

300 years of Freemasonry – A reflection on European Freemasonry during Mozart’s time

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It is a dark, cold and windy night on this 14th December 1784. The Police carry out their routine inspections as it is long after sunset that there are people huddling inside their coats and coaches to get to their destinations. They all are hopeful not to be stopped by Police or security agents. We can only speculate what may have gone through the mind of the esteemed Composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart during the 10-minute walk from his apartment in Schulerstrasse to the meeting place of the Viennese Lodges in Landstrasse. His dislike for the Clergy may have caused him to crack a smile when passing by the seat of Austrian Catholic Church at St. Stephen’s Cathedral, being conscious that he is about to become a member of the society of men that already had invoked the irritation of and ban by the Catholic Church. He may also have been cautious of Police who might have stopped him, inquiring about this destination and reason to be out and about at such a cold night and at a seemingly late hour.

Vienna is already a centre of Art, Culture and political influence in the 18th Century, having the benefit of Empress Maria Theresa’s long reign and enjoying relative political stability. Maria Theresa grew up in an environment somewhat open to new ideas and specifically to ideas generated by the movement of enlightenment. Her father, Emperor Karl VI, had earlier put into effect some new ideas in the Empire which were further cultivated and enriched by other new ideas implemented by the Empress. It is the time of general recognition of the benefits of ‘enlightenment’ that started to emerge in the UK and many European countries, foremost in France, the German counties and in Austria. European stability rested on the genius of Maria Theresa, marrying seven of her surviving 10 of 16 children to other European royal houses¹, thereby also forging alliances with those engaged in the 7-year war, reducing political conflict and likelihood of further wars. The most prominent of these alliances was Maria Antoinette, she is married to Louis XVI - and of course we know, she was executed in 1793 during the chaos of the French Revolution. Apart from this unfortunate outcome of good intentions: Tu felix Austria nube – you lucky Austria marry! - was the phrase used by others who did not have the opportunity to secure marriage of many children to royal houses. Maria Theresa’s nickname throughout the continent was “Mother in Law of Europe”.

To understand better the circumstances in the 18th century leading to the development of Freemasonry in Austria, we need to examine a bit closer how the Rulers of the day exerted

¹ Various historic sources, also in Wikipedia [Maria Theresia – German snippets]

their varying influence on European Politics and Society. Without that background, some of the later happenings lose their context. With your indulgence then let us digress a little and look further at the societal and cultural circumstances that enabled Masonic development in Austria.

The husband of the Empress, Franz Stefan I von Lothringen (Lorraine) was crowned Holy Roman Emperor of the German Nation, a mostly honorific title by that time, but asserting a certain influence over the then still fragmented German Nation. Francis I was also intent to create more equality in the Empire and influenced his wife, the Empress, to make some changes for the benefit and welfare of the Austrian Nation, then spread through the largest part of Western Europe, reaching from Transylvania in the east, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, parts of Poland, parts of Germany, Northern Italy, to the Austrian Netherlands in the West. This period was by historians later declared “the reign of benevolence”. The influx of new ideas and promise of humanitarian and scientific enlightenment had captured the imagination of the Holy Roman Emperor from early on.

The Netherlands and Germany seem to have become the first proponents of Freemasonry and its ideas in Europe, many Lodges were formed in the German Palatinates. Even Maria Theresa’s strongest opponent in Europe, Frederick II German Emperor (of the Prussian Provinces) became a Freemason². He was in favour of the ‘new ideas’ of being a benevolent ruler, albeit still remaining an autocratic ruler. The enemies nevertheless, Maria Theresa and Frederick the Great, copied each other’s ideas about managing a kingdom or empire in a more benevolent way.

Karl VI decided that Franz Stefan of Lorraine should marry his daughter Maria Theresa and sent him in preparation for future court duties on diplomatic missions all over Europe. In 1731 he was sent by his future father in law to the Netherlands, England and Prussia. He met in The Hague the British Ambassador Philip D. Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, who made the arrangements for Franz Stefan’s visit to London³. Most likely, the Earl also arranged for the initiation of Franz Stefan into Freemasonry at the beginning of June 1731 in The Hague. Prominent Freemasons of the time came to participate and witness the event: Dr Desaguliers was the official emissary of the United Grand Lodge of England, other prominent Masons in attendance were John Stanhope, Counsellor to the British Ambassador in The Hague, Earl von Hotzendorff, Grand Inspector of Workings from Germany and other Dutch Brethren. Dr Anderson (he of the “Constitutions of Freemasonry” from 1717 fame) in his history of Freemasonry from 1738 describes that Franz Stefan was ‘made a ‘prentice and Fellow Craft, receiving the masonic ranks that were conferred at the time’⁴. In England, Franz Stefan lodged with the Grand Master Lord Lovell at his estate, from where he visited a lodge in Houghton Hall with him and attended on Friday 4th December 1731 the Lodge meeting in Devil’s Tavern near Temple Bar before being raised to the degree of Master Mason in the Norwich Lodge “Maid’s Head” while staying at the estate of the then British Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole⁵ and before leaving London on the 9th December. This event made lasting impression on the English Brethren, there was even a Lodge named after Franz Stefan, the “Lothringian”.

