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“No kind of reading is so generally interesting as biography”: Establishing Narratives for Haydn and Mozart in the Second and Third Decades of the Nineteenth Century

SIMON P. KEEFE

Where was Haydn and Mozart biography in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century? As the immediacy of Haydn’s death receded, with Mozart long gone, potential biographers were in a position to build on foundations laid by Friedrich Schlichtegroll and Franz Xaver Niemetschek, who foregrounded Mozart’s Salzburg and Viennese years respectively, and Georg August Griesinger and Albert Christoph Dies, who compiled accounts of Haydn’s life from discussions with him in his final years.¹

The critical climate was also conducive to such work. “The lives of those who have attained the highest eminence in any art or profession, cannot fail of exciting an interest in the minds of all,” wrote a reviewer of Stendhal’s *Lives of Haydn and Mozart* in 1817.² For another, discussing a volume by John R. Parker in 1825: “no kind of reading is so generally interesting as biography. If tolerably well written, the life of an eminent man . . . can hardly fail to interest and gratify all classes of readers.”³

From a first glance across the two decades, pickings look slim, at least in terms of extended studies. For one modern writer, three decades of biographical work on Mozart from 1798 onwards

¹See Friedrich Schlichtegroll, “Johannes Chrysostomos Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart,” in *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1791* (Gotha, 1793), 82–112; Franz Xaver Niemetschek, *Leben des K. K. Kapellmeisters Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart, nach Originalquellen beschrieben* (Prague: Herrliche Buchhandlung, 1798), trans. Helen Mautner as *Life of Mozart* (London: Hyman, 1956); Georg August Griesinger, “Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn,” in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 11 (1808–09): cols. 641–49, 657–68, 673–81, 689–99, 705–13, 721–33, 737–47, and subsequently in book form (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1810); and Albert Christoph Dies, *Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph*

Haydn (Vienna: Camesinische Buchhandlung, 1810). Griesinger and Dies are published in English in *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, ed. and trans. Vernon Gotwals (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968).

²*The British Critic, New Series* 8 (1817): 13.

³*The United States Literary Gazette* 1 (1825): 323.

is dismissed as “almost entirely plagiarized . . . adding fiction and embroidery but virtually no new information of any trustworthiness”; another finds “[no] . . . biography of substance” in the same period; and a third, in a wide-ranging study of nineteenth-century Mozart reception, makes only passing references to biographical work during this time.⁴ Schlichtegroll, Niemetschek, Griesinger, and Dies had provided biographical information obtained from the composers themselves or those close to them; the disappointment for recent critics, then, is that subsequent work does not advance our collective knowledge through analogous processes of discovery. But the kind of serious, scholarly studies implied in the quoted remarks, a long way in the future for both Haydn and Mozart (with the exception of Georg von Nissen’s on Mozart from 1828), are only one side of the life-and-works equation. Popular, anecdotal, and fictional biographical materials, abundant in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, also enriched and enlivened the images and reputations of the composers, if not by promoting new information as their venerable predecessors had done, then by shaping, reshaping, and reinforcing narratives about them. As has been explained, anecdotes about an artist, irrespective of truth value, can “expect to illuminate

⁴William Stafford, “The Evolution of Mozartian Biography,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 200–11, at 202; Alec Hyatt King, “Biography and Biographers,” in *The Mozart Compendium*, ed. H. C. Robbins Landon (New York: Schirmer, 1990), 404–08, at 405; Gernot Gruber, *Mozart and Posterity*, trans. R. S. Furness (London: Quartet Books, 1991), 113, 145. In addition, Karen Painter’s “effort to establish a German musical culture through texts [on Mozart]” in the early nineteenth century makes almost no reference to biographically oriented writings between 1810 and 1828. See Karen Painter, “Mozart at Work: Biography and a Musical Aesthetic for the Emerging German Bourgeoisie,” *Musical Quarterly* 86 (2002): 186–235, at 188. Where Haydn biography in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century is concerned, Giuseppe Carpani’s *Le Haydine ovvero Lettere su la Vita et le Opere del celebre Maestro Giuseppe Haydn* (Milan: Boccinelli, 1812)—discussed below—is considered inferior to Griesinger and Dies: “not always a reliable source of biographical information,” it is “an exuberant, exaggerating, sprawling book, which, unlike those of Griesinger and Dies, soon assumes an existence of its own quite independent of its ostensible subject, Haydn.” See Vernon Gotwals, “The Earliest Biographies of Haydn,” *Musical Quarterly* 45 (1959): 439–59 (quotations at 452, 449).

his life and gain insight into his character not supplied elsewhere”; an anecdote “recounted so frequently” assumes biographical significance by “[warranting] the conclusion that it represents a typical image of the artist.”⁵ Since lines between fact, quasi fact, and fiction are often difficult to draw unambiguously in biographical writings, all types of work—short, long, serious, light—are usefully evaluated together for their capacity to style discourse on Haydn and Mozart irrespective of positions occupied on a fact-fiction continuum. By explaining the diverging and converging narratives associated with Haydn and Mozart in varied biographical work including fiction, I identify the second and third decades of the nineteenth century not as a protracted biographical cold spot but rather as a springboard and inspiration for future scholarly endeavor.

CONTRASTING AND CONVERGING NARRATIVES

Biographical narratives for Mozart and Haydn between 1811 and 1830 often diverged in one hermeneutic respect: Mozart was regarded as thoroughly immersed in music from beginning to end, born into it as an infant prodigy and dying in the act of writing it for the Requiem, encapsulating a unified life and oeuvre; in contrast, Haydn embraced a rags-to-riches, triumph-over-adversity story—poor at birth and in his youth but eventually feted as one of Western music’s greatest figures—with full-fledged life-work alignment at death potentially compromised by a perceived decline in compositional powers toward the end (such as in *The Seasons*). Such tropes were well established in biographical writings more generally, even by the early nineteenth century, and re-energized in discussions of Mozart and Haydn: artists whose “talent strives early and urgently for expression,” whose “inner life is bound up with his work[,] . . . creator and creation . . . irrevocably linked,” who “rises high from humble beginnings,” and who overcomes “obstacles put in the way of his chosen profession,” were

⁵See Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 11.

promoted from the sixteenth century onwards and rooted in ideas from antiquity and in myth.⁶ Mozart also seems sometimes to dictate terms for Haydn in the biographical arena. In the aforementioned book by John Parker, for example, where profiles of them appear one after the other,⁷ Mozart's indicates musical admiration for Haydn, but Mozart on the whole looms larger in Haydn's. (It is even acknowledged that Mozart had little time for acquainting himself with the music of others.⁸) Haydn's achievements and biographical significance are partly determined with reference to Mozart not vice versa; in short, Haydn needs Mozart more than Mozart needs Haydn. As we will see, narrative convergences in this period document intertwined, intersecting perceptions of the two composers.

