CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

Introduction

Yesterday morning at 10 was the rehearsal of the mass. At first a little bashfully, but with gradually rising courage, the empress sang all her solos, but especially the Et incarnatus est de spiritu sancto ex Maria virgine (all of which she did quite pleasantly) and the Benedictus, very accurately and charmingly. But what gave me most pleasure was her satisfaction with my composition. Again and again: "Bravo!" "Schön!" And her highest expression was: "Haydn! Superb!"

Don't be angry! But I have fallen in love with my most gracious empress. She is also a beautiful, warm-hearted woman.[1]

Thus in 1801 Michael Haydn wrote to his wife of a rehearsal of a mass commissioned by Empress Marie Therese.[2] Second wife of Emperor Franz II from 1790 and empress from 1792 to her death in 1807, from complications arising from the birth of her twelfth child, Marie Therese devoted much of her short life to music. She played the piano and sang, organized and participated in many private concerts, compiled a large music library, and befriended and supported professional musicians. With these activities, which brought her into fruitful contact with some of Europe's finest composers and performers, she helped shape Viennese musical life during the period when Michael Haydn's older brother was writing his last works and Beethoven his first masterpieces, winning for herself a place among the leading musical patrons of the age.

As eldest daughter of King Ferdinand IV and Queen Maria Carolina of Naples, Marie Therese grew up at the Neapolitan court, where she was given thorough musical training. Her keyboard teacher Vincenzo Orgitano wrote a vast amount of music for her, mostly sonatas that she played on a piano built by the celebrated Johann Andreas Stein of Augsburg.[3] In

[1] Michael Haydn to his wife, Vienna, 24 September 1801, in Hans Jancik, *Michael Haydn: Ein vergessener Meister*, Vienna, 1952, 239.

[2] I adopt this version of her name (French, but without the accents), frequently used by historians to distinguish her from her more famous grandmother, the Maria Theresa who ruled from 1740 to 1780.

[3] On Orgitano, his keyboard music for MT, and its place in the musical life of the Neapolitan court see Hanns-Bertold Dietz, "Instrumental Music at the Court of Ferdinand IV of Naples and Sicily

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

correspondence about Marie Therese's future marriage to her cousin Franz, Maria Carolina sent Emperor Leopold II, Franz's father, a description of her daughter that mentioned her musical abilities: "Elle sait la musique bien, le clavecin, le chant, un peu de harpe; elle danse bien."[4] A painting of the Neapolitan royal family by Angelica Kauffmann shows her as a teenager at the harp (frontispiece).

Marie Therese's musical taste was shaped by two primary influences. On the one hand she absorbed the language and aesthetic values of Neapolitan music, with its emphasis on vocal melody and improvised embellishment and its allegiance to the castrated male voice. On the other hand her mother, an archduchess of Austria and daughter of Maria Theresa, inculcated in her a love for and knowledge of the Viennese musical tradition, with its emphasis on craftsmanship, harmonic sophistication, and richness of instrumental color. In Vienna she gave expression to both sides of her musical personality, and in her patronage and performance she championed the synthesis of these traditions. Several of the composers she favored, including Johann Simon Mayr, Ferdinando Paer, and Peter Winter, successfully straddled the musical cultures of Italy and Germany.

These same composers were among the most popular in Vienna during her reign, partly because she helped to mold Viennese taste through her influence on the repertory in the court theaters. But long before her arrival, Vienna had been a musical melting pot, out of which came composers who could "bind all the power of German music to the sweet Italian style," as one critic wrote of Antonio Salieri.[5] The empress owed some of her success as a patron to the fact that her hybrid musical taste to a large extent embodied that of many of her Viennese subjects.

Partly in reaction to the dark times in which she reigned – wars with France and increasing political repression in Austria – Marie Therese often withdrew from Viennese society to the palaces of Schönbrunn and Laxenburg. There she immersed herself in music and other arts and entertainments, amusing herself and her rapidly growing brood and giving her husband respites from the cares of government with plays, games, and fancy-dress balls. Her music-making, under these circumstances, followed two separate paths. In a series of private concerts in which neither her

and the Works of Vincenzo Orgitano," *International Journal of Musicology* 1 (1992), 99–126. On MT's ownership of a Stein piano see John A. Rice, "Stein's 'Favorite Instrument': A Vis-à-vis Piano-Harpsichord in Naples," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 21 (1995), 34, 56.

4 Maria Carolina to Leopold, 21 April 1790, HHStA, Fa, Sb, Kart. 19.

5 "Salieri, der die ganze Kraft der deutschen Musik mit der süsseren italiänischen zu verbinden weiss" (*Musikalisches Wochenblatt* [Berlin], 1791, p. 15).