² Freimaurer-wiki-de

³ Internationales Freimaurer Lexikon, Eugen Lenhof, Oskar Posner, 1932 edition

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Freimaurer in Österreich“, Reinhard Lamer. 2001

All these events no doubt prepared the ground for the ideas of enlightenment at the Imperial household and served as encouragement to take a more moderate view of Absolutism, Imperialism and Government. Maria Theresa's son Josef was exposed from an early age to moderate and humanitarian thoughts and practices. But, much was to be done, Protestants were still persecuted, Jews were required to be distinguished by growing beards, marriage restrictions were forced on them, access to studies was restricted to wealthy people only and private courts held by Aristocracy were still handing out harsh and often unjust punishments mostly to the lower stations in life.

As Maria Theresa saw more and more of her subjects being hurt by the unjust behaviour of Police, Bureaucracy and variable by Nobility, she was persuaded to actively initiate reforms. Her son Josef was instrumental in promoting some wide-reaching changes while he was still a co-regent with his Mother. The 'Josephinian Reforms' were initially successful, but many in advisory positions to Maria Theresa warned against 'too much and so quickly' and a later regression of some of the achievements was notable.

It must be observed here that despite being staunchly Catholic, representing the highest Authority of the Catholic Church in Austria, Maria Theresa was instrumental in the separation of autonomy of the State from the Church. Papal edicts and bulls could only be proclaimed with Imperial consent⁶. Later, when he was sole Emperor after his mother's death, Josef II issued the 'Toleranz Edikt' (Proclamation of Tolerance), removing restrictions to religions and reducing the power of the Nobility, instituting the right to religious freedom that was not to be found in other Catholic Nations⁷. Some of the changes to the justice and policing systems as well as the bureaucracy invoked are enduring, some are still practised today.

Before we move on to re-join Wolfgang Amadeus, we should investigate this question: How then did Freemasonry establish itself in a very Catholic Nation? We already met with Franz Stefan and learnt of his initiation into the Craft in the Netherlands and his experience in England. At that time, there were some Lodges already established on the Continent, mostly in the Northern European countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden but also sparsely in Germany, namely Hamburg, Berlin and in the German-speaking outliers in today's Czech Republic in Silesia, and in Prague. The Viennese court had close control over the Czech Bureaucracy, being then under Austrian Rule, and regular visits of Austrian Nobility to the Sudetenland as well as Prague also exposed them and Bureaucrats to the then-fledgeling Masonic movement. There is another Lecture hidden here about the reasons for the social and political reasons Freemasonry established so quickly in the now Czech Republic.

On the 17th September 1742, Brethren of the Lodge 'Aux Trois Squelettes' – The three Skeletons – of Breslau, Silesia, working under the German Grand lodge in Berlin, founded the first Lodge in the Imperial Capital⁸, the Lodge 'Aux Trois Canons'. We need to again sidestep quickly into political history to understand the problematical development of the Craft in Vienna. As Maria Theresa took the Throne, all of Europe thought they can now break the Habsburg rule and take their slices of the Empire. This period is known as the 'Succession wars' and lasted seven years until early in 1742. Only Frederick II succeeded to annexe a small part of the Empire into the Prussian Realm, namely Silesia. It requires little

⁶ '200 Jahre Freimaurerei in Österreich', Kuess/Scheichelbauer

⁷ Many historic sources, also "Symposium 250 Jahre Freimaurerei in Österreich", Vienna 1992, Grand Lodge of Austria

⁸ '200 Jahre Freimaurerei in Österreich', Kuess/Scheichelbauer

imagination to picture the rumours and suspicions that almost immediately flared up after the consecration of the first Viennese Lodge by Germans under guidance from Berlin, as of course, the Lodge met 'in secret'. No one really knew what that was all about, it was by many imagined it must have to do with espionage!

