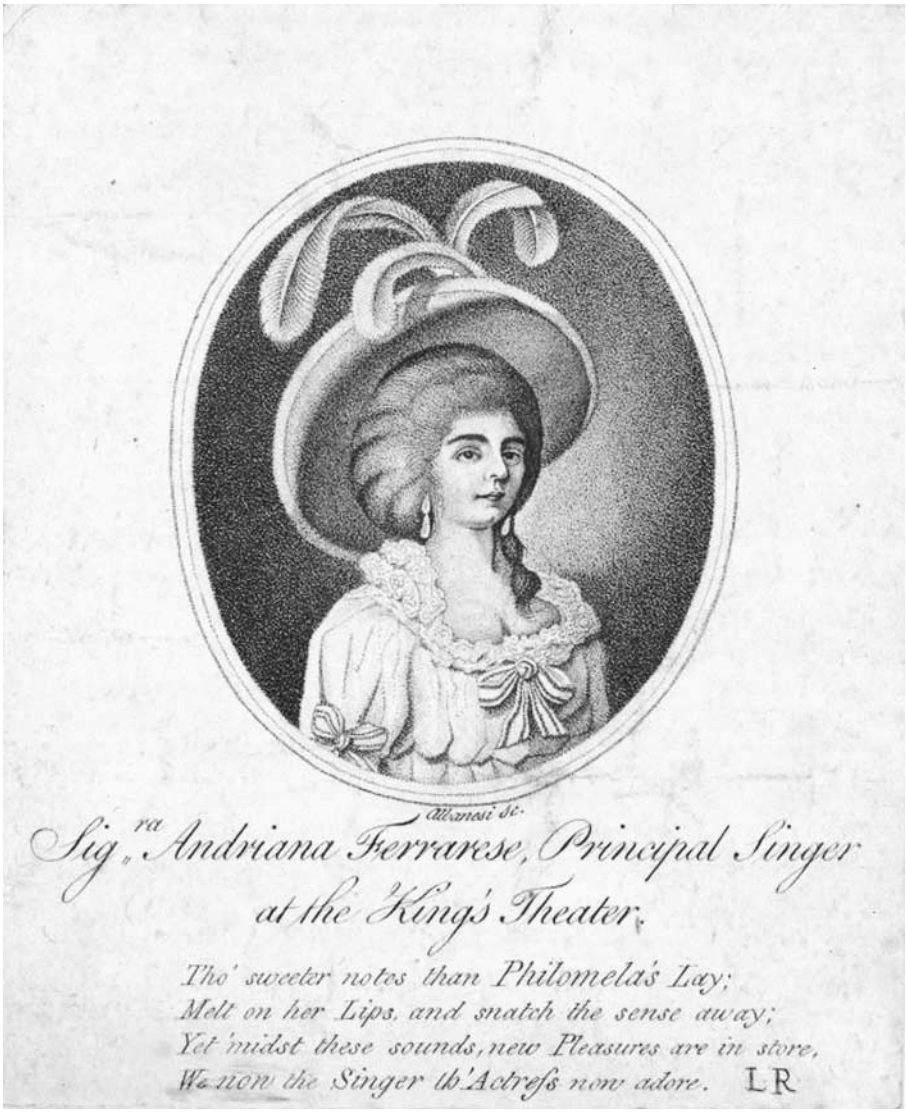
Mozart
on the Stage

Presenting a fresh approach to Mozart's achievements as a composer for the stage, John A. Rice outlines the composer's place in the operatic culture of his time. The book tells the story of how Mozart's operas came into existence, following the processes that Mozart went through as he brought his operas from commission to performance. Chapters trace the fascinating series of interactions that took place between Mozart and librettists, singers, stage designers, orchestras, and audiences. In linking the operas by topic, Rice emphasizes what Mozart's operas have in common, regardless of when he wrote them and the genres to which they belong. The book demonstrates how Mozart's entire operatic oeuvre is the product of a single extraordinary mind and a single pan-European operatic culture.

JOHN A. RICE has taught music history at the University of Washington, Colby College, the University of Houston, the University of Texas, and the University of Alabama (where, in 2005, he occupied the Endowed Chair in Music). He is the author of *W. A. Mozart:* La clemenza di Tito (1991), *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera* (1998, winner of the American Musicological Society's Kinkeldey Award), *Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792–1807* (2003), and *The Temple of Night at Schönau: Architecture, Music, and Theater in a Late Eighteenth-Century Viennese Garden* (2006).



Adriana Ferrarese, who portrayed Susanna in the 1789 revival of *Le nozze di Figaro* and created the role of Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*. This portrait pays tribute to her performances in London in 1785–86, where she sang in both serious and comic opera, winning applause (as the poem attests) for her acting as well as her voice. Engraving by Allanesi. New York Public Library, Muller Collection.