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

husband nor her children participated, her performances increased in seriousness and scope. But much of the music she commissioned for occasions outside her private concerts is characterized by a childlike playfulness, and can be best understood as a musical counterpart to the games she organized at Schönbrunn and Laxenburg.

For her private concerts Marie Therese formed a coterie of amateur and professional musicians, ranging from chamber servants to virtuosos, instrumental as well as vocal, German as well as Italian. With orchestra, chorus, and vocal soloists she performed music by many celebrated composers. She explored a remarkably large repertory: excerpts from operas and oratorios, complete operas, oratorios, secular cantatas, masses, concertos, symphonies, and chamber music. In its frequency her music-making resembled the chamber-music sessions of her uncle, Emperor Joseph II. But in variety of repertory and size of musical forces she went well beyond Joseph, who often performed excerpts from opera and oratorio from the score with just three or four musicians clustered around a keyboard.[6]

Baroness Alexandrine du Montet, whose husband served as chamberlain to Emperor Franz, wrote in her memoirs that Marie Therese was "capricious, her activities trivial, and her games often very common."[7] This side of her personality expressed itself rarely in her private concerts, whose repertory could hardly be called superficial or common, but does help to explain some of the music that she performed on other occasions, such as her elaborate celebrations of Franz's nameday and birthday. Several of these works contain quodlibets, playfully combining excerpts from popular operas and other vocal music. Others, breaking down the distinction between music-making and children's play, make use of Berchtesgadner Instrumente, toy instruments of the kind made in the Bavarian Alps.

But the birthday and nameday celebrations also featured music of impressive grandeur and seriousness, including the two masses that Michael Haydn wrote for the empress. Haydn's *Missa S. Theresiae* and *Missa S. Francisci* represented a new kind of concerted mass that has attracted surprisingly little attention from scholars and performers: a cycle including not only the Ordinary but also a gradual, an offertory, and a Te Deum. Marie Therese cultivated the plenary mass with great energy; her library contained about sixteen such works.

The empress commissioned much of the music she performed in private concerts and on Franz's nameday and birthday. She asked many leading

[6] John A. Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera*, Chicago, 1998, 23.
[7] Alexandrine du Montet, *Souvenirs de la Baronne du Montet, 1785–1866*, Paris, 1904, 6.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

composers, not only in Vienna but in Germany, France, and Italy, to write music, including Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Beethoven (*Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* and possibly the Septet, Op. 20, "most humbly dedicated to Her Majesty the Empress"), Luigi Cherubini, Joseph Eybler, Joseph Haydn (the Te Deum in C), Michael Haydn, Mayr, Paer, Giovanni Paisiello, Anton Reicha, Salieri, Joseph Weigl, Winter, Paul Wranitzky, and Niccolò Zingarelli. Not all of them fulfilled her commissions, but most did. Marie Therese's contacts with librettists occasionally led to new works for the public theaters of Vienna. Her request to Giovanni de Gamerra for "a grand opera seria" resulted in Paer's *Achille*; her repeated declarations to Joseph Sonnleithner that "no opera text had ever given her so much pleasure" as Jean-Nicolas Bouilly's *Léonore* resulted in Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

In studying Marie Therese's musical activities we can draw on a wealth of musical and documentary evidence. Most of her music library survives, though little in the musicological literature would lead one to suspect its size and significance, or even its existence. Many of the letters written to her by the musicians and poets she patronized are preserved in Vienna. She recorded in a diary the names of the musicians who performed with her, the pieces they executed, and the rewards she gave librettists, composers, and performers. Involved not only in the performance but also in the inception, commissioning, and shaping of musical works, she preserved manuscript librettos, ballet scenarios, and outlines (some in her own hand) of theatrical works not yet set to music.