After an initial great success through large numbers of initiations, the influence of some of Maria Theresa's advisors became persuasive and the Lodge meeting held on the 7th March 1743 was stormed by Police and all Brethren present arrested for "criminal behaviour, further for conducting a meeting in secret and being under suspicion of conducting treasonous activity"⁹. If you like to review the actual Police protocols, you can still do so today gaining access to the originals in the Imperial and Royal Archives of State in Vienna. 100 Policemen were involved in the raid and the justice system prepared for a scandalising trial of Nobility.

Intervention from Franz Stefan seems to have mollified the Empress, she was after all very much in love with her Husband and granted him the wish that all should be released 'with a stern warning'. This event was widely noted and commented on throughout Europe. After this episode though, the interest of the Empress in the activities, a part of the Nobility involved itself in 'after hours' was waning and it was eventually left for Josef II to take more 'decisive' action much later.

The stern warning was taken seriously as at the time torture was still part of the Justice system, but all got away without punishment. The Brethren who were not arrested did continue to meet in secret and continue to perfect themselves. After the eventual release of the incarcerated Brethren, Freemasonry continued to develop and despite the occasional attempt to raid Masonic meetings, the situation gradually became more relaxed and in 1749 a new Lodge was formed, but still in the Underground.

We should here also note that on 7th March 1738, Pope Clement XII released his Bull "In eminenti apostolatus specula"¹⁰ where Catholics were forbidden to join and mix with this 'new religious sect'. The immediate reaction was that in the Netherlands Freemasonry was banned and in Sweden, Italy and Malta participation was subject to capital punishment. In Austria, no such thing happened as the Habsburgs, while staunchly Catholic, saw this Papal directive as interference in their domestic politics and the Papal Bull was never proclaimed. How fortunate for the Brethren!

Incidentally, this Papal Bull was not moderated by the Vatican until 1965, where excommunication has been removed from the consequences of being a Freemason, but the general position towards the Craft did not change and neither have the proclaimed "religious" consequences. In between these two dates, there were other Papal Bulls and sanctions for Catholics issued about Freemasonry and Masons suffered many times with serious repression and many lost their lives for being Freemasons even late in the 19th century.

The first period of Austrian Freemasonry flourishing is recorded for the time between 1780 to 1785. It was just after the death of Maria Theresa, as Josef II became the sole ruler of the Empire, that an upswing in Masonic activities took place. The first Lodges, under the more relaxed observance by the authorities, were founded from 1770 onwards (Three Eagles,

⁹ K und K Haus Hof und Staatsarchiv (Imperial and Royal State Archives); also *Freimaurer in Österreich*, Reinhard Lamer. 2001

¹⁰ *Internationales Freimaurer Lexikon*, Eugen Lenhof, Oskar Posner, 1932 edition

founded 1770; Crowned Hope 1771 and St. Joseph, 1771). In a petition to Joseph II in 1774, the Berlin Grand Lodge sought Imperial Protection from the Emperor for the Lodges working in the Austrian Empire, which was denied by the Emperor in 1776¹¹.

Apart from Imperial troubles, Freemasonry also suffered from internal discord, namely about the ritual and its teachings. There was the 'strict observance' movement and the more liberal interpretation of the Ritual by German Lodges, greatly influencing operations in Austria. The two systems, the strict observance derived from French Ritual by Baron von Hund, claiming their heritage from the Templars, allowed the wearing of weapons (the sign of a free man) in Lodge, whereas the Ritual revised for the German Lodges by Count Dr. von Zinnendorf was oriented towards the more Christian interpretation of the fundamentals of Freemasonry as was then practised in Sweden. The Lodges in Austria worked initially all under the 'strict observance', but many disputes about the wearing of weapons and other disagreements led to the dying out of this ritual in 1785 when the Craft went underground for the second time.

An imperial edict was released in 1781 that forbade any society, religious or secular organisation to be ruled or guided by foreign authorities or jurisdictions. Freemasonry in Austria received through this development an unprecedented opportunity to set itself up independently and determine its own destiny without having to be influenced or directed by Berlin. The Grand Lodge of Austria was founded in April 1784 after lengthy negotiations and discussions and was divided into seven Masonic districts.

The eight Lodges then operating in Vienna had some 600 members (this number is an estimate only, the number varies in different sources), the smallest Lodge had 32 members (confirmed by all sources). Three Lodges are especially noteworthy: Crowned Hope, founded 1770; True Harmony, founded in 1781 and Benevolence, founded in 1783. These appear to have been the Lodges attracting most of the notable members of Court, Nobility, Merchants, Scientists and Academics of the time.

