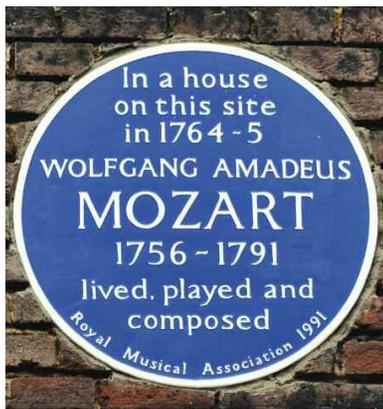


I sometimes wonder whether there was a specific moment when I realised that Mozart was my favourite composer, or that I wanted to set up a company devoted to performing his music, but in reality these processes often end up being far more gradual and nebulous. In the same way, I can't remember the precise moment, if indeed there was one, when I had the idea for MOZART 250, a 27-year-long project exploring the music of Mozart and his contemporaries. In practice, it only started to become a reality when I found myself telling people about it.

The premise of MOZART 250 is to follow Mozart's life and music in chronological sequence exactly 250 years after the event. Each January we present a concert made up entirely of music – by a variety of composers, not just Mozart – composed or premiered in the equivalent year 250 years previously, and within the ensuing few months we present further projects relating to works or events from that specific year.

Appropriately, we began in 2015 with a major retrospective of Mozart's childhood visit to London in 1764-65. Across five concerts we presented a range of music, by more than 20 different composers, that we know was written or performed during Mozart's fifteen-month stay in the capital. The eight-year-old composer wrote his first symphonies, and his first surviving aria, in London, but even more intriguing were the pieces by largely forgotten composers, many of which had been languishing in the British Library unperformed since the 18th century. As well as providing

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Forthcoming performances

The Mozartists Launch Concert
18 September 2017, 7.30pm
Wigmore Hall, London
Classical Opera launches its new brand, The Mozartists, with a programme including Mozart's glorious Sinfonia concertante and Symphony No. 29.

Classical Opera 20th Birthday Concert
9 October 2017, 7.30pm
Barbican, London
This uplifting programme exploring themes of creation, rebirth, compassion and aspiration features works by Mozart and Haydn before culminating with Beethoven's celebrated 9th Symphony.

1768 — a retrospective
23 January 2018, 7.30pm
Wigmore Hall, London
This fascinating survey of the musical year 1768 features an intriguing selection of works by Mozart, Haydn, J. C. Bach, Jommelli, Hasse and Vanhal.
(Tickets on-sale from 7 November)

Haydn: Applausus
15 March 2018, 7.30pm
Cadogan Hall, London
A rare performance of Haydn's melodious cantata, composed 250 years ago in 1768.

Mozart: La finta semplice
2 June 2018, 7.30pm
Birmingham Town Hall
6 & 8 June 2018, 7pm
Queen Elizabeth Hall, London
This eagerly awaited semi-staging of Mozart's delightful 1768 comic opera, based on a genuinely witty libretto by Goldoni, features a superb international cast.

Mozart's Czech Mates
16 June 2018
Žofín Palace, Prague

Martin Randall Travel's 'A Festival of Music in Prague'
A dynamic programme of works by Mozart and his Bohemian contemporaries; please note that tickets for this concert are only available as part of the complete festival package.

Bookings and further information
www.classicalopera.co.uk/whats_on

fascinating insights into Mozart's childhood influences and development, the music has a genuine charm and beauty of its own, and we are planning to release a 2-CD recording of this music, 'Mozart in London', next spring. This year, 1767 in MOZART 250 terms, has seen us perform Mozart's remarkable first operas and concertos, all composed at the age of eleven, and so long as we are able to secure the necessary funding the project will continue until 2041, the 250th anniversary of *The Magic Flute*, *the Requiem* and Mozart's own death.

Classical Opera was founded in 1997 and we have already performed much of Mozart's output, especially of course his operas. MOZART 250 will feature all of Mozart's significant compositions not just his operas, and in September we will mark our 20th birthday by launching a new brand, The Mozartists, to reflect and facilitate our expanding concert work. Central to our mission and identity is our highly-acclaimed period-instrument orchestra and the development and championing of world-class young singers; many of our artists are now singing in leading opera houses across the world, from La Scala to the Met.

It is a relatively recent phenomenon to go back to performing Mozart's music on the type of instruments for which he was originally writing. These instruments are generally quieter, more temperamental and harder to play, so there are challenges as well as rewards, but the colours and atmosphere that they bring to the music create a genuine dynamism and vibrancy that lifts the notes off the page. Mozart was arguably the greatest and most gifted musician ever to have lived, so it should come as no surprise to us that his music sounds better and makes more sense when performed on the instruments and in the same style and conditions that he originally envisaged.

For me, almost the most important thing of all with MOZART 250 is that it enables us to provide a context for Mozart's life and music. Many audience members have come away saying that they felt they learnt something as well as enjoyed the music, and the sense of an ongoing narrative is crucial as we strive to share our journey with an enthusiastic, receptive and ever-growing audience. On one level MOZART 250 is an elaborate history game, but it also helps to generate a genuine sense of occasion at our concerts, and, curiously, to enable our performances to feel creative rather than re-creative.

Above all, we hope to build a legacy over the next quarter of a century, which can introduce, inspire and feed future generations of music lovers. In an increasingly troubled world, the great masterpieces of our cultural heritage become more and more valuable and relevant, and Mozart's music incorporates and sublimates a message of compassion, hope, empathy and forgiveness that we ignore at our peril. MOZART 250 is an attempt to build a legacy of our own, and I find it an inspiring thought that if we continue our journey to its natural conclusion and perform *The Magic Flute* in 2041, then some of our cast for that production may not yet have been born, and virtually none of them will yet know that they are going to be professional opera singers when they grow up.

Ian Page is the conductor, founder and artistic director of Classical Opera.
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