At Marie Therese's death most of her collection of music became part of the "Kaisersammlung," Emperor Franz's music library, now split between the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek and the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde; the rest, consisting of liturgical music, went to the Hofkapelle, the court chapel, most of whose library has also been incorporated into the Nationalbibliothek. An inventory of the church music, hitherto unpublished, is presented here in appendix 1. Franz contributed to the Kaisersammlung before, during, and after his marriage to Marie Therese. But I hope to demonstrate in chapter 1 that a very large part of the Kaisersammlung belonged to her and that her personal library can be identified with some confidence and precision within the larger collection. Is it wise to begin a book with what is essentially a bibliographical essay? I would argue that we cannot begin to understand Marie Therese unless we know of her activities as a collector of music; and we cannot fully understand her activities as a collector without knowing what she collected and where her music is now.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

Marie Therese's musical diary, preserved in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna, documents the private concerts she organized and in which she took part between 1801 and 1803. It is the single most important record of her musical activities. Although displayed in 1982 in an exhibition celebrating the 250th anniversary of Joseph Haydn's birth and discussed in its catalogue,[8] the diary has never been published and remains little known. Demonstrating the empress's musical ambition and energy, the high quality of the musicians with whom she performed, and the sophistication of her musical interests, it is a valuable source of information not only about music at court but about Viennese musical life in general at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Appendix 2 is an annotated edition of the diary.

Also in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv are many of the letters, mostly unknown to musical scholarship, that the empress received from musicians and poets concerning works commissioned by her, and from others who informed her about musical events far from Vienna and helped her obtain music. From Salzburg her brother-in-law Ferdinand, whose passion for collecting music equalled hers, asked for copies of music in her library and offered her copies of his latest acquisitions. From Paris the Marchese di Gallo, the Neapolitan ambassador, sent operas by Cherubini, Winter, and many others, and reported Cherubini's reluctance to write anything for her; and Paisiello promised to set to music librettos she had sent him (promises he did not keep). From Venice Giuseppe Carpani sent operas that had recently been performed and cantatas for which he supplied the text, and wrote of his collaboration with Weigl and Zingarelli on works commissioned by her. From Naples her sisters Cristina and Amalia sent a never-ending chronicle of theatrical events, an occasional score, and requests for music from Vienna. Among the most useful letters are the thirty-four that Paer wrote between 1803 and 1807 while serving as Kapellmeister at the court of Dresden. Paer's letters, which frequently refer to the music he wrote for Marie Therese and to the process of bringing it to performance, are presented in appendix 3.

Very few of the empress's letters to composers have apparently survived. That makes the correspondence between Paisiello and her, even if it did not result in any new works, particularly interesting and valuable. Three letters from Marie Therese to Paisiello and one from him to her are transcribed in appendix 4.

[8] *Joseph Haydn in seiner Zeit*, exhibition catalogue, Eisenstadt, 1982, 492, 496.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

Marie Therese's theatrical papers, also in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, include a wide variety of documents related to plays, operas, ballets, and various combinations of music, dance, and spoken theater. She wrote out in her own hand sketches for possible theatrical productions. Librettists submitted detailed plans for future works, indicating the number and organization of acts, the number and voice-type of characters, and the locations and types of arias and ensembles. Entire librettos were elegantly written out in manuscript, some of which were never apparently set to music. Some of the documents concern the Last Judgment, a subject that held Marie Therese's interest for several years and on which she urged Joseph Haydn to compose a sequel to *Die Schöpfung* and *Die Jahreszeiten*. Others (in appendix 5) concern *Il conte Clò*, a comic cantata by Paer to which he referred often in his letters and of which the autograph score, formerly in the empress's library, is now in the Nationalbibliothek.

Marie Therese's musical library, diary, correspondence, and theatrical papers illuminate one another. The diary, for example, helps us decide what music belonged to her. Her library, once we have reconstructed its contents, allows us to understand references to particular works in the letters. Together, these sources offer insights into the process by which she brought new music to performance, her relations with poets and musicians, and her musical taste.

This book is the first to attempt a comprehensive survey of Marie Therese's activities as musician and patron and of the musical culture at court that this remarkable woman fostered and enjoyed. Because many of the archival and musical documents on which it is based are themselves little known, and because of the interdependence of these documents, I have devoted a large part of the study to their transcription and explication. The preliminary nature of this inquiry has kept me from interpreting the empress's activities within a single theoretical framework and from exploring in depth their manifold implications for gender studies, economics, sociology, and cultural politics. Yet a number of important themes do emerge from the following pages, all of which are related to a question that will occur to anyone who reads this book: Why have historians of music largely ignored Marie Therese and the vibrant musical culture she supported?