We should pause here and meet some of those notable Government figures and personalities of Science and Society. Many of the most prominent Noblemen of the day who served the Empress, Joseph's mother as Councillors, and later Joseph II, were supporting changes for the improving not only of Government but also for the position and livelihood of the common people¹². Seven out of 16 advisors to the Empress and later Josef II were Freemasons. The most notable is Prince Wenzel Anton Kaunitz-Rietberg who was the principal advisor on external (foreign) affairs. His antipathy towards the German Emperor Frederick II saw a political shift towards the French as allies of Austria.

The highly regarded lawyer Joseph Baron Sonnenfels was a Freemason and was named in 1763 the first Professor for Police and Public Service Science (Kameralwissenschaft) at the University of Vienna. He was instrumental in successfully abolishing the practice of torture of prisoners and was the editor of a weekly periodical named "Man without Prejudice", which circulated for approximately seven years, no mean feat under the circumstances of the time.

¹¹ '200 Jahre Freimaurerei in Österreich'; Kuess/Scheichelbauer

¹² Walter Koschatzky (Hrsg.): *Maria Theresia und ihre Zeit. Zur 200. Wiederkehr des Todestages*. Ausstellung 13. Mai bis 26. Oktober 1980, Wien, Schloß Schönbrunn (Exhibition and catalogue notes „200 year anniversary of Maria Theresia's death“, Schönbrunn Palace)

The Dutch-born Gerard van Swieten was appointed Court Physician to Maria Theresa in 1745. Eventually, he became Director of the Court's Library. He made sweeping changes to the Library system and built a public reading room, available to anyone who wanted to read. This became later the magnificent National Library we know today. He also greatly improved the health care system, in Vienna at least, by bringing to Vienna the most outstanding medical Doctors then known and founded the 'First Viennese Medical School', that later became world renown for their research and modern methods in patient care and surgery. He revolutionised the Hospital System and persuaded Josef II to make funds available to enlarge the existing General Hospital in Vienna and build a Hospital where all people, not only Nobility, could be treated. This large-scale hospital closed its doors in about 1995 when it was replaced with a more modern edifice. He also fought general superstitions then still rife and especially the belief in Vampires.

Some other notables were Ignaz von Born, a much-loved Freemason and highly experienced mining engineer, inventor of many improvements to mining and mineral extraction, founder of many "Scientific Cabinets" for Mineralogy. He was awarded many honours by the Empress and later Josef II and created the Imperial Minerals Cabinet and curated the precious stone collection at court. Von Born created a system of Lodges of Instructions that was unique at the time and was in a slightly modified way adopted by today's Grand Lodge of Austria. Another opportunity for a Lecture is shrouded in this fact.

Joseph Hilarius Eckhel is an interesting case, as he was a Jesuit and Freemason and was appointed Director of the Imperial Mint and he also was a practising Priest! It is notable that Jesuit's were banned from teaching and establishing schools in the Empire during Maria Theresa's time and until about 1840.

Another of the very large figures and a Councillor was Samuel Brukenthal, her Advisor in Eastern Affairs of State. Brukenthal came from the Transylvanian Capital Hermannstadt to Vienna and soon was initiated into the Craft on the 2nd March 1743 in the Lodge "Aux trois canons" (The three Canons). On the 8 December 1743, he became a member of the Lodge of Union", Scottish Constitution in Berlin. He then founded the Lodge "A trois clef d'Or" (Three golden Keys) in Halle before joining in Vienna and founding another Lodge in his hometown in Transylvania. He was instrumental in developing a large Library and Science Cabinet in Hermannstadt, actively supported compulsory education for children from a young age onwards and was elevated to the Rank of Imperial Baron and Governor of Transylvania¹³.

All these outstanding men and many others became Freemasons from the early days of the Craft being established in Vienna and persevered in their Masonic work throughout their lives enduring also the great difficulty Freemasonry was exposed to. But they also rose to great heights of achievement in their secular and professional lives.

Here we meet again the hero of the essay, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who had by the time he was proposed into Freemasonry, achieved a celebrity status throughout the Empire and all of Europe and England. Mozart's musical and general education started early and followed a strict regimen set by his Father Leopold for Wolfgang and his sister Nannerl. Both were highly talented musicians, performing from an early age on and we know that Mozart composed his first Symphony at the age of six (or seven as some sources claim).

¹³ Otto Werner Förster: Matrikel der Freimaurerloge Minerva zu den drei Palmen 1741–1932. Taurus Verlag, Leipzig 2004

Nevertheless, he was a real prodigy and his early musical achievements are a legend. We can safely assume that the international travels Leopold could arrange for his children at an early age contributed to a unique education and the formation of diverse viewpoints and humanitarian thoughts in young Wolfgang. Mozart had spent nine years travelling throughout Europe and England by the age of 25. No doubt he not only encountered widely different ways of life but also was influenced by the personalities he met. Many would have been Freemasons no matter where they lived.

