

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart`s financial struggles and strategies

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Abstract: *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart navigated the complexities of the economic environment of the 18th century, often facing, despite his extraordinary talents, financial difficulties. In order to generate income through his multiple abilities (composition, teaching, conducting, performing) he faced various challenges, inconsistent income, competition and changing patronage dynamics. The particularities of an artist's financial income are approached in the current research, analyzing the particular case of the great Austrian composer. Understanding the economics of music in his time can provide a better understanding on the struggles and interior pressures the composer faced, that had a contribution in how his compositions were created.*

Key-words: *Mozart, Financial struggle, Patronage system, Music publishing*

1. Introduction

The 18th century represented a period of significant transformations in the musical field, characterized by stylistic, technical and economic developments. Financially, this century profoundly influenced the careers of artists, the conditions under which they composed and performed, and the way in which music came to be heard by the public, whether it was the aristocratic elite or the common people.

In the current paper, the attention will be focused on the genius composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and his different sources of income, with an outline of the economic and social structures that influenced his artistic activity, as well as on the impact these social-economic conditions had on his artistic, pedagogical and human development. The fact that the composer was far ahead of his time, from a professional point of view, being a visionary, a versatile artist and one full of creative imagination, determined a life full of moments of fulfillment but also sustained struggles.

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2. Sources of Income for Musicians

The artists of the 18th century had various sources of income at their disposal, and they constantly found themselves in the situation of adapting to the dynamic and rather less predictable conditions in which they carried out their activity. These conditions generated a significant impact on the artistic development and on the creativity that every artist who had developed artistic potential had to show. The financial environment was at that time closely linked to the social and economic structures that governed the world. In addition, international influences also began to emerge, with musicians from different countries interacting and exchanging ideas, led to an enrichment of repertoire and styles.

2.1. Royal courts – aristocratic engagements

The economic and financial environment of the 18th century had a particular impact on the evolution of music. The relationship between the musicians and the royal courts that patronized their artistic careers was essential for the development of their artistic careers. Patronage from the high imperial or aristocratic courts enabled artists to acquire new sources of income and, at the same time, enabled the development of complex and varied musical forms, from operas and chamber music to symphonies and concerts.

A significant source of income and a highly targeted one by musicians was therefore the royal court. Employment within the royal or aristocratic court created the context of obtaining a constant remuneration and, at the same time, consolidated a greater image capital and extraordinary prestige. The right context was thus created for composers to innovate in the musical field, to develop new musical genres and musical styles, but also to develop their own compositional or interpretive style. Musicians such as:

- Johann Sebastian Bach, who was employed at the Köthen court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, at the Weimar Court, or principal employee at the Church of St. Thomas of Leipzig (Wolff 2000, 117);
- George Frideric Händel who composed various operas and oratorios commissioned by the British royal house through Queen Anne and then by King George II, but also by the court of Prince Elector of Hanover, Georg Ludwig (Hunter 2015, 147);
- Antonio Vivaldi, a composer close to the court of King Charles VI in Vienna, employed at the court of Countess Anna Girodani in Venice and employed at the court of the Duke of Mantua (Kolneder 1970, 17);

- Joseph Haydn, who worked for almost 30 years at the court of Prince Paul Anton Esterházy (Jones 2009, 45);
 - Ludwig van Beethoven who was supported by the Austrian imperial court (Zannos 2003, 11);
 - Frédéric Chopin, highly appreciated composer, benefiting from the support of several European courts (Polish, French, Russian etc.) (Bellman and Goldberg 2017, 59);
 - Richard Wagner, composer supported by the Prussian kings and the Dresden court (Geck 2013, 130);
 - Johannes Brahms who composed many of his works for members of the Austrian aristocracy, being supported by figures from his hometown, Hamburg, as well as other influential figures at the time, such as Clara Schumann (Avins 1997, 185, 120);
 - Sir Edward Elgar, composer to the English royal court (Moore 1999, 240);
- had their life course significantly influenced by these economic conditions, propitious to the concentration of the musical genius towards music and less towards covering the immediate needs, without the satisfaction of which musical excellence could be greatly limited.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was employed at the court of Archduke Colloredo of Salzburg in the period 1773-1781 where he held the position of concertmaster and composer, composing both court and sacred works (Melograni 2007, 134). After leaving Salzburg, Mozart moved to Vienna, where he became a freelance composer, but had close relations with the imperial court where he built a special reputation.

Even starting from a very young age, W.A. Mozart had encounters with the most powerful rulers, due to his father's determination to travel and share his son's incredible talent and liveliness of mind to the most influential people. For example, at age six, he performed in front of Emperor Francis I who provoked him into playing the piano with only one finger while the keyboard was completely covered. He received a small violin as a gift for impressing the emperor on that occasion (Stendhal 1974, 183).

