
Music

The Mozart jewel goes to auction

by David Shavin

On Wednesday, Nov. 21, the original manuscripts of Mozart's Sonata in C minor (K. 457) and his Fantasy in C minor (K. 475), was auctioned by Sotheby's of London. The world at large has been without the benefit of this manuscript since 1801, when the music publisher Johann André used it for his "*Edition d'après le manuscrit original.*" The manuscript was kept in private hands, largely unnoticed, until it was rediscovered last July 31 at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, in the Philadelphia suburb of Lower Merion Township.

The business world viewed the item as the heavyweight-class production of the "hottest" classical composer being marketed today, being auctioned as we begin a year of celebrations and notoriety for Mozart during the 200th anniversary of his death. If such an item, it was reasoned, did not command the \$1.4 million figure being floated by Sotheby's, then there would be little hope for putting a floor under the speculation in this rarefied market. In fact, it was purchased for \$1.7 million by the Austrian consortium for the International Mozarteum Foundation in Salzburg.

However, the so-called collector's value of this manuscript may well be dwarfed by its actual value. Among the 14 pages of the two works, there is to be found one page of extra-special concern: a heretofore unexamined, draft version of the variational treatment of the development section of the sonata's middle movement. This writer was able to catch a glimpse of this when the manuscript was put on display in Philadelphia, but its actual contents will only be made public at a future point by a scholar who has been given exclusive publishing rights.

Contrary to the magical view of the workings of Mozart's mind put forth for the credulous by such concoctions as the movie *Amadeus*, God does not excrete his powerful beauty through the right hand of Mozart in some unmediated fashion. The footprints, as it were, of Mozart's composing process indicate that a vast amount of the finished composition had already been worked out in his head, making even more significant the indications of the portions of the compositional puzzle that occupied his thinking up to the point of putting

pen to paper. The existence of a draft version of his solutions to the developmental possibilities of the theme of the sonata's second movement, may provide the world a fresh insight into how such problem-solving activity is to be mastered.

Such questions were provocative enough to the composer, that he addressed the developmental possibilities explicitly in the more free-form, "improvisational" accompanying piece, the Fantasy in C minor. The sonata was finished in 1784, and Mozart used this piece to teach his students. He clearly found this teaching process fascinating enough to develop it further, creating the fantasy in May of 1785.

The examination of how the human mind creates new laws, and new possibilities for development, in a lawful fashion, was a question that Mozart fought over in a sustained and intense manner over the four years from 1781 to 1785. Mozart was, in fact, a leading thinker of the European faction of republicans in the wake of the smashing of the British at Yorktown. The C minor project itself, as Lyndon LaRouche has emphasized, epitomized the use of vocal register-shifts in the musical demonstration of lawful changes in the physical universe. It was first communicated to Mozart from Johann Sebastian Bach's famous 1747 "Musical Offering" education of the Prussian King, Frederick, via the education minister, Baron von Swieten, at the time that Mozart joined his republican circles in Vienna in 1781. (The good baron's father had contributed some tangible aid to the American Revolution, not the least of which was his medical treatise on the subject of dealing with injuries sustained in naval warfare.)

This C minor manuscript is a legacy that stands as the benchmark in Mozart's investigation of how the geometry of the language of music is constructed. Mozart fought for the mastery of the inner workings of his own "natural genius," and, as such, waged his own successful revolution. Not unlike the colonies, he refused to yield to being simply an incredibly rich vein of natural resources to be mined by the courts of Europe. He fought for, and took sovereignty over, his own genius. It is this process of deliberation—epitomized afresh for us today, within this manuscript, and particularly, within the draft portion—that has a unique value for us today.

The alternative was that Mozart could have remained unmoved and distant from the new possibilities created when "the world was turned upside-down" in 1781, and continued the prodigy-like creations of his youth. In that case, we would know him as perhaps the best of a group of prodigies of his time, such as William Crouch. We know and love Mozart today because he became, as it were, "a temple of liberty, and a beacon of hope" to the world.

The rediscovery of Mozart's manuscript was announced to the world on Oct. 3, 1990—whether intentionally or not, a birthday gift to the newly reunited German republic. The manuscript, and the classical culture that stands behind that nation, if given a chance, have not a little to contribute in establishing a proper foundation to the true worth of art today, putting to shame the fantasies surrounding the auction price.