Mozart's dislike for the 'new rich' and arrogant persons is legendary, he despised those that were pompous in life and patronised the less fortunate. His disputes with and walking out on the Archbishops of Salzburg's employ are well reported. But as a freelance Composer and Kapellmeister (the first ever in history), he knew what he had to do to earn a living, but got on best with those sponsors and supporters that were treating him with respect. We know that Mozart always felt sympathetic towards those that struggled and were less fortunate than him¹⁴.

His appearance at the Imperial Court of Vienna at the age of six in October 1762 has become folklore, he was invited to compete with Maria Theresa's first born daughter, Maria Anna who apparently was quite a good pianist. It does not need much to guess who was declared the winner of the contest. It must have been quite a show as the Empress, her Husband and twelve Archduchesses and Archdukes were present with the appropriate Imperial retinue. Afterwards, Mozart and his sister played with the Imperial Offspring and in his exuberance of having won the contest, Mozart had leapt into the Empresses lap and gave her a kiss – very unusual and out of etiquette for the time!

The somewhat unusual demeanour was to be a character trait all of Mozart's life. Most of the time, his genius prevented serious consequences when he appeared 'rebellious' towards Nobility, Sponsors or Agents. He always had a flair for good clothes knowing that a man also gets judged by the exterior impression he gives. That seems to have fooled many in describing Mozart as an extravagant and big spender. He no doubt had much money trouble and led at times a highflying life. He never forgot though that there are people who have greater needs than himself. In his many letters to his father and later his wife Constanze, he talks about the people poorer than himself, and the way he is and they are treated by some who feel and act as Superiors due to their elevated station in life. He is never very tactful or complimentary when he vents his frustration about condescending behaviours.

In Vienna, he endeared himself through his art and his most optimistic behaviour to many sponsors and art enthusiasts who placed orders for music, masses and operas as well as tuition for their offspring. That brought him in close contact with many that turned out to be Freemasons. His first conscious encounter with Freemasons though came from Munich, where the request for a Masonic Cantata was received from the Lodge 'Cautiousness'¹⁵. K 148 was written at the age of 16 with the title: "Praise of the solemn St. John's Lodge".

Later he would have heard with more interest the tale of people who seek enlightenment, personal improvement and wishing to practice benevolence and respect fellow human beings. Through his concerts and Operas, Mozart was known to all of the Upper Classes (and Commoners) and got to know people like Earl of Dietrichstein, a close advisor to the Empress and Joseph II and at one time Grand Master of the newly formed Grand Lodge of

¹⁴ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Fritz Henneberg, Reclam 1970

¹⁵ „Schröder's Geist und Mozart's Musik“, Jens Oberheide, Salier

Austria. Others like Ignaz von Born would also have been familiar to Mozart and the discussions with and meeting of these personalities were instrumental in Mozart becoming more interested in Freemasonry. He also met other artists and musicians who were already Freemasons. His motivation to join the Craft was decidedly based on humanitarian interest and the ability to meet with others that were thinking similar thoughts as himself and were equally intent on improving life for their families and others.

During travels in Germany, he often met with Theatre producers and writers, among which was Otto, Baron von Gemmingen¹⁶. The Baron was to become a close friend of Mozart's and as a Freemason himself, would have introduced Mozart to some of the ideas in the many discussions they had. As a lover of Music, von Gemmingen wrote the libretto for a Musical which unfortunately never saw the light of day as Mozart did not set the words to Music. When von Gemmingen moved to Vienna to be at the cultural hub of Europe, he found many artists there he knew and of course renewed the friendship with Mozart. He arranged for Mozart's reception in the Lodge "Benevolence" in December 1784.

We can only speculate what Mozart felt when he was introduced to the various steps preceding his Masonic initiation prior to being admitted into the Lodge and his actual initiation. At the time, there was still the 'strict observance' ritual practised in the Austrian Lodges that were founded prior to the unification under the Grand Lodge of Austria. "True Harmony" and "Benevolence" were working under the 'strict observance' Ritual, where the Brethren were referred to as "Brother Knights". There were trials by Earth, Fire, Water and Air that were literally imposed on the Candidate, who was variably referred to as Petitioner and Sufferer. Mozart was kept in the dark for a considerable length of time and had to pass his trials blindfolded. He was later 'thrown out of the Lodge' to resume his usual attire and as prescribed by the Constitution. A considerably different practice that later introduced into the Lodges and practised even now, or indeed as we are used to in Western Australia.