Important aspects must be taken into consideration that refer to the condition of an artist in that period of time. It is from Empress Maria Teresa's own words that we find out that the artists are viewed as „useless people” (Weinberg 1962, 11), therefore recommending her son, Archduke Ferdinand, not to hire Mozart while being General Governor of Lombardia. The empresses' cold, subjective and almost unhuman perspective offers valuable information on the struggles that artists, including W. A. Mozart, needed to face.

Another example that offers information on the social hierarchy that artists needed to face is that of the period that W. A. Mozart spent working at the court of Archbishop Colloredo. The composer dined together with the staff who served the

kitchen and the stables (Weinberg 1962, 123). It can be understood in this way that the consideration that the artist received was not too high, taking into account the hierarchy within the episcopal court.

In Vienna he composed important works, including works that became immediately famous such as *Le nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro, 1786, K.492) and *Don Giovanni* (1788, K.527). From a financial point of view, however, the remuneration received for the extraordinary success at the sixteen performances of the opera *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Viennese Burgtheatre is considered offensive by the composer (450 guilders).

The composer was also well received at the court in Prague, where he had success with his opera *Don Giovanni*, presented to the public for the first time at the Prague National Theatre. *Don Giovanni*, commissioned by the Prague opera director, Bondini who offers the composer the joy of recognition and reward for his work at a much higher value, 100 gold ducats. However, the director of the Prague institution did not pay the composer his due share for the success of the numerous performances that his works had in the Prague theater. The great success of the opera thus consolidated his status as a successful composer, being invited to appear at numerous musical events and gaining the support of some local aristocrats. Throughout his short life, Mozart had collaborations with various European courts, including those of Mannheim and aristocrats from other regions, but his most notable engagements were in Salzburg and Vienna.

However, these commitments created the benefit of financial stability, but also involved certain constraints. The musician was often obliged to compose works to suit the specific tastes and requirements of the patron who financed and created the conditions necessary for the works to be composed and staged. Often the requirements involved the choice of a libretto approved by the members of the royal court, of certain staging demands that fit into some preferences perhaps less approved by the composer but which were rigorously taken into account when accepting the order.

In the same time, patrons often behaved like true masters or owners of the musician, by imposing a traditionalist behavior and opposing progress and the innovative ideology of the creative genius. However, the progress that the composer initiates is unstoppable, the artistic phenomenon started both from a musical point of view and from the point of view of the artistic reflection on the social component in which his activity was carried out, breaking the barriers that the aristocrats wanted so much to maintain. Due to the fact that his family was not part of the aristocracy, it meant that he had to endure morally unfair aspects, being often restrained from the creative advance that his musical language and the immortal artistic content of his creations imposed on him.

2.2. Singing in concerts

The emergence and expansion of the middle class in the 18th century brought new opportunities for musicians. The presence of the middle class at musical events, considered not long ago accessible only to the aristocratic class, confirms an increased interest in culture and education. This social category begins to actively participate in the many musical events of the time. In this context, concert halls developed and music began to become an integral part of social life for many individuals. This led to a diversification of musical styles, as musicians had to adapt to the tastes of the public.

These engagements and relationships significantly influenced the composer's career and contributed deeply to his success as one of the most important composers of classical music and one of the most important composers of all time. This is considered an exceptional element in the artist's career, especially because he started performing at a very young age, as his first tour in Europe started when he was only seven years old. In the tour he sang in front of electors, prices by holding public concerts in Augsburg, Mannheim, Frankfurt, Coblenz, Bruxelles, Paris, Versailles (where the Mozart family: Wolfgang, his sister Nannerl and his father Leopold received the honor of receiving a portrait in which they were depicted together) for which he always got the highest prices.

However, Mozart did not always have a warm reception among cultural institutions. At only twelve years old, the composer was asked by the director of the Vienna opera house to compose an opera to be performed on the occasion of the marriage of one of the daughters of Empress Maria Teresa. The opera, *Apollo and Hyacinth* (K.V. 38), was never performed in the famous cultural institution although the rehearsals for its staging had started. Rumors, gossip fueled by certain musicians who did not approve of the rise of the young composer created intrigues and aversions that governed the composer's entire life.