Soon after Griesinger and Dies, several Haydn biographies articulated themes that were to be aired repeatedly in the next two decades. Joachim Le Breton, permanent secretary to the "Institut Impérial" music division into which Haydn had been inducted as an honorary member, gave an extended, biographically orientated speech to a public meeting in October 1810, publishing it the next year.⁹ While most is from Griesinger, and thus of little interest to German readers according to the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*,¹⁰ it represents Haydn both as a supreme musician in receipt of numerous international accolades and as a hardy individual overcoming the difficulties of youthful poverty, mistreatment at school, the resentment of other musicians, and a bad marriage, all without sacrificing innate positivity and a perennially good mood: "adversity had no influence on his amiable character: he is always Haydn." In addition, "his firmness and patience in adversity

attest a force and elevation of soul. . . . He was ever ready to show his benevolence and his gratitude. His modesty was conspicuous in the midst of his successful career."¹¹ Haydn's triumphs over adversity also received attention in Nicolas-Étienne Framery's biography, for which Pleyel was almost certainly a source.¹² Significant difficulties—with Johann Georg Reutter in his youth in Vienna, when (temporarily) resigning from Prince Esterházy's service, when his house burned down in Eisenstadt, when subjected to Florian Leopold Gassmann's malicious machinations—were all well and truly conquered.¹³ According to Framery, commitment to musical endeavours helped Haydn overcome the travails of life: lacking ability in languages at school, he paid students to complete his homework from money obtained playing at concerts; living in poverty in musician Spangler's attic, his musical genius was reawakened and propelled him forward as a composer; and performing the "Farewell" Symphony for Prince Esterházy convinced the tearful nobleman to plead for Haydn to remain in service.¹⁴

Giuseppe Carpani's and Stendhal's biographies a few years after Le Breton and Framery introduce further perspectives on Haydn.¹⁵ While Stendhal plagiarized Carpani extensively, much to the latter's consternation, he added, omitted, reordered, and modified materials as well, potentially mitigating the offence according to early nineteenth-century commentators.¹⁶

¹¹For the quoted materials, see the English translation of Le Breton's biography in *Monthly Magazine* 35 (1813): 225–31 at 229.

¹²See Nicolas-Étienne Framery, *Notice sur Joseph Haydn* (Paris: Barba, 1810). Pleyel looms large in a number of anecdotes, including on the rebuilding of Haydn's house in Eisenstadt following a fire, on the publication of Haydn's works, and on Haydn in London (26–34).

¹³*Ibid.*, 4–6, 16–22, 26–27, 35–38.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 3, 7–9, 16–22.

¹⁵Giuseppe Carpani, *Le Haydine* (1812); Marie-Henri Beyle (Stendhal), *Vies de Haydn, de Mozart et de Métastase* (Paris: P. Didot, 1814). Stendhal was first translated into English in 1817; for a modern translation, see *Lives of Haydn, Mozart and Metastasio*, trans. Richard N. Coe (London: Calder & Boyars, 1972).

¹⁶For early-nineteenth-century French and English commentaries on the plagiarism dispute, see *Revue encyclopédique: ou analyse raisonnée des productions les plus remarquables dans la littérature, les sciences et les arts*, vol. 4 (Paris: Baudouin, 1819), 572–73; *Harmonicon* 1 (1823): 124.

⁶*Ibid.*, 28, 131, 25, 30.

⁷John R. Parker, *A Musical Biography: Or, Sketches of the Lives and Writings of Eminent Musical Characters* (Boston: Stone & Fovell, 1824), 36–56 (Haydn), 57–85 (Mozart).

⁸*Ibid.*, 68.

⁹See Joachim Le Breton, "Notice historique sur la vie et les ouvrages de Joseph Haydn," in *L'esprit des journaux français et étrangers* (Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1811), vol. 2, 154–85. For the identification of Le Breton's secretarial duties, see *Notice des travaux de la classe des beaux-arts de l'Institut Impérial de France* (Paris: Firmin, 1812), 47.

¹⁰*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 13 (1811): col. 151.

Although standard biographical details and anecdotes are included and chronology sometimes followed, Carpani and Stendhal are less interested in communicating extended, conventionally organized information about Haydn's life than in discussing Haydn's music and aesthetic qualities. Haydn's spirit, a recurring topic, is deemed to comprise *inter alia* abundant energy and compellingly conveyed ideas, simplicity of melody, humor and cheerfulness, unity, and abundant invention and color.¹⁷ The closest relative to Carpani and Stendhal among Mozart biographies, then, is Ignaz Arnold's *Mozarts Geist* (1803),¹⁸ which follows the more orthodox Schlichtegroll and Niemetschek, just as Carpani and Stendhal succeed Griesinger and Dies.

The divergent upbringings of Haydn and Mozart identified by Carpani and Stendhal ultimately feed a rags-to-riches narrative for Haydn. Whereas Mozart was fortunate in his prodigious early years, especially receiving his expert father's tutelage, "the case was far different with poor Joseph, a waif of a chorister alone and unbefriended in Vienna, who could only get lessons by paying for them, and who had not a penny." But the lack of tutoring actually helped Haydn, we are told, encouraging and facilitating compositional originality. Moreover: "Poor, shivering with cold in his attic, with no fire in his hearth, studying into the small hours of the night, dropping with weariness, beside a broken-down harpsichord rapidly crumbling away to ruin at every corner, he was happy."¹⁹ Stendhal's plagiarism of Schlichtegroll via Théophile-Frédéric Winckler's *Notice Biographique sur Jean-Chrysostome-Wolfgang-Théophile Mozart* projects a Mozart totally immersed in music, as Schlichtegroll was the first seriously to advance this idea in the biographical arena.²⁰ Reviewers of Stendhal drew

attention to the different narratives coalescing around the composers. For one: "The natural effect of these tours [for Mozart in his youth] was that Mozart learned at the fountain head, whatever was worth knowing in music throughout the principal cities of Europe; and thus, while poor Haydn was doomed to struggle with difficulties at every step, and to acquire knowledge, sometimes by labour and sometimes by artifice, Mozart lived in a round of continual variety and pleasure."²¹ While Mozart lived and breathed music, then, Haydn had to overcome obstacles at every turn in pursuit of musical glory. For another reviewer:

In reading the letters on Haydn we think the principal interest arises from the difficulties he had to struggle against; the obstinate perseverance with which he overcame them; his promptness in seizing upon every advantage which accident threw in his way; and the gradual developement [*sic*] of his genius, by long-continued industry and steady application. In the history of Mozart, we find every thing the reverse of all this. He was born in a situation of life . . . where he had every advantage that instruction and emulation could give him; his mind, ardent and exalted, burst at once into maturity.²²

The same stories are accentuated in a summary of Stendhal's biographies: whereas Haydn was born "of very humble parents . . . and was in a state of extreme poverty till 1758" subsequently raising himself to the exalted status of an honorary doctor at the University of Oxford, Mozart's musical journey began "[when] only *three years* old . . . finding concords on the piano. . . . Entirely absorbed in music, this great man was a child in every other respect. His hands were so wedded to the piano, that he could use them for nothing else: at table, his wife carved for him."²³

Alexandre-Étienne Choron and Joseph-Marie Fayolle as well. For example, the list of Mozart's operatic works (Stendhal, *Haydn, Mozart, Metastasio*, trans. Coe, 181), divided into Italian then German works, is taken directly from Niemetschek, while the passages on Mozart admiring the likes of Porpora, Durante, Leo, and Handel and striking like a thunderbolt, and on the anticipated short-lived popularity of Martín y Soler's music, are taken from Choron and Fayolle, *Dictionnaire historique des musiciens artistes et amateurs, morts et vivant*, vol. 2 (Paris: Valade and Lenormant, 1810), 74–75.