The practice of the times was that all Brethren were clothed identically, the clothing was provided from Lodge funds. A Brother was appointed as the "Brother Gardorbier" who handed out the clothing at the beginning of every meeting, thereby ensuring the equal appearance of all Brethren in the Lodge room¹⁷. Mozart received at his initiation the following prescribed items of clothing¹⁸:

- An Apron made of white leather without lining, without a border or trim or any other embellishment
- The strap to fasten the Apron, which is also made of white leather
- On top of the triangular flap is a triangular buttonhole with which to fasten it to the waistcoat
- A pair of white women's gloves which are tied to the right side of the Apron during the initiation ceremony
- A pair of white men's gloves which he wore on his hands
- Another pair of white men's gloves as a memory reminding him of his initiation

Mozart received, as was customary, in addition:

An unpolished silver trowel on a white leather strap, fastened on the third button of his clothing. The unpolished trowel of the apprentice reminds him that he must work diligently at

¹⁶ "Mozart – Mensch, Musiker, Freimaurer; Wilma und Franz Prinz (Eigenverlag) and other sources

¹⁷ The manner of clothing is described in the Minute Book of L True Harmony, in Article 5. The cost of clothing was included in the Initiation fee.

¹⁸ Ibid, Minute Book Article 6

all times at his self-improvement to reach the wisdom of a Master and self-knowledge that comes with this wisdom.

Once elevated to the sublime degree of a Master Mason, Mozart was clothed in the blue-bordered Apron with three blue rosettes, a golden trowel fastened to a golden chain and an ivory key, both tied to a blue ribbon¹⁹. The ivory key was to remind him of secrecy and the purity of thought towards his fellow Brethren and all mankind.

Many paintings of the times show the Brethren wearing their street clothes in a Lodge meeting. This can safely be dismissed as untrue but seems to have been practised to protect the sanctity and integrity of their obligation. This forbids generally the depiction of anything revealing of masonic detail or making legible any characters or signs that may be part of the Masonic lore.

Mozart chose to be initiated in the Lodge “Benevolence” which was founded in 1783. He was passed to the second degree in “True Harmony” and eventually raised to Master Mason in his own Lodge. He was a keen supporter of Masonic ideals until his untimely death. He visited many other Lodges in Vienna but mostly frequented his own Lodge and “True Harmony”. He composed a number of masonic musical gems, the most well-known perhaps is the “Bundeslied”, now also the National Anthem of Austria.

The Masonic ideals and ideas of the Enlightenment and self-improvement were very important to Mozart. He appreciated the Lodge as a space of democratic freedom so contrasting to the outside world of feudal society. He introduced his father Leopold into Lodge “True Harmony” on the occasion of the father’s visit to Vienna in March 1785. Among the numerous pieces he wrote as an accompaniment to Lodge meetings, where music is an important part of the proceedings, is the Cantata “Journey of the Fellow Craft” [Gesellenreise], KV 468, which he may have written in honour of his father’s passing to the 2nd degree²⁰.

Others think that it was written for the occasion of his own passing to the second degree. Subsequently, the Cantata was often performed at the Festive Board or at Masonic celebrations. He composed a number of songs for the performance during meetings and especially noteworthy the Masonic Funeral Music (Maurerische Trauermusik), KV 477, composed at the death of two Brethren. A song he composed on the occasion of his Lodge honouring Ignaz von Born at the receipt of Imperial Honours is “Masonic Joy” (Maurerfreude) KV471.

Other interesting people he met were Emanuel Schikaneder, a theatre impresario and writer, with whom he collaborated later to create the Magic Flute. Another interesting character was Angelo Soliman. Soliman was born in northern Nigeria, was sold into slavery in Sicily, but came to the household of Prince Lobkowitz, a General in the Imperial Austrian Army, who acquired Soliman as a gift from an Italian Countess. Lobkowitz, later also a Freemason, recognised the abilities of Soliman and his great knowledge in a wide number of diverse

¹⁹ Gerald Fischer – Colbrie, What did a Freemasons Apron look like? In “Mozart in Linz”, Catalogue “Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum (State Museum of Upper Austria) N.F. Linz 1991, 87, 42- 43”

²⁰ As noted in “Mozart – Mensch, Musiker, Freimaurer; Wilma und Franz Prinz (Eigenverlag)

subjects and fluency in six languages. He elevated Soliman's status to chief Butler. But due to disagreements about Lobkowitz's poor treatment of his servants, Soliman was dismissed²¹.

