, LTD @1977, p. 7.

Additional Sources

- Life of Mozart*, Otto Jahn, (3 Volumes), Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., @1970.
- New Mozartiana*, Henry George Farmer and Herbert Smith, Jackson, Son and Co., @1935.
- A Mozart Pilgrimage, Being the Travel Diaries of Vincent and Mary Novello in the Year 1829*, Eulenburg Books, @1955, Novello & Co., Ltd.
- Mozart and the Masons*, H. C. Robbins Landon, Thames and Hudson, @1982.
- 1791: Mozarts Last Year*, H. C. Robbins Landon, Schirmer Books, @1988.
- Mozart: The Golden Years*, H. C. Robbins Landon, Schirmer Books, @1989.
- Music in the Classic Period*, Reinhard G. Pauly, Prentice Hall, Inc., @1973.
- The Mozart Companion*, H. C. Robbins Landon, W. W. Norton & Co., @1969.
- The Choral Tradition*, Percy M. Young, W. W. Norton & Co., @1962.

FOR CHANGE OF ADDRESS
Be sure to notify the Editor at:
P.O. Box 6310, Lawton, OK 73506



CHOIR ROBES
EXPERT TAILORING \$23⁹⁵ UP

Finest Fabrics including Permanent Press and Wash and Wear. Superior Quality. Free Color Catalog and Fabric Swatches on Request. Guaranteed Satisfaction.

Toll Free
1-800-826-8612

REGENCY
CAP & GOWN CO.
P.O. Box 10557 CJ
Jacksonville, Florida 32207

Where in the world will you go for an encore?

MEXICO • EUROPE • AFRICA • SPAIN
HAWAII • AUSTRALIA • EXPO '92
ISRAEL • CHINA • USSR

World class orchestras are interested in America's finest choral groups. From invitations to perform with the Leningrad Philharmonic and Mexico's National Symphonies to custom concert tours designed especially for your needs (including special events like Spain's Expo '92), we know the world like nobody else and have the ENCORE performance you are looking for. Call us today!



CALL ENCORE
1-800-842-7575

John C. Bishop David R. Stapley



1486 South 1100 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84105 801-486-1486