²¹ *Quarterly Review* 18 (1817–18): 73–99, at 92.

²² *Edinburgh Monthly Review: January-June 1819* 1 (1819): 321–40, at 334.

²³ *Edinburgh Review* 65 (1820): 379–80.

¹⁷ See Carpani, *Le Haydine*, 98–101, 36–37, 108–17 (passim), 148–49; Stendhal, *Haydn, Mozart, Metastasio*, trans. Coe, 36–37, 50, 67–70, 102, 141.

¹⁸ Ignaz Ferdinand Cajetan Arnold, *Mozarts Geist: seine kurze Biographie und ästhetische Darstellung seiner Werke* (Erfurt: Henningschen Buchhandlung, 1803).

¹⁹ Carpani, *Le Haydine*, 25, 27; Stendhal, *Haydn, Mozart, Metastasio*, trans. Coe, 23, 24. (Quoted material in Coe's translations.)

²⁰ As in the plagiarism of Carpani for the Haydn biography, Stendhal in his Mozart biography expands, re-positions, and omits material from the Winckler source (Paris: J. J. Fuchs, 1801), incorporating information from Niemetschek, and

The contrasting biographical narratives for Haydn and Mozart appear time and again in short biographies and other literature. The *Monthly Magazine* (1811) laid Haydn's poverty on thick: after dismissal from the choir as a young man in Vienna, "he endured all the rigour of adverse fortune, finding it very difficult to earn even a bare subsistence." The rags-to-riches story is then captured in a single sentence: "In his youth he suffered great hardships: but notwithstanding the indigence by which he was depressed, he raised himself to eminence by following the impulse of his soaring genius."²⁴ After emphasizing Haydn's early struggles ("[thousands] would have sunk under such hardships"), the *Encyclopædia Perthensis* moved straight on to Haydn's successes in England, thereby providing a skeletal version of the usual narrative.²⁵ Ernst Ludwig Gerber, whose article for the *Neues historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler* was written in extended chunks before and after Haydn's death and came out in 1812, included colorful details of Haydn's extreme early poverty and hardship such as breath freezing on bedclothes in the garret and water freezing between being fetched and arriving home; Gerber later documented Haydn's awards and markers of esteem in considerable detail, ending the article with a hyperbolic list of nearly a dozen of them.²⁶ A common version of the rags-to-riches tale (already aired in Framery, Carpani, and Stendhal) sees Haydn achieving success as a direct result of hardships endured: "he rejoiced that he had been compelled, by his situation and circumstances, to study without an instructor" thus accomplishing objectives through "his own exertion and perseverance"; his powers of invention were unshackled by having to teach himself; and his talents were nurtured by having to cope with trials and tribulations.²⁷

²⁴*Monthly Magazine* 32/2 (1811): 244, 245.

²⁵*Encyclopædia Perthensis; or Universal Dictionary of the Arts, Sciences, Literature &c*, vol. 23 (Edinburgh: James Brown, 1816), 252.

²⁶Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Neues historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1812–14), vol. 2 (1812), cols. 535–605, at 539, 545–51, 604.

²⁷Francis Nicholson, *The Practice of Drawing and Painting Landscape from Nature in Water Colours* (London: Booth and Clay, 1820), 42 and, for a similar argument, Sholto

The idea of Mozart immersed in music from beginning to end was attributable to two seemingly immovable hermeneutic pillars: prodigiousness in the earliest years, solidified biographically by Schlichtegroll following discussion during Mozart's lifetime; and death in musical action in the Requiem, set in motion by Constanze and in stone by Niemetschek and Johann Friedrich Rochlitz.²⁸ Mozart lived only for music, we are told, "[imbibing] harmony with his mother's milk, and [inhaling] it from the very atmosphere he breathed," and dedicating himself so fully to his art that "his fingers had assumed such a shape [through constant practice] that he could scarcely make use of them in the daily offices of life."²⁹ He was "wholly a musician. Even in his earliest years no pastime had ever any interest for him in which music was not introduced. . . . [Existing] only for his art, he scarcely suffered even the visible approach of death to withdraw him for a moment from his beloved studies."³⁰ Furthermore: "When an idea struck him, nothing could divert him from his occupation. He would compose in the midst of friends, and passed whole nights in the study of his art. . . . His soul [when playing the piano] . . . rose above all the weaknesses of his nature, and his whole attention seemed rapt in the sole object for which he was born, *the harmony of sounds*."³¹ For one critic, greater genius was revealed in Mozart's "entire devotion to the pursuit" of music than in his actual playing.³² He was "nursed in good music" by his father

and Reuben Percy, *The Percy Anecdotes: Original and Select*, 20 vols. (London: J. Cumberland, 1826), vol. 17, 72; *Euterpeiad* (ed. John R. Parker) 3 (1822): 123; review of Grégoire Orloff, *Essai sur l'histoire de la musique en Italie* (Paris: Dufart, 1822) in *Monthly Review*, vol. 103 (London: Porter, 1824), 466–72, at 468.

²⁸For translation and extended contextualization of the latter, see Maynard Solomon, "The Rochlitz Anecdotes: Issues of Authenticity in Early Mozart Biography," in *Mozart Studies*, ed. Cliff Eisen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 1–59.

²⁹Felix Joseph Lipowsky, *Baierisches Musik-Lexikon* (Munich: J. Giel, 1811), 221; *Euterpeiad* 1 (1821): 95; J. B. Depping, *Evening Entertainments; or Delineations of the Manners and Customs of Various Nations* (Philadelphia: David Hogan, 1812), 196.

³⁰George Lillie Craik, *The Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties* (London: Charles Knight, 1830), 76.

³¹John Sainsbury, *A Dictionary of Musicians from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time* (London: Sainsbury, 1824), vol. 2, 186–99, at 194, 197 (italics in original).