The Freemason Prince Wenzel von Liechtenstein engaged Soliman as Tutor for his children. In Liechtenstein's employ, Soliman met Ignaz von Born, who arranged for his reception in his Lodge "True Harmony". Through his status at the Liechtenstein estate, Soliman also became known to Josef II and his Brother, the later Emperor Franz II, which afforded the Nigerian regular access to the Imperial family. While in the Lodge, Liechtenstein and Soliman behaved as expected as Masonic Brothers, but when leaving, Soliman walked behind the Baron's coach, as would have been expected by Society.

The effect of the Edict of Tolerance issued by Josef II and no doubt the influence of Masonic thinking in such a time of prevailing superstition, suspicion of all things foreign were responsible for an African finding status and favour in society not as an object of curiosity but being treated as a true human being. Mozart befriended Soliman and appreciated his great knowledge and humour.

Mozart enjoyed his Freemasonry very much and took his engagement and the intents of Masonic teachings very seriously. Shortly before the death of his father, he wrote in a letter (dated 4 April 1787): "As death is the purpose of our lives, so I have acquainted myself over the last few years with this true and loyal friend of mankind so much that his image holds no more terror for me, but is something comforting and consoling. And I thank my God that he favoured me with the opportunity to come to meet and appreciate him (you understand my meaning) as the key to true happiness"²².

The Craft in Austria was not favoured by longevity or happiness. The rise of the Fraternity came to a somewhat sudden end in 1785, as Emperor Joseph II issues the Freemasons Decree [Freimaurer Patent]. The Emperor, although still considering beneficial and charitable aspects that Freemasonry could have, feared that the Fraternity has a negative influence on Religion and Society and could be detrimental to Public Order. It appeared more sensible to him to gain more control over the Craft. He forbade as first steps the formation of Lodges on land owned by Nobility and in Country Regions and required further that all Lodge meetings are registered with the Police accompanied by a full listing of members attending. It was decreed that in one location no more than three Lodges with no more than 180 members are allowed²³.

At this time, we see the dissolution of some Lodges and formation of many new, smaller ones. The house of Baron Moser became the central meeting place for all Lodges in Vienna. Many members of Nobility did not want to identify any longer with the Craft as the Emperor saw it as "morally corrupting and outright dangerous"²⁴. Mozart's Lodge "Benevolence" amalgamated with "Three Flames" [Zu den Drei Feuern] and "Crowned Hope" [Gekrönte Hoffnung] to become "The Newly Crowned Hope" [Zur Neugekrönten Hoffnung], numbering 116 members. The work "A little Freemasons Cantata" [Eine Kleine Freimaurerkantate] KV 623 was specifically written for the consecration of Lodge "The

²¹ Ibid

²² In a note of Lodge "Equality" Vienna, also Freimaurerwiki.de.

²³ In "Symposium 200 Jahre Freimaurerei in Österreich", Grand Lodge of Austria, 1992

²⁴ Imperial and Royal Home, Court and State Archives, Confidential files [K & K Haus-Hof und Staatsarchiv]

Newly Crowned Hope” 25 and directed by Mozart himself on 18 November 1791. Two weeks later he was dead.

Police files containing confused and convoluted reports on Lodge raids attest to Mozart’s Masonic activities²⁶, especially notable through printed invitations to Lodge meetings where Mozart performed his works. Those invitations were confiscated and are still available for inspection in the archives today. Invitations to recitals in Lodges and musical accompaniment, for example, show Mozart gives a Piano Concerto and other works at a meeting in support of two Artists that fell on hard times. He also wrote in 1788 as fundraisers for the Imperial Deaf and Mute Home (a charity strongly supported by Joseph II) several songs with Masonic overtones collected in “The New Children’s Library” [Neue Kinderbibliothek]. This Institution was very strongly supported by several Lodges, possibly also to gain the then waning favour of the Emperor, raising the credit of Freemasonry and increasing the esteem of it in the Public Eye.

In early summer of 1791 Mozart commences work on the Magic Flute, his contribution to the discussion about Freemasonry. The Opera contains for those who are Initiates and know, without any doubt, some interesting and perhaps idealised views of Freemasonry. Prince Tamino wishes to belong to the circle of the ‘clothed ones’, meaning most likely being clothed with the Apron upon initiation. A series of trials and tests such as demonstrating Temperance, Secrecy and Charity are required as prerequisites to be counted among the priests of Isis and Osiris (indeed it could be argued that all four Cardinal Virtues are addressed in the Opera). Similarities to Ritual and Symbols associated with Initiation are of course also part of the Masonic concept portrayed. Brother Schikaneder, who wrote the Libretto, and Brother Mozart do not reveal ritual in the Magic Flute and none of the Secrets associated, but simply attempt to guide people to a path to enlightenment through the popularisation of some of the underlying Masonic ethics.