One reason why Marie Therese occupies such a marginal place in the historiographical tradition is that scholars have tended to view artistic patronage after the French Revolution with less interest than earlier patronage. Many patrons of the Renaissance, the Baroque, and the Ancien Régime have appeared to historians of music and the visual arts as heroic figures, as

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

Cambridge

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

worthy of research as the musicians and artists who depended on them.[9] Most of these patrons belonged to absolutist courts, to the nobility, or to the Catholic Church – institutions greatly weakened in wealth, prestige, and power by the Revolution and its aftermath. As nineteenth-century artists freed themselves from a system of patronage rooted in the feudal past, preferring one in which they could sell their work, one piece at a time, to whoever could pay for it, patrons became mere purchasers of art. But not Marie Therese, who could still ask a celebrated composer to write an opera for her, on a libretto chosen by her, without offering any payment: "The kindness with which I have no doubt you will satisfy my request will be most delightful and pleasing to me, and will give you a new claim on my admiration and benevolence, of which I am now pleased to assure you." As addressed to Paisiello in 1802 such a statement must have sounded distinctly old-fashioned. "Benevolence" meant a reward, of course; and Marie Therese was a generous dispenser of the exquisite gifts – the snuffboxes, watches, writing sets, and diamond rings – characteristic of the world of artistic patronage through which the child Mozart had so profitably travelled during the 1760s. But Paisiello would have probably required a more definitive offer before agreeing to write an opera for the empress, whose patronage was an anachronism that may have left her contemporaries, and some historians as well, puzzled about what to make of her.

Many of the composers Marie Therese patronized have been studied almost as little as she herself. Scholars interested in music in Vienna at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth have naturally directed most of their attention to Joseph Haydn and Beethoven, and to the aristocratic and predominantly male circles that supported them. It is not surprising that the system of patronage within which Weigl, Wranitzky, and Eybler – to name three of the composers most closely associated with the empress – worked is largely unexamined.

Although historians have usually mentioned Marie Therese in connection with those occasions when her musical interests brought her into contact with Haydn and Beethoven, they have tended to pass over such contacts quickly. Students of *Fidelio* have failed to follow up on Sonnleithner's statements concerning the empress's role in the conception of the opera. They have found it difficult to accept the idea that Beethoven – the prototype of the new kind of independent artist – could have allowed an empress's tastes to shape one of his most important works, and have preferred to cite reasons

[9] See, among other important studies, Alan Yorke-Long, *Music at Court: Four Eighteenth-Century Studies*, London, 1954, and Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, 2nd ed., New Haven, 1980.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

why Beethoven himself might have been attracted to the story on which it is based.[10] One recent study of Beethoven's place in Viennese musical patronage at the turn of the century, by the sociologist Tia DeNora, does not mention Marie Therese at all.[11]

A considerable cultural distance separated the court of Franz and Marie Therese from the highest ranks of the Viennese nobility.[12] DeNora has argued that the high aristocracy projected its identity and distinguished itself from the middle classes and lower levels of the nobility with a self-conscious promotion of greatness in music at the expense of music it perceived as merely entertaining or pleasing. Her argument suggests the possibility that music played a similar role in defining differences between the nobility and the court.

Haydn and Beethoven benefitted from the empress's patronage, but their relations with her were not as warm or as productive as those she maintained with many other musicians. Did Haydn and Beethoven fear that a close association with Marie Therese might endanger aristocratic ties that not only brought them financial gain but enhanced their reputations as great masters? If they had come more noticeably into her orbit, would they have become less attractive to a nobility that prided itself on its cultural independence from the court?

I believe the musical cultures of the court and the nobility were more similar than they might appear in a musicological literature that has focussed so doggedly on Haydn and Beethoven. Members of the high nobility patronized and otherwise encouraged many other composers, including some of Marie Therese's favorites. Indeed, the musical tastes and practices of the court sometimes coincided with those of the aristocracy so closely that they became rivals for the same musical talent and resources.

A related issue is Marie Therese's status as an outsider (and, from a Viennese perspective, as an Italian, despite the fact that she, like her husband, was a grandchild of Maria Theresa) in the cultural politics of the capital during a period of increasing nationalism. When German opera

[10] For example, according to William Kinderman (*Beethoven*, Berkeley, 1995, 102–3), in composing *Fidelio*, "Beethoven was captivated by the great, over-reaching themes of freedom and tyranny, life and death." For more detailed discussions of the libretto's appeal to the composer see Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven*, New York, 1977, 198–200, and Barry Cooper, *Beethoven*, Oxford, 2000, 137–8. None of these writers mentions Sonnleithner's claims in regard to MT.

[11] Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803*, Berkeley, 1995. Table 2, "Key Viennese Music Patrons in the 1790s and 1800s," does not include MT.