³²*Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* 9 (1827): 454.

and sister; at the end of life, and as a “man of superior genius,” he died appropriately “celebrating his own obsequies.”³³ A number of musically immersive ingredients are included in Leopold Chimani’s biographical recipe: once he had begun to learn music at age three, Mozart “lost all taste for the usual distractions and games of childhood, and his whole soul was suffused only with music”; he “lives only in art” in the title of one section of the profile; the Requiem legend is related, with Mozart writing it for himself (as usual); and “Music was so much the main business of his life that in the true sense of the word he never did anything that was not directly or indirectly related to it.”³⁴ According to another German writer, the infant Mozart demonstrated talent for mathematics and especially arithmetic, but soon had his whole soul seized and filled by music.³⁵ Short biographical sketches emphasized Mozart’s immersion in music at the beginning and (through the Requiem legend) at the end.³⁶ A paragraph on his “entire [absorption]” in music, as an introduction to the anecdote “Mozart’s Requiem,” supports the unification of life, death, and art in the famous story. In addition, “it was only by incessant application to his favourite study, that he prevented his spirits sinking totally under the fears of approaching dissolution.”³⁷ With life and art in complete

alignment, *La clemenza di Tito* (September 1791) as well as the Requiem pointed to impending death: accompanimental material “visibly betrays the wane of the author’s physical strength”; and melodic simplicity and melancholy “bespeaks further the decline of mental energy.” In short, *Tito* saw Mozart “preparing for his reluctant departure on that mysterious journey from which there is no return.”³⁸ Similarly, Mozart’s musical obsessions worried Constanze before the Requiem: friends “pretended to surprise him, . . . but he did not lay aside his pen . . . he uttered a few inconsequential words, and went on with his writing.”³⁹ The coming together of music and death in the Requiem accrued a new Mozartian soundtrack in D. Thompson’s contrafactum for the popular duet “Bei Männern welche Liebe fühlen” from *Die Zauberflöte*: “In song he clos’d life’s fleeting day, / Like the swan when death is nigh, / His Requiem was his parting lay, / Its closing strains his latest [i.e., last] sigh!”⁴⁰

With stories of Mozart’s musically immersive life disseminated before 1810 (and solidified thereafter) from sources such as Schlichtegroll, Niemetschek, Rochlitz, and others, biographical tales about Haydn were susceptible to Mozartian influence. Musical experiences accentuated at the very beginning and end of Haydn’s life forged connections with better-known stories of the infant and dying Mozart. An account of Mozart’s death, via the Requiem legend, is followed immediately by one of Haydn’s, whose rendition of the Emperor hymn as “the song of the swan” saw Haydn to all intents and purposes dying in music like Mozart.⁴¹ An anecdote about Haydn’s youthful musical endeavors next to one on Mozart’s established Haydn’s credentials as a gifted infant through initial reference to

³³*The Mirror of Taste and Dramatic Censor*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: Barton, 1811), 477; Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein, *Germany* (trans. from the French), 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1813), II, 408.

³⁴Leopold Chimani, *Vaterländische Merkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 6 (Vienna: Schulbücher, 1819), 135–46 (quotations at 137, 138, 144).

³⁵Karl Christian Friedrich Krause, *Darstellungen aus der Geschichte der Musik nebst vorbereitenden Lehren aus der Theorie der Musik* (Göttingen: Dieterich’schen Buchhandlung, 1827), 207.

³⁶*Conversations-Lexikon, oder encyclopädisches Handwörterbuch für gebildete Stände*, vol. 6 (Stuttgart: Macklot, 1817), 563–68; *Biographie étrangère*, vol. 1 (Paris: Alexis Eymery, 1819), 463–64 (two thirds devoted to the Requiem legend); *Time’s Telescope for 1821* (London: Sherwood, 1821), 8–11, also given in *The London Magazine*, vol. 3 (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1821), 210–11; *Dictionnaire historique, critique et bibliographique*, vol. 20 (Paris: Ménard et Desenne, 1822), 54–56 (over two thirds on childhood exploits and the Requiem legend).

³⁷John Seward, *The Spirit of Anecdote and Wit*, vol. 2 (London: Walker, 1823), 344–46. See also *Percy Anecdotes*, vol. 11, 106–08.

³⁸*The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics for January 1814*, ed. Rudolf Ackermann, vol. 11 (London, 1814), 73–74.

³⁹*Ladies’ Literary Cabinet*, new series vol. 1 (New York: Samuel Huestis, 1821), 182.

⁴⁰“Song to the Memory of Mozart Addressed to the Eolian Harp: Duetto Written by D. Thompson” (Philadelphia: G. Willig, 1818).

⁴¹Samuel Dobree, *The Book of Death* (London: Bulmer, 1819), 338–39, 340–42. For the Haydn story, see also *Percy Anecdotes*, vol. 17, 38–42.

Mozart's prodigiousness.⁴² And Haydn, as well as Mozart, received attention for "precocity" and "remarkable prematurity."⁴³ For Carpani (1812), in gushing mood, Haydn must have come into being in a musical context:

Physicists tell us that the disposition of the mind at the time of conception influences more than anything else the character of the offspring. Granting this, I can find no better circumstances for producing a Haydn than an evening in August (for it was precisely in this month that our Haydn was conceived), . . . a good sonata on the harp . . . and then followed what God has commanded for the hope and comfort of good married couples. . . . If Haydns are not formed this way, I do not know how else it can come about.⁴⁴

Invoking for Haydn's death a Requiem-like link to the other world, Choron and Fayolle explained: "As a pure sound emanated from the lyre, his soul exhaled in the heavens."⁴⁵

The Creation and Requiem assumed common narratological cause as late works, albeit one finished eleven years before death in Haydn's case. A report of a universally praised performance of *The Creation* in 1814 struck a Requiemesque tone by stressing Haydn's poor health and inspired compositional activity right to the end. How is it possible, the correspondent asked, for a man whose body was already failing to write a work with such powerful harmonies, gracefulness, and melodic beauty? (There is no evidence that Haydn's health was in fact on the wane in the late 1790s.) "Through this work of art," he continued, "Haydn has once again confirmed the truth that there are individuals who are completely permeated by the divine nature of their art, whose spirit never ages and strives to achieve with incessant progression ever higher goals, to the last breath of their earthly life."⁴⁶

⁴²See *Percy Anecdotes*, vol. 3 (London: T. Boys, 1826), 56–57, 57–59. The Haydn anecdote is also given in *Euterpeiad 3* (1822): 76.

⁴³Patrick Fraser Tytler, *Life of James Crichton of Cluny Commonly Called Admirable Crichton* (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne, 1819), 210.

⁴⁴Translation from Gotwals, "The Earliest Biographies of Haydn," 449–50.

⁴⁵*Dictionnaire historique*, vol. 1, 319–23, at 322. Also given in Grégoire Orloff, *Essai sur l'histoire de la musique en Italie* (Paris: Dufart, 1822), 148.

⁴⁶"Nachrichten: Hildburghausen," *AmZ* 16 (1814): col. 320.

