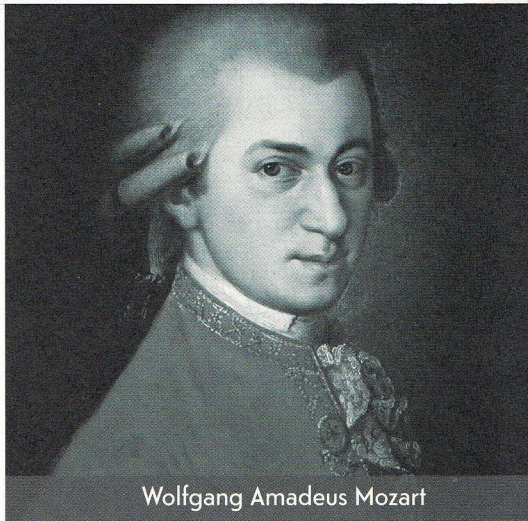


Amadeus has got a lot to answer for. Peter Shaffer's original play on Mozart's struggles and achievements, and his relationship with Salieri – first performed in 1979 – began as a sensitive study of the nature of genius. But by the time Miloš Forman got his hands on it for his 1984 movie, it had become a sensationalised soap opera that depicted Mozart as a farting, wisecracking, insolent bad boy, almost unaware of his own genius. It brought Mozart and his music to millions of new listeners worldwide, and won eight Oscars in the process – but it also painted an exaggerated picture of the composer that is difficult to shake.

On the other hand, visit Prague, Vienna or Salzburg and you'll see the Mozart tourist industry in full flow, with the composer's image on all manner of merchandise. Mozart balls – or, to give them their proper name, Echte Salzburger Mozartkugel – are a tempting confection wrapped in colourful foil bearing Mozart's image that glint from the windows of sweet shops in Salzburg. But they have no connection with that city's most famous musical son.

There's nothing wrong, of course, with a bit of movie escapism or a tasty chocolate treat. But it's no wonder we're confused about one of the world's greatest musicians. We seem to be trying to reconcile two different Mozarts – 'bad boy' Mozart who sticks two fingers up at authority, and 'chocolate box' Mozart who receives his charming music as if through divine inspiration.

The truth about Mozart, of course, is far more complex. You can't escape the astonishing facts of his early life and talents – he learnt the harpsichord from the age of three, began composing at five, had already gained a reputation as a musical prodigy by six, and had written his first opera at 12. He wrote his *First Symphony* (Sun 11 Oct) at the age of eight, and by the age of 17 he'd matured enough to write the stormy *Symphony No.25* (Fri 18 Sep), whose rhythmic urgency and emotional directness probe deeply into the human heart.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

But with such remarkable early achievements, it's tempting to think it all came easily. That's far from the truth. His sketches show that he worked damned hard at crafting and perfecting his music. And in a work such as the *Symphony No.31 'Paris'* (Thu 3 Mar), for example, he threw everything in his compositional arsenal at his biggest, grandest, most dramatic symphony to date, calculated to make his 1778 visit to the French capital unforgettable.

Elsewhere, other myths abound. Mozart's *Requiem* (Fri 10 Jun) has attracted them like no other work: commissioned by a mysterious stranger, it ended up as the mass for Mozart's own death after he was poisoned by arch-rival Salieri, leaving the work unfinished. That last point is true – what we hear is a completion by Mozart's pupil Süssmayr – but it was a messenger from Count Walsegg-Stuppach, an acquaintance of Mozart, who asked him to write the piece, and it's enormously unlikely that Salieri poisoned him. The *Clarinet Concerto* (Sat 26 Sep) is the final important work that Mozart managed to complete before his death, and it's often dubbed 'valedictory' – but it's easy to think that when we know he died just a couple of months after writing it. Any sadness or nostalgia in the work is more than offset by its vigour and verve.