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For Daniel Heartz

on his eightieth birthday

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

Anderson	*The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, trans. and ed. Emily Anderson, 3rd edn., New York, 1985
Deutsch	*Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, ed. Otto Erich Deutsch, trans. Eric Blom, Peter Branscombe, and Jeremy Noble, 2nd edn., London, 1966
Eisen	*New Mozart Documents: A Supplement to O. E. Deutsch's Documentary Biography*, Stanford, CA, 1991
MBA	*Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Wilhelm A. Bauer, Otto Erich Deutsch, and Joseph Heinz Eibl, expanded edn., 8 vols., ed. Ulrich Konrad, Kassel, 2005
MDL	*Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, ed. Otto Erich Deutsch, Kassel, 1961
MDL, AC	*Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, Addenda und Corrigenda, ed. Joseph Heinz Eibl, Kassel, 1978
MDL, ANF	*Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, Addenda, Neue Folge, ed. Cliff Eisen, Kassel, 1997

PREFACE

What possible justification can there be, in the aftermath of Mozart's two-hundred-and-fiftieth birthday in 2006, for adding to the large number of books, many of them first rate, that have been written about his operas?

Most books on the subject, including Edward J. Dent's *Mozart's Operas* and János Liebner's *Mozart on the Stage*, follow a chronological plan, with one or more chapters devoted to each opera. Charles Osborne's *The Complete Operas of Mozart* and William Mann's *The Operas of Mozart* subject each opera to a scene-by-scene description and analysis of its music and plot. Rudolph Angermüller's *Mozart's Operas* is a richly illustrated, chronologically ordered survey.

Carolyn Gianturco, in *Mozart's Early Operas*, uniquely limited herself to the works written before *Idomeneo* (1781); many other books focus on the later operas, beginning with *Idomeneo* or, more rarely, with *La finta giardiniera* (1775). Daniel Heartz's *Mozart's Operas* begins with *Idomeneo*, Stefan Kunze's *Mozarts Opern* relegates the operas written before *Idomeneo* to a single opening chaper, while Nicolas Till's *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, Virtue and Beauty in Mozart's Operas* presents a chronological discussion of the operas from *La finta giardiniera* onward, interspersed with biographical and contextual essays.

Another approach favored by writers on Mozart's operas has been to direct their attention to some but not all of the operas written after *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782). In *Mozart the Dramatist*, Brigid Brophy was largely concerned with *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Die Zauberflöte*, while Andrew Steptoe, in *The Mozart–Da Ponte Operas*, discussed the three last opere buffe and their cultural context. Wye Jamison Allanbrook's *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart:* Le nozze di Figaro *and* Don Giovanni subjects two of the late operas to a stimulating critical examination.

All the operas from *Idomeneo* on are the subject of individual books. Monographs on *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte* alone could fill whole shelves.

The anniversary year saw the publication of several fine books on Mozart's operas. David Cairns, in *Mozart and His Operas*, followed Stefan Kunze in presenting, in chronological order, chapters on all the major operas from *Idomeneo* on after an introductory chapter that quickly covers the operas written before *Idomeneo*. Jessica Waldoff's *Recognition in Mozart's Operas* examines closely a theme of central importance to Mozart and his librettists as they treated it in several operas, from *La finta giardiniera* to *Die Zauberflöte* and *La clemenza di Tito* (mostly in the order in which they were written). Kristi Brown-Montesano's *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas* explores the female characters in four of the late operas (*Don Giovanni* followed by *Die Zauberflöte*; *Figaro* followed by *Così fan tutte*), using a broadly chronological framework.

I do not call into question the value of any of these books, or suggest that this one will make any of them less useful. On the contrary: it is the effectiveness with which they have covered their chosen ground that has made this book possible. My predecessors have given me both the freedom and the obligation to do something different.

Only twenty-seven years separated Mozart's momentous encounter, at the age of eight, with opera seria in London and his death in Vienna in 1791. Only twenty-one years separated the first performances of *Mitridate* in Milan (1770) and of *Die Zauberflöte* and *La clemenza di Tito* in Vienna and Prague (1791). The brevity of Mozart's life means that the operatic culture that he entered as a child in the 1760s resembled in many ways the one to which he contributed the masterpieces of his final decade.

Mozart was not only tragically short lived but amazingly precocious. While we might justifiably ignore the teenage works of great operatic composers whose musical development took place at a more normal rate, the experience and skill that the teenage Mozart brought to the composition of his early operas should discourage us from dismissing them as juvenilia. As opera lovers we might legitimately prefer *Tito* to *Lucio Silla* (1772). But as historians and readers of history we should find the earlier work and its context as interesting and as revealing of Mozart's approach to operatic composition as the later one.