There is a similarly Mozartian ring to Haydn notating musical ideas "amidst company" and unifying life, work, and subject in *The Creation*: "It is this enthusiasm which inconceivably fills the mind of genius in all great and solemn operations . . . [and] whenever a great and continued exertion of the soul must be employed. It was experienced . . . by Haydn, when employed in his 'Creation,' earnestly addressed the Creator ere he struck his instrument. In moments like these, man becomes a perfect unity—one thought and one act, abstracted from all other thoughts and all other acts."⁴⁷ A performance of *The Creation* after the Requiem at the Edinburgh Music Festival in 1819 serendipitously achieved a Romantic synthesis of work and nature to complement the analogous (and well-known) synthesis of life, work, topic, and commemoration in the Requiem.⁴⁸ The "solemn and affecting strains" of the Requiem led the reviewer to conclude—in the usual biographically inflected fashion—that there "is something about this, the dying work of its immortal author, that is singularly touching." *The Creation* is then described in simultaneously ominous and uplifting tones long associated with Requiem criticism:

This great work opens with a symphony of instruments, intended as a representation of chaos. . . . And here, at the hazard of being thought fanciful, we will notice a very singular effect, which was produced by a very common cause. While the audience were listening, in the deepest silence, to those sublime and appalling bursts of sound, rendered more impressive by the somber and majestic appearance of the hall in which they sat, the place suddenly became dark, and a violent storm of wind and rain, beating against the large windows, lent a misty horror to the scene, and, mingling in a sort of wild harmony with the sounds from the orchestra, produced an effect which was felt by the whole assembly. It is not less singular, that, with the temporary suspense

⁴⁷Isaac Disraeli, *The Literary Character Illustrated by the History of Men of Genius, Drawn from Their Own Feelings and Confessions* (New York: James Eastburn, 1818), 137, 154–55.

⁴⁸The Requiem had already become, by 1819, the work of choice at memorial services for musicians and nonmusicians; see Simon P. Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem: Reception, Work, Completion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 86.

of the storm, the character of the music changed, by almost imperceptible degrees, the discords became less harsh, and the transitions less abrupt.⁴⁹

Haydn, like Mozart in the Requiem, to all intents and purposes dies in musical action when his final public appearance at the Vienna University performance of *The Creation* on 27 March 1808 is incorrectly identified as taking place around two (rather than fourteen) months before his death. The error was not made by Griesinger, Dies, or Carpani, but appeared in Le Breton's Haydn lecture published in 1811: overwhelmed by the audience reaction and declaring "This is more than I have ever felt—let me die now, and be received among the blessed in another world," Haydn left his audience with "a presentiment, that sorrow would be soon mingled with their joy. It was indeed but too just; on the 31st of May, just two months and a half afterwards, Haydn expired."⁵⁰ Anecdotes on "Haydn's Tod" published in the *Berliner Abendblätter* (1811) intensified connections between *The Creation* performance and Haydn's death: Haydn not only now expressed the desire to die after the ovation from the audience, but actually lost consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) on arriving home, passing away two and a half months later.⁵¹ Compressing *The Creation* performance and Haydn's end into a ten-week period, the events implicitly brought together by a stated desire for death at the former, continued for the remainder of the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, in publications as geographically and topically diverse as *The Edinburgh Encyclopædia* (1817, 1830), the *Galérie historique* (1819), *The Works of the Rev. Charles Buck* (1822), the *Biographie nouvelle* (1823), and the *Choix d'anecdotes anciennes et modernes* (1828).⁵² Writing to *The*

Harmonicon (1825) to correct an earlier error about a final public appearance for Haydn in 1805, Fayolle introduced one of his own by dating the *Creation* rendition at 27 March 1809, "which preceded Haydn's death by exactly two months."⁵³ Haydn in receipt of his just desserts from an adoring public at a performance of his single greatest work, desiring his final breath and taking it only weeks later, resonates with (the story goes) Mozart's seamless merging of life and work in a transcendent Requiem written in the run-up to his death. And amplifications of the *Creation* narrative, including Fayolle's "moral electricity communicated . . . to every soul present" as Haydn arrived at the concert,⁵⁴ and the *Berliner Abendblätter's* Haydn collapsing at home after the performance, parallel Rochlitz's dramatization of the Requiem story passed down to him by Niemetschek.⁵⁵ Haydn's (supposed) final acts, as a musically absorbing experience, gravitate toward Mozart's famous (and also supposed) final acts, promoting a narrative attractive to romantic sensibilities.

ANECDOTES AND FICTION

As has already become clear, anecdotes, and anecdotal information play important roles in the establishment of early narratives about Haydn's and Mozart's lives and music, as well as in biographical writings more generally.⁵⁶ For one writer, quoting Jonathan Swift: "Anecdotes correspond in literature with the sauces, the savoury dishes, and the sweetmeats of a splendid banquet."⁵⁷ Anecdotes are often thought to bring us closer to Haydn or Mozart, via individuals who had encountered them personally or were able to report

⁴⁹*The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany: A New Series of The Scots Magazine, Jan-June 1819*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1819), 471, 472.

⁵⁰English translation from *Monthly Magazine*, vol. 35, 231.

⁵¹*Berliner Abendblätter* (1811), given in *Berliner Abendblätter*, ed. Heinrich von Kleist (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1959), 87–88, 91–92, 96.

⁵²*The Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, ed. David Brewster, vol. 10 (New York, 1817), part 1, 273, and *The Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, ed. Brewster, vol. 10 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1830), 664; *Galérie historique de contemporains*, vol. 5 (Brussels: Wahlen, 1819), 286; *The Works of the Rev.*

Charles Buck, vol. 6 (Philadelphia: W. W. Woodward, 1822), 90–91, also in George Colman, *The Circle of Anecdote and Wit* (London: J. Williams, 1826), 55–56; *Biographie nouvelle des contemporains*, ed. A. V. Arnault et al., vol. 9 (Paris: Emilie Babeuf, 1823), 90; Antoine Bailly, *Choix d'anecdotes anciennes et modernes recueillies des meilleurs auteurs* (Paris: Roret, 1828), vol. 3, 47–48.

⁵³[Fayolle, signed letter], "Haydn's Last Appearance in Public," *Harmonicon* 3 (1825): 129.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵On Rochlitz's intensification process, see Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 16–18.

⁵⁶On the latter, see Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, 11.

⁵⁷See Seward, *Spirit of Anecdote and Wit*, vol. 2 (title page).

their words, even at many times removed. (No doubt this perspective partially accounted for the enduring popularity of Rochlitz's anecdotes; he claimed to have obtained them directly from Mozart and those close to him.) As Edward Holmes explains, desiring the kind of small, personal details conveyed in anecdotes: "We do not wish to know the great performances of great men, we wish to know their *little* actions, how they walked, looked and spoke, their crooked habits and peculiarities; and to know that Mozart had a restless and nervous fidgetiness in his hands and feet, and seldom sat without some motion of them, makes him more present to us than the most laboured picture."⁵⁸ Thus, the anecdotes about Mozart in Michael Kelly's *Reminiscences* (1826), relating to time spent as a singer in Vienna in the 1780s when creating the roles of Don Basilio and Don Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro*, are widely reproduced; letters to Padre Martini (who met the Mozarts during their Italian trips) are quoted for the nuggets of information conveyed; and the deaths of a Leipzig orchestral musician Carl Gottlieb Berger in 1812 and the first Tamino, Benedikt Schack, in 1826 prompt short accounts of their experiences with Mozart.⁵⁹