Even Mozart's remarkable last three symphonies are often thought to be his message to posterity, but they are nevertheless the work of a professional, written to be performed and to earn him money. The stormy *Symphony No.40* (Fri 20 May) might seem to reflect the parlous financial circumstances of Mozart's final years, but it was written at the same time as

the warm, humorous *Symphony No.39* and the grand, imposing *Symphony No.41 'Jupiter'* (Sun 6 Dec) – hardly the products of a worn-down composer. And while we're on Mozart's '*Jupiter*', that symphony is often used as the perfect example of Mozart's music being joyous and 'easy to get'. Yet in its time, it was considered difficult and complex – as is the profusion of melody and ambitious scale of his *Symphony No.33 'Prague'* (Fri 29 Apr).

Opinions on Mozart have always said more about their own times than they've said about him. He's always been admired, of course – not least by fellow composers, many of whom have taken inspiration from his music in aspects of their own. Tchaikovsky was a big fan, and his *Mozartiana* (Sun 24 Apr) is an affectionate reworking of four lesser-known Mozart piano works; French composer Jacques Ibert's *Hommage à Mozart* (Sun 11 Oct) is a similarly affectionate, witty tribute written to mark the 200th anniversary of Mozart's birth; and even Richard Strauss' *Duet-Concertino* for clarinet, bassoon and strings (Sun 24 Apr) has a Mozart-inspired Classical lyricism and simplicity.

Behind 'bad boy' Mozart, 'chocolate box' Mozart, and any other imagined idea of the composer, though, lies Mozart's profound humanity. It's there in his evident affection for all his opera characters, good, bad or otherwise, and it's there in his touchingly sincere choral music – including *Exsultate, Jubilate* (Fri 6 Nov) and the grand *C Minor Mass* (Fri 5 Feb). It's there, too, in the witty egalitarianism of his social music, whether that's the generous sharing of the musical spotlight in his *Quintet for Piano and Wind, K452* (Thu 24 Sep) or the joyful exchanges of his *Concerto for Two Pianos* (Fri 3 Jun), written for himself and his sister to perform. Most of all, though, it's there right across his enormously sophisticated music that draws on a huge variety of human experience, yet makes it all sound effortless. As Royal Northern Sinfonia's 2015/16 season encourages us, it's time to leave behind 'bad boy' and 'chocolate box' Mozart, and to reclaim him in all his complexity, diversity and profound humanity.

Notes by David Kettle

Fri 18 Sep | 7.30pm | Hall One
OPENING CONCERT
with MOZART Symphony No.25

Thu 24 Sep | 8pm | Hall Two
LARS VOGT CHAMBER

Sat 26 Sep | 7.30pm | Hall One
CLASSIC FM: MOZART MEETS THE NORTH

Sun 11 Oct | 3pm | Hall One
MY MOZART MATINEE ONE

Fri 30 Oct | 7.30pm | Hall One
MOZART'S VIENNA

Fri 6 Nov | 7.30pm | Hall One
EXSULTATE, JUBILATE

Sun 6 Dec | 7.30pm | Hall One
CLASSIC FM: MILOŠ
with MOZART Symphony No.41 'Jupiter'

Fri 5 Feb | 7.30pm | Hall One
MOZART MASS IN C MINOR

Wed 10 Feb | 8pm | Hall Two
RNS UP CLOSE: TIMOTHY ORPEN

Thu 3 Mar | 7.30pm | Hall One
MOZART IN PARIS

Sun 24 Apr | 3pm | Hall One
MY MOZART MATINEE TWO

Fri 29 Apr | 7.30pm | Hall One
MOZART IN PRAGUE

Fri 20 May | 7.30pm | Hall One
THE 'GREAT G MINOR SYMPHONY'

Fri 3 Jun | 7.30pm | Hall One
MOZART AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Fri 10 Jun | 7.30pm | Hall One
FINALE: VOGT'S SIBELIUS SEVEN
with MOZART Requiem