The letters of Mozart and his father constitute one of the greatest sources of information about eighteenth-century operatic aesthetics and practices. Many of these letters deal with the early operas. They tell us much more about

the composition of *Mitridate*, *Ascanio in Alba*, and *Lucio Silla* than we know about the composition of *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Die Zauberflöte*. Only by paying close attention to the early operas can we make full use of what the letters say about Mozart's operatic ideas and working methods.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I propose what anthropologists might call a "synchronic" study of Mozart as a composer of operas: a book organized not chronologically or by individual operas, but by topics as relevant to the early operas as to the late ones. In doing so I hope to emphasize what Mozart's operas have in common, regardless of when he wrote them and the genres to which they belong. I intend to play down some of the more obvious differences between opera seria, opera buffa, and Singspiel, in order to show how Mozart's entire operatic oeuvre is the product of a single extraordinary mind and a single pan-European operatic culture.

Having rejected an approach based on the chronology of Mozart's life, I have adopted another kind of temporal organization, following the process that many eighteenth-century composers went through as they brought operas from commission to performance. This book shows how Mozart – whether he was thirteen or thirty, in Milan or Vienna, writing a Singspiel or an opera buffa – put an opera together in a series of interactions with a libretto (and sometimes – but not always – a poet who wrote or revised the libretto), singers, a stage designer, an orchestra, and an audience.

The chronological framework suggested by the titles of the following chapters is simpler and more rigid than the actual calendar of activities that Mozart faced when he wrote an opera. Many of those activities overlapped. Most if not all of the operas that he wrote from *Idomeneo* on benefitted from close collaboration between him and a librettist, which in some cases took place at more or less the same time as composition. The librettist's work, moreover, was not finished when he completed the text; he often played an important role in staging. In composing arias Mozart normally worked directly with the singers who were to perform them; that collaboration often involved a combination of composition, rehearsal, and revision. Later rehearsals, especially those involving the orchestra, were often attended by members of the court and nobility. Mozart hoped these influential audiences, impressed by what they saw and heard, would spread positive news about the opera that would enhance its effect before the general public. Rehearsals, serving as the

eighteenth-century equivalent of theatrical previews, are thus part of the history of an opera's reception. I have tried to do justice to the complexity of the interaction of people and activities that produced Mozart's operas, while at the same time showing how these activities followed a roughly chronological pattern.

This book had its origins in a suggestion made to me in 2000 by Victoria Cooper, Music Editor at Cambridge University Press, to whom I am most grateful for her patience and her continued interest. It includes material that I presented first in the form of lectures given, for the most part, between 2002 and 2006, and I thank those who made those lectures possible. Margaret Butler, formerly of the University of Alabama, invited me to occupy that university's Endowed Chair in Music during November 2005; Christine Getz and Roberta Marvin arranged for me to address the Opera Studies Group at the University of Iowa; and David Buch asked me to give two colloquia at the University of Northern Iowa. To them and to their colleagues and students, with whom I enjoyed many stimulating conversations, I am most grateful.

I read earlier versions of the first chapter at the conference "Der junge Mozart," given by the Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum in Salzburg in December 2005, and at a session devoted to Mozart during the annual meeting of the American Philosophical Society in San Francisco during November 2006. I thank Christoph Wolff, who helped to organize both meetings, for inviting me to take part in them. The discussion of Antonio Baglioni, who created the roles of Don Ottavio and Tito, is based on a talk I gave in Prague in October 2006, at a conference memorably framed by performances of *Don Giovanni* and *La clemenza di Tito* in the theater for which they were written. I am grateful to Milada Jonášová for organizing that conference and for asking me to participate in it.

This book has benefitted from discussion and correspondence with many colleagues other than those I have mentioned already. Mario Armellini, Evan Baker, Karl Böhmer, Daniel Brandenburg, Bruce Alan Brown, Paul Corneilson, Sergio Durante, Dexter Edge, Daniel Heartz, Dorothea Link, Michael Lorenz, and Michel Noiray have generously given me information and advice. Final and special thanks go to Margaret Butler, Daniel Heartz, and Simon Keefe for reading and correcting the manuscript and giving me many suggestions for improving it, and to Bruce Alan Brown for reading the proofs.

In the many quotations throughout this book from the letters of Mozart and his father and from documents related to Mozart I have translated some passages from the originals myself. Others I have borrowed from Emily Anderson's elegant, lively, and idiomatic translations of the letters – familiar to all English-speaking students of Mozart – and from the translations of the documents by Eric Blom, Peter Branscombe, Cliff Eisen, and Jeremy Noble. I have always checked these translations against the originals, as published in *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* and *Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, and have made changes whenever I thought it might be possible to render the meaning more accurately.

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