Just as frequently, though, editors and publishers did not appear unduly concerned about the truth-value of their printed anecdotes. They were tacitly acknowledged to inhabit, it seems, the kind of grey area between fact and fiction happily accommodated by one critic: "we might fairly insist on a rational deduction from the wonders recorded of Mozart; but . . . will rather run the risk of acquiescing at a probable exaggeration, than of committing an injustice."⁶⁰ A version of the Rochlitz-inspired Requiem story, for example, with the work completed by Mozart shortly before he died, is related numerous times

long after the protracted, well-publicized *Requiem-Streit* (Requiem Conflict) had proven it definitively false; the legendary story needed to be retained, then, even if known to be untrue.⁶¹ Exaggerations to existing stories (including Rochlitz's on the Requiem relative to Niemetschek's) highlight the same grey area. An adaptation of Griesinger's and Dies's accounts of the genesis of Haydn's first, now-lost, opera, *Der krumme Teufel*, to a libretto by Joseph von Kurz fits into this category: Dies's "offensive remarks in the text" that led to the opera's withdrawal became "a nobleman . . . [who] perceived he was ridiculed, under the name of the Devil on Two Sticks, and caused the piece to be prohibited," thereby personalizing the controversy; a swimmer swimming away from the waves in Griesinger and Dies morphed into a storm forcefully illustrated by Haydn running with both hands from the top to the bottom of the keyboard; and Haydn's recollection of events to Griesinger and Dies grew into him "laughing during the whole of the passage" across the English Channel on the way to London as he remembered the nautical storm.⁶² Similarly, the first biographers' descriptions of a French army captain visiting Haydn shortly before the composer's death and performing a Haydn aria became a daily guard of honor with morning renditions of arias from several French musicians.⁶³

From time to time, anecdotes develop into full-fledged fiction. The Requiem legend—with ominous commissioner and tortured composer—directly inspired works such as Alexander Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri* (1830) and Adolph von Schaden's *Mozarts Tod* (1825) as well as poems by Rufus Dawes (1826), Felicia Hemans

⁶¹See Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 22–24.

⁶²For Griesinger's and Dies's accounts, see *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, 14–15, 97–98. For the adaptation, "Haydn and 'The Devil on Two Sticks,'" see *The Pocket Magazine of Classic and Polite Literature*, vol. 1 (London: John Arliss, 1818), 26–28. This anecdote is also given in William Oxberry, *The Flowers of Literature; Consisting of Selections from Biography, Poetry and Romance* (2nd edn., London: Thomas Tegg, 1824), vol. 3, 102–03.

⁶³See Chevalier C. L. Cadet de Gassicourt, *Voyage en Autriche, en Moravie et en Bavière fait à la suite de l'armée française, pendant la campagne de 1809* (Paris: Huillier, 1818), 260–61. For the Griesinger and Dies references, see *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, 51, 193.

⁵⁸Edward Holmes, *A Ramble among the Musicians of Germany* (London: Whittaker, Treacher, & Co., 1828), 169.

⁵⁹For the Mozart anecdotes from Michael Kelly in reviews of his *Reminiscences*, see, for example, *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* 7 (1825): 475–98; *The Museum of Foreign Literature, Science and Art*, vol. 8 (Philadelphia: E. Littell, 1826), 145–56; *Eclectic Review* 27 (1827): 114–21. The Martini letters are given in *AmZ* 22 (1820): cols. 649–55, 665–67. For Berger and Schack, see *AmZ* 14 (1812): col. 106 and *AmZ* 29 (1827): cols. 519–21.

⁶⁰*Euterpeiad* 1 (1821): 95.

(1828), and others.⁶⁴ A supposed story (now known to be apocryphal) of Haydn receiving an urgent request to write a minuet for the wedding of a butcher's daughter and getting an ox from the butcher as a thank you in return also provided material for fictional expansion as a "comedy-anecdote in one act" by Jules Joseph Gabriel and Alexis Jacques Marie Wafflard.⁶⁵ In *Haydn, ou le menuet du bœuf*, which premiered at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris on 12 November 1812, our protagonist is an internationally acclaimed composer eliciting praise in London and Italy; *The Creation*—on which he is now working—will crown his reputation. Furthermore, Haydn is exceedingly honest, down-to-earth and kind, in both musical and non-musical matters: he assists his goddaughter and intended husband to marry, by seeking permission from Prince Esterházy; he writes the eponymous minuet for the poor but eager butcher Fritz and is impressed by Fritz's passion for music; and he donates the ox ultimately gifted him by Fritz to the father of his impoverished student, Peters. Haydn is the modest, generous and decent man bequeathed to the biographical tradition by Griesinger and Dies; his affinity with the poor, and desire to help them, reflects his own humble upbringings and—with high professional status duly recognized—his journey from rags to riches. The work of fiction, then, harmonizes with the early biographical portrayal of Haydn as a great man as well as great musician. And life and works come together too, as in an ideal biographical scenario: the "menuet du bœuf" is so named by Haydn after events in the drama (the ceremonial procession toward him of musicians, boys, girls—plus decorated ox—performing the minuet); the gratitude of Fritz and the villagers gives tangible voice to the esteem in which Haydn is held; and a musical work, the minuet, facilitates a life-changing event (for Peters's father whose fortunes are transformed by the acquisition of the ox). Reviews of the vaudeville were mixed.⁶⁶ But the

anecdote continued to be told for more than a decade and spawned a well-received one-act Singspiel *Die Ochsenmenuette* in 1824 featuring Haydn's music arranged by Ignaz von Seyfried.⁶⁷ Also, in a rare example of Mozart following Haydn in the biographical arena not vice versa, it probably inspired an anecdote about Mozart writing a minuet quickly for a beggar and giving it to him along with a note for the publisher to whom it was to be taken indicating redemption for a payment.⁶⁸ Elsewhere, Mozart simply replaced Haydn in a variation of the original anecdote, writing a waltz in one hour for a butcher's wedding, "the celebrated oxen-waltz," and in so doing cleared debts with the butcher.⁶⁹ A story promoting Haydn's generosity and swift composition of a short piece—on this occasion for a ship captain heading to Calcutta from London in urgent need of a march to "enliven" his crew—also may have taken inspiration from the "Menuet du bœuf" anecdote.⁷⁰

A fluid relationship between biography and fiction, via anecdotal information, characterized Mozart as well as Haydn reception, with *Don Giovanni* standing out in this respect like the Requiem. One anecdote wove together Mozart's rapid composition of the *Don Giovanni* overture with the Requiem story, connected by a paragraph in which Mozart was identified as succumbing

ou Journal des sciences, des lettres et des arts, ed. A. L. Millin, vol. 6 (Paris: J. B. Sajou, 1812), 175; *Mercure de France* 53 (1812): 468–69; *Mémorial dramatique* 7 (Paris: Locquet, 1813): 114–15; *Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser* 6 (1812): 1160.