[12] On the often strained relations between the court and the aristocracy during MT's reign see Annedore Brock, *Das Haus der Laune im Laxenburger Park bei Wien*, Frankfurt, 1996, 250–82.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

was reintroduced to the court theaters in 1795 the libretto for the inaugural *Singspiel*, Wranitzky's *Die gute Mutter*, was dedicated to the empress in a prefatory letter (transcribed in chapter 7): "Your Majesty most graciously demonstrates at every opportunity how much you wish for German diligence, German art, and German merit to be recognized, encouraged, and rewarded." A document whose aim was to emphasize Marie Therese's "Germanness" managed, through exaggeration, to remind readers that she was in fact a Neapolitan princess.

A looming presence during the whole period of Marie Therese's reign, without which the nationalism expressed in the preface to *Die gute Mutter* would have been unthinkable, was the long series of wars with France. If the musical culture that Marie Therese promoted at court represented at some level an escape from military preoccupations, at other levels post-revolutionary France and its wars fascinated her. She owned a collection of French revolutionary currency; worse, she owned a tricolor freedom cap, a symbol of the Revolution that scandalized the official who, after her death, compiled the inventory of her effects. He listed the cap under a special rubric – "Things that no one will treasure" – and, as if that disapproval were not strong enough, added after the entry, with surprising vehemence and impudence: "Since moreover the spirit of this decoration has brought so much unhappiness to all mankind, only Beelzebub in Hell will be able to treasure this souvenir."[13]

War and music went hand in hand for Marie Therese, whose library contained a large assortment of programmatic works on military themes. Among her several battle symphonies was Wranitzky's *Grande Sinfonie caractéristique pour la paix avec la Republique Françoise*, which she included in one of her private concerts despite her husband's having forbidden it to be performed in public. *L'uniforme*, an opera that Weigl wrote for her and in which she created the principal female role, contains two spectacular battle scenes.

Marie Therese took advantage of the peaceful interlude that followed the Treaty of Lunéville (1801) to collect music from Paris on a grand scale. Here again her tastes paralleled those of Viennese theatergoers, who welcomed the *opéras-comiques* that suddenly flooded Viennese theaters at exactly this time. Her patronage brought her into competition with Napoleon, whose musical tastes, especially in Italian opera, resembled hers.[14] Paisiello, responding to her request for a new opera, wrote from

[13] Quoted in Brock, *Das Haus der Laune*, 259.
[14] Théo Fleischman, *Napoléon et la musique*, Brussels, 1965.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521825121 - Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792-1807
John A. Rice
Excerpt
More information

Paris that he could not fulfill her commission for the time being because he was working on an opera, *Proserpine*, for the First Consul. The empress had to be satisfied with music written by Paisiello for Napoleon's chapel.

War and Napoleon finally caught up with Marie Therese. Forced to flee Vienna before the advancing French army in November 1805, she expressed in letters to her mother the misery she felt when faced with the realities of war. Napoleon's military victories at Austerlitz and Jena presaged a musical victory over Marie Therese in the form of an agreement with the Saxon court (December 1806) that brought Paer to Paris and ended his close and productive relations with her. But by then she had only a few months to live.

The same nationalism that Marie Therese had to answer to in Vienna, that led a court official to express horror at her freedom cap, has also influenced thinking in musicology. The mixture of cultures that she embodied may fascinate us today; but during much of the last two hundred years it may have disturbed or even repelled some historians. Neither purely Viennese nor purely Neapolitan, she has attracted the sustained attention of no musical scholar writing in either German or Italian.

Marie Therese's activities as musician and patron (and her neglect by musicologists) need to be considered in light of the constraints that limited the actions of any woman of her time and place, even one at the highest levels of power and wealth. Some of these constraints were self-imposed, at least in part. When she spoke with Michael Haydn about the *Missa S. Theresiae*, she referred to her own abilities with a modesty that she probably felt suited her status as a woman: "You haven't made the soprano part too difficult for me? I'm singing it myself."[15] Scholars have tended to take such statements at face value. All assessments of her musical abilities in the following pages, by her and others, need to be evaluated in the context of a culture that generally did not expect or reward virtuosity in female amateurs.

As a woman, the empress had to deal with the tendency of her contemporaries to interpret her relations with male musicians as amorous and therefore immoral. Even her mother recoiled at her fondness for the great *musico* Luigi Marchesi, while tongues wagged all over Vienna when she was seen walking arm in arm in the gardens of Schönbrunn with the tenor Giuseppe Simoni. Rumors of sexual impropriety could easily have dampened the pleasure she took from music; they could even have kept musicians

[15] "Sie haben mir doch die Sopranstimme nicht zu schwer gesetzt? ich singe sie selbst" ([Georg Schinn and Franz Joseph Otter], *Biographische Skizze von Michael Haydn*, Salzburg, 1808, 30).

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org