The Viennese Lodges had hoped for a new beginning in moving to a new central location at the Moser house, where Mozart was also initiated. Alas, the fraternity was doomed and could not be resurrected. After Joseph II’s death, his brother Leopold II took the reins of the Austrian Empire and showed less goodwill towards Freemasonry than his brother before him. His son Franz who ascended to the Imperial Throne in 1792 after Leopold’s death, delivered the final blow to the Fraternity by rigorously persecuting the Members and closing off all means of meeting under cover of secrecy. He fully revoked the advancements based on ideas of enlightenment made under Joseph II and suppressed free-spirited thinking and enlightenment ideas as a threat to the Empire. He may have been frightened by the beginning of the revolutionary ideas in France.

The Lodge “The Newly Crowned Hope” ceased its labours on the 2 December 1793 as one of the last Lodges to submit to Imperial pressure and stated in a letter to the Emperor that “our Labours are not understood, misinterpreted, made near impossible to practice and have been declared as not needed”²⁷. It took until 8 December 1918, just after the first Austrian Republic was declared before Freemasonry could resume its presence and work. Freemasonry was not forgotten, Austrian Freemasons met in other countries or parts of the Empire, that was less strictly controlled than the Heartlands and Vienna.

²⁵ In “Mozart – Mensch, Musiker, Freimaurer; Wilma und Franz Prinz (Eigenverlag)

²⁶ Imperial and Royal Home, Court and State Archives, Confidential files [K & K Haus-Hof und Staatsarchiv]

²⁷ ‘200 Jahre Freimaurerei in Österreich’, Kuess/Scheichelbauer

The suppression of the Craft did not extend to Hungary for example, who's Government did not invoke a prohibition of societies as in Vienna and 50 years after the light was extinguished in the Austrian Empire, but not in the Kingdom of Hungary and other countries, Viennese Masons started to work in Lodges in other locations.

Mozart's love for the Craft can only be an inspiration to us. The Craft has received many impulses relevant to and in support of humanitarian ideals from Mozart and his fellow Masons. Many of the foundations laid by Masons in this difficult time for Light and Enlightenment in one of the largest Empires in Europe are still significant today. Modern forensic science was invented in Vienna by a Freemason, as was basic health care for the public, also the reformation of Theatre production and the changes to a bureaucratic system that simplified administration of large governing bodies.

But most of all, Mozart's inventiveness in music and composition are still fascinating and inspiring today. The numerous works he crafted before and during his being a Freemason are a testimony of his humanitarian attitude, his regard for fellow man and the desire to provide a better world for all. In a review of the Opera "La Clemenza di Tito" performed at the 2017 Salzburg Festival, the reviewer's comment that the Masonic Funeral Music being played as Tito is on his deathbed conveys clearly the overtones of Tolerance, Relief and Truth. In this, Mozart's last Opera, we catch sight of his real persona and inclination in life. The topic of revenge turned to an understanding on the one hand and understanding to forgiveness shown by Tito on the other, could not originate in more universally directed principles than we find in Masonic teaching. It is today perhaps even more relevant and critical than in Mozart's time, although it is difficult to evaluate from a distance the real influence on Brother Mozart.

The creative expression of Masonic principles as we find in the Magic Flute and in La Clemenza is perhaps the greatest of our Brother Genius' achievements. The Kyrie Eleison that is sung at the moment of Tito's forgiveness of transgressions, the reviewer admired, is the true culmination of resolving tension and giving hope.

The Masonic eulogy for Brother Mozart was amended with a poem which in the translation hopefully still conveys the esteem and gratitude in which Brother Mozart was held²⁸:

He was in life good, kind and upright
A Mason in word and thought
Darling of the tonal art – he helped us
to find superior emotions
Broken is now that bond!
Our Masonic blessings-happy and courageous-
Shall guide him and Brotherly love support him
Into the lands of eternal Harmony;
In silence, we followed his steps

²⁸ Jahn, W. A. Mozart (4th Vol. Leipzig 1856-1859)

To find those that fate made poor;
Where he often, in feeble widow's dwellings
Brought offerings to soothe
Where his happiness was dignified by Orphans blessings;
Giving clothes where naked poverty reigns
The love of God his only wages
Which now support him to his grave;
He, who adulated, soothed by songs of the Sirens,
could delight in the happiness
in the eyes of needy fellow man,
never forgot that he is a human being.