⁶⁷For the anecdote, see *The Power of Music, in which is shown the effects it has on man and animals* (London: J. Harris, 1814), 97–99; *Euterpeiad* 1 (1821): 75; *The Portfolio: Comprising the Flowers of Literature*, vol. 4 (London: William Charlton Wright, 1825), 61. On *Die Ochsenmenuette*, see *AmZ* 26 (1824): col. 41.

⁶⁸See *Percy Anecdotes*, vol. 1 (London: T. Boys, 1826), 167; also given in *The Humourist: A Collection of Entertaining Tales, Anecdotes, Repartees, Witty Sayings, Epigrams, bon mots, jeu d'esprits*, vol. 2 (London: J. Robins, 1822), 30. See also George Ramsay, *The Encyclopedia of Anecdotes Illustrative of Character and Events* (London: William Sams, 1828), 76–77.

⁶⁹See *The New York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette*, vol. 7 (New York, 1829–30), 149; also in *The Free Enquirer*, series 2, vol. 2 (1829–30; rpt., New York: Greenwood, 1969), 43.

⁷⁰Given in Charles Baldwin, *A Universal Biographical Dictionary* (Richmond, VA: Normand White, 1826), 234. Alternatively, this story may have adapted one from Dies (*Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, 149–50).

⁶⁴See Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 24–27.

⁶⁵For the libretto, see Jules Joseph Gabriel de Lurieu and Alexis Jacques Marie Wafflard, *Haydn, ou le menuet du bœuf, comédie-anecdote en un acte; mêlée de vaudeville* (Paris: Maugeret, 1812).

⁶⁶See *Journal des arts, des sciences et de la littérature*, vol. 11 (Paris: Porthmann, 1812), 217–19; *Magasin encyclopédique*,

quickly to ill health;⁷¹ its existence no doubt reflected a desire at that time for easily digestible biographical information on two of Mozart's most popular works. And the tastiness of the anecdote (*à la* Swift) is also apparent: "We ought . . . to say that some very sagacious critics have discovered the passages in the composition where Mozart dropt asleep [when writing the *Don Giovanni* overture in a single night], and those where he was suddenly awakened."⁷² E. T. A. Hoffmann, whose career as critic and storywriter traversed fact-fiction lines, embraced anecdotes and sought meaning in them. For example, the criticism of Mozart writing "too many notes," famously attributed to Emperor Joseph II in response to *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, reveals a misunderstanding of the unified whole, whereby "very dissimilar figures must often be given to widely separated instruments in order to achieve a *single* objective."⁷³ On a *Don Giovanni* anecdote specifically, Hoffmann affirmed Mozart's immersion in music via a cunning bait and switch: dismissing as "prosaically absurd" the story of Mozart composing the overture to *Don Giovanni* at the very last minute, Hoffmann replaced it with one about Mozart carrying it around "complete in his mind in all its wonderfully distinctive detail, just as if it had been cast in a perfect mould." Unshakeable belief in the intertwined nature of Mozart's life and music, where he composed in effect at all times, enabled Hoffmann confidently to override one configuration of biographical "facts" (Mozart composing the overture incredibly rapidly) with another ("teasing his friends" about its incomplete rather than just unwritten status).⁷⁴

Hoffmann moved into unambiguous fictional territory with his story "Don Juan: Eine fabelhafte Begebenheit, die sich mit einem reisendem

Enthusiasten zugetragen" (Don Juan: A Fabulous Incident which Befell a Travelling Enthusiast). The narrator, discovering a direct passage between his hotel room and a private box at a provincial theater, attends a performance of *Don Giovanni* at which the singer of Donna Anna pays him an unexpected visit. The music and the encounters with Donna Anna are overwhelming: "In Donna Anna's scene [in act II; "Non mi dir"] I felt myself enveloped by a soft warm breath [the same description as for her earlier presence in the box]; its intoxicating spirit passed over me and I trembled with bliss. My eyes closed involuntarily and a burning kiss seemed to be imprinted on my lips. But the kiss was a long-held note of eternal passionate longing."⁷⁵ Profoundly affected by her role at that evening's performance, the Donna Anna singer died at 2 a.m., coinciding exactly with the moment when the narrator, who had returned to his box to contemplate the operatic masterpiece in a deserted theater, felt a "warm electrifying breath" and heard the "floating tones of an ethereal orchestra" accompany Anna's performance of "Non mi dir."⁷⁶ Thus, life and art for the narrator are seamlessly merged: overcome by Donna Anna on- and offstage, he experiences her life, death, and music simultaneously. And she stands as proxy for Mozart's association with the Requiem, deeply affected by the task at hand and dying in wondrous musical action. An ideal of biographical endeavor—the unification of music and life—feeds a well-established notion of Mozart as completely immersed in music.

Ultimately, then, fictional and ostensibly "factual" writings (accepting murky areas between the two) support similar biographical narratives and agendas. While dramatizations of Haydn's and Mozart's lives and musical outputs in anecdotes from popular publications and in fiction naturally would have striven for commercial appeal, they also brought prevailing opinions and interpretations to life for potentially large musical and non-musical audiences

⁷¹See John McDiarmid, *Scrap Book; a Collection of Amusing and Striking Pieces, in Prose and Verse* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1821), 175–77. It also appears in Oxberry, *The Flowers of Literature*, vol. 1, 213–15, and John Pierpont, *The America First Class Book; or, Exercise in Reading and Recitation* (Boston: William B. Fowle, 1823), 218–20.

⁷²McDiarmid, *Scrap Book* (1821): 175–76.

⁷³Given in E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Musical Writings*, ed. David Charlton, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 445.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 105–06.

⁷⁵The story was first published in *AmZ* 15 (1813); for a translation, see R. Murray Shafer, *E. T. A. Hoffmann and Music* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 63–73.

⁷⁶Quotes from Shafer, *Hoffmann and Music*, 67, 72–73.

attentive to the composers' relevance—individually and collectively—in a new era.

NISSEN'S *BIOGRAPHIE W. A. MOZART'S*
AND BEYOND

The end of our two decades saw the publication of a huge biography initiated by Constanze Mozart's second husband, Georg von Nissen, and completed by Constanze and an associate, Johann Heinrich Feuerstein, after Nissen's death. It is problematic for modern readers, who cite chaotic organization and editorial inconsistency, extensive plagiarism of earlier critical and biographical materials, and selective use of available primary sources.⁷⁷ For Maynard Solomon, the transgressions of the Nissen team "add up to an editorial ineptitude unsurpassed in biographical annals."⁷⁸ There were mitigating circumstances, irrespective of our assessment of the final product: Nissen's death in 1826 forced Constanze to take control of the project while dealing (presumably) with the practical and emotional turmoil of losing her second husband. And she probably had to work on a tight timeframe too: the trailing of the biography, and pre-publication advertisements mentioning a subscription scheme, began in 1827.⁷⁹ Whatever the shortcomings, the authors themselves knew where the principal value and importance lay for early-nineteenth-century readers: in the several hundred previously unpublished letters principally from Mozart and father Leopold. The volume's subtitle draws attention to the "original

letters" (*Originalbriefen*) and the preface extols their virtues at length; those dating from 1777 onwards—the start of an extended tour of central Germany and France—are considered particularly valuable.⁸⁰ Family letters subsequently dominate large swathes of the volume, including the trips to Italy in 1769–73, Munich in 1774–75 and 1780–81, and Germany and France in 1777–79, which are described almost entirely through them.⁸¹ Before printing the latter, Nissen explains: "Here begins, so to speak, an autobiography."⁸² Breitkopf & Härtel also promoted the letters in advance of publication.⁸³