An emblematic place that influenced and contributed to the consolidation of W. A. Mozart's international fame is the Prague Opera House (in Czech *Stavovské divadlo*, inaugurated in 1783 under the name of the Bohemian National Theatre), one of the oldest buildings that houses an opera from Europe. The Austrian composer inaugurates the first opera performed in this new building, *La clemenza di Tito* (K.621), an opera specially composed for the coronation of Emperor Leopold II of the Habsburg-Lothringen dynasty. Also, the first world performance of the opera *Don Giovanni* also took place at the Prague opera house in 1787 under the baton of the composer himself (Wallace 1866, 232). It was a resounding success, being repeated during that season several times (the exact number of which is unknown), indicating the public's appetite for the mozartian compositions in the city. W. A. Mozart actually started playing instruments, singing vocally and conducting at a very young age.

He conducted in front of the imperial court in Vienna at age twelve his own compositions for the inauguration of the orphans' church. Later on, W. A. Mozart organized public concerts, renting event halls and selling tickets. In many of these cases, the events brought him significant additional income. At the same time, the composer was often requested to play at the courts of the nobles or in the private salons of the aristocracy. Such engagements were well paid and constituted an important source of income.

The emergence of written publications in the form of event chronicles also influenced the financial side of musicians' lives. Concert reviews in newspapers and trade publications helped promote the works and increased demand for them. Ticket sales thus increased the demand for the musicians' creations, who thus began to be valued not only by patrons but also by middle-class audiences, which added a competitive dimension to the evolution of their artistic careers by organizing an increasing number of public concerts. This was the opportune context for the significant increase in W. A. Mozart's popularity and reputation, his creations becoming real hits on the streets of European capitals where performances of his works took place.

2.3. Publishing compositions

The development of printing technique and its use on an ever wider scale contributed significantly to the accessibility of music, to the distribution of musical works and to the shortening of the copying time. In this context, publishing sheet music became another significant source of income for composers, with their works becoming accessible to anyone interested that had the financial means to purchase them. The artist's collaboration with publishing houses to print their works also contributed both to the increase in the income collected and to the increase in the fame of the musicians.

W. A. Mozart composed and published his first works in Paris at only seven years old. They were dedicated to high aristocracy members: the first was dedicated to the second daughter of King Louis the XV-th and the second one to Countess de Tesse. It can be concluded that the connections between publishing and popularizing the compositions with such high dedications contributed to raising Mozart's reputation.

At the same time, the great artist had to adapt to the demands of the market to have access to his compositions, and his success depended on the ability to attract the largest possible audience to his performances. This dynamic contributed significantly to the popularization of W. A. Mozart's music among the public who were interested and willing to purchase tickets to the latest performances of his compositions, as well as to purchase the scores of his compositions.

2.4. The teaching activity

A different manner that allowed 18th century musicians to financially support their artistic careers and their families was by teaching music. Private lessons provided an important and steady source of income for W. A. Mozart, especially during his last years in the Habsburg capital. These private lessons allowed the composer to share his knowledge, especially since they contributed to maintaining a permanent direct interaction with the bourgeoisie, with the elite of society with whom he created an important network of contacts.

His didactic talent is manifested in the demanding approach to the development of the interpretive technique and the development of the expressiveness of his students, at the same time emphasizing the learning of the elements of music theory. This teaching activity helps to spread the mozartian style to younger generations, inspiring them to continue the musical legacy of their master.

However, the composer neglected his students on many occasions, especially during the periods when he focused exclusively on the completion of an important musical creation or during the periods in which he traveled. For this reason, the brilliant composer turned to the help of acquaintances to find students. In one of his letters to Michael Puchberg (1), Mozart mentions the fact that he has two students, and to be able to meet the expenses of the house, eight more would be necessary. The information related by the composer himself indicates the accentuated financial difficulties experienced in certain periods of his life, at certain moments resorting to loans that he tried his best to pay from the sale of his compositions, today priceless in value but at that time very poorly paid in comparison with the immense contribution he had in the history of music.

3. Conclusions

The social and financial environment of the 18th century was an essential factor in the development of the career of the great composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. His artistic development, diversification of sources of income, access to education, willingness to make sacrifices and the social transformations he witnessed, allowed the musician to explore new creative horizons, influencing the evolution of music forever. His artistic career contributed during the period to establishing the foundations of a modern musical system, where music was no longer just a privilege for the aristocratic class only, but represented an art form accessible and appreciated by the general public.

The financial earning potential of the great genius was fabulous, considering the immortal works he left to humanity, but although he earned considerable sums at certain times, his lack of financial education through poor financial management contributed to the financial difficulties accentuated by the less responsible lifestyle regarding money, especially in the latter part of his all-too-short life.

These aspects can be considered elements of reflection on the career of an artist in the century in which the composer lived, but they can also represent elements of thought on their actuality today. Human and professional value is not always the one that generates the best financial and career results. The ability to create connections, the ability to manage relationships with people who can influence the professional development is also part of the complex and always challenging life of an artist.

4. References

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