Above all, Nissen's book would have been unthinkable without the interest in Mozart generated *inter alia* by the biographical work of the previous two decades. For Edward Holmes, future Mozart biographer and author of the most important English-language review, the "great charm" of Nissen "is that it in a manner introduces us to the personal acquaintance of one [Mozart] who has communicated to thousands some of the deepest and most exquisite emotions of which their nature is capable."⁸⁴ In the biographical arena, it was principally the short accounts, stories, anecdotes, and sketches written and disseminated in the previous twenty years, offering rich, enticing interpretations that cultivated the desire for that "personal acquaintance."

The classic narrative for Mozart, firmly embedded in the biographical tradition during our period (even if present before then), also influenced later landmark publications. Otto Jahn (1856) in effect dismissed all work between Niemetschek and Nissen in the introduction to

⁷⁷Georg Nikolaus von Nissen, *Biographie W. A. Mozart's, nach Originalbriefen, Sammlungen alles über ihn Geschriebenen, mit vielen neuen Beylagen, Steindrücken, Musikblättern und einem Facsimile* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1828), and *Anhang zu Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Biographie* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1828). For modern criticisms, see, for example, Ruth Halliwell, *The Mozart Family: Four Lives in a Social Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 613–28, especially 619–28; Solomon, "Rochlitz Anecdotes," 49–55; William Stafford, *The Mozart Myths: A Critical Reassessment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 20–23.

⁷⁸Solomon, "Rochlitz Anecdotes," 51.

⁷⁹See *AmZ* 29 (1827): col. 521; *Allgemeine Musikzeitung zur Beförderung der theoretischen und praktische Tonkunst* (Offenbach, 1827), 327; M. F. J. Fétis, *Revue musicale*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1828), 572–75; *Harmonicon 1828, Part the First* (London: Samuel Leigh, 1828), 139.

⁸⁰Nissen, *Biographie*, xiii–xxiv, at xvi.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 156–249, 251–88, 293–413, 416–33.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 293.

⁸³See advertisements in *Harmonicon 1828*, 139; Fétis, *Revue musicale* 3 (1828): 574. For positive reviews and serializations of Nissen focusing on the importance of the letters, see *Cäcilia*, vol. 10 (Mainz: Schott, 1829), 225–37, 277–307; *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 6 (1829): 108–11, 116–20, 121–24, 129–34, 137–40, 145–47, 153–57, 161–62, 177–82; *Berliner Conversations-Blatt für Poesie, Literatur und Kritik*, ed. Fr. Förster and W. Häring, vol. 3 (Berlin: Schlesingerschen Buch- und Musikhandlung, 1829), 337–39, 341–43, 345–47, 349–52; *Harmonicon* (1830): 314–15, 362–64, 449–51.

⁸⁴*Foreign Quarterly Review* 4 (1829): 404–37 (quotation at 437). This review was widely reproduced in the English press.

W. A. Mozart,⁸⁵ but simultaneously provided the most august and venerable nineteenth-century outing for the absorption-in-music story, located in the reciprocity between life and works. The indivisibility of man and musician for Jahn captures a deep process of life experiences expressed in and through music: “The artist . . . can only give what is in him and what he has himself experienced.”⁸⁶ Thus, the Requiem, as “the truest and most genuine expression of his nature as an artist,” brings together life and music by fusing “the innermost spirit of its author” with unified emotional, religious, and artistic content.⁸⁷ And the “Haydn” string quartets are “the clear and perfect expression of Mozart’s nature” precisely on account of life experience: “nothing less is to be expected from a work upon which he put forth all his powers in order to accomplish something that would redound to his master Haydn’s honour as well as his own.”⁸⁸ For Mozart biographer Alexandre Oulibicheff (1843) too, the musical immersion narrative helped to reconcile a very busy schedule and extraordinary productivity: “the solution of the riddle lies in the fact, that by day and by night, morning and evening, at the table or in the carriage, alone or in company, over the social glass or during the pain of teaching the scale, he still composed and composed all the time.”⁸⁹ Quietly residing behind interpretations and assumptions of this kind is the voluminous hermeneutic work carried out between 1811 and 1828. As with Haydn, who would receive his own monumental life

⁸⁵See Otto Jahn, *W. A. Mozart* (1856), as given in *Life of Mozart*, trans. Pauline D. Townsend (London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1882), I, iii–vi.

⁸⁶Jahn, *W. A. Mozart* III, 22.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, III, 391–92. For more on Jahn’s interpretation of the Requiem, see Keefe, *Mozart’s Requiem*, 62–63.

⁸⁸Jahn, *Life of Mozart*, III, 6.

⁸⁹As given in the translation from *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, vol. 8 (Boston: Edward L. Balch, 1855–56), 194.

and works in 1875–82,⁹⁰ an apparently unproductive biographical period should be understood instead as a vibrant, engaging one for the composers individually and in combination with each other.

SIMON P.
KEEFE
Haydn and
Mozart



Abstract.

Very little critical attention has been directed toward biographical writings on Haydn and Mozart in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, following the first wave of work by Friedrich Schlichtegroll and Franz Niemetschek (for Mozart, 1793, 1798) and Georg August Griesinger and Albert Dies (for Haydn, 1809, 1810). Examining varied biographically oriented materials in books, short profiles, anecdotes, and fiction, this article establishes contrasting narratives for the two composers during this period: Mozart was regarded as thoroughly immersed in music from beginning to end, born into it as an infant prodigy and dying in the act of writing it for the Requiem, encapsulating a unified life and oeuvre; and Haydn embraced a rags-to-riches, triumph-over-adversity story—poor at birth and in his youth but eventually feted as one of Western music’s greatest figures—with full-fledged life-work alignment at death potentially compromised by a perceived decline in compositional powers toward the end. The article also traces influences of one narrative on the other, especially Mozart’s on Haydn, including through accounts of Haydn’s *Creation* and death. By explaining the diverging and converging narratives associated with Haydn and Mozart, I identify the second and third decades of the nineteenth century not as a protracted biographical cold spot but rather as a springboard and inspiration for future scholarly endeavor, including the serious, extended studies of Georg von Nissen, Alexandre Oulibicheff, and Otto Jahn (1828, 1843, and 1856 respectively). Keywords: anecdotes, fiction, Mozart’s Requiem, Haydn’s *Creation*, Stendhal, Georg von Nissen

⁹⁰See Carl Ferdinand Pohl, *Joseph Haydn*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1875, 1882).