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Article

Music Drama as a Christian Parable: Mozart's *Idomeneo*

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Abstract: This article discusses Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera *Idomeneo: Re di Creta* (1781, to a text by Giambattista Varesco) as a Christian parable in the historical context of its genesis. Mozart's *Idomeneo* is based on a short episode in François Fénelon's *Télémaque*, but also on Antoine Danchet's adaptation of this episode for the theater in his tragédie lyrique *Idoménée* (1712; set to music by André Campra). In important aspects, Mozart's *Idomeneo* changed the narrative with a marked independence of Fénelon as well as Danchet. In recent scholarship, important new information has come to light concerning Mozart's composition of the Oracle scene, constituting the dénouement of the music drama. Based partly on these new insights, I attempt to provide a picture of a basic spiritual intention governing Mozart's composition of the opera for the Carnival season of 1781 at the Munich court. Mozart's *Idomeneo* is a Christian sacrifice drama modeled on the Aqedah (the sacrifice of Isaac; Gen 22: 1–14), which, in Christian traditions, is understood typologically as pointing to the Passion of Christ. Oppositely, Fénélon's and Danchet's versions rather correspond to the biblical story of Jephthah (Judges 11: 29–30). In a brief concluding section of this article, I also discuss the contemporary cultural importance of reading a classical opera such as Mozart's *Idomeneo* as a conscious product of Enlightened Christianity. In modern times, ecclesiastical boundaries and religious doctrines often seem to matter little in the music and theater culture of the Western world; classical opera is often staged more in order to respond to contemporary political or social issues than to communicate the original intentions of its creators (the so-called *Regieoper*). I argue that *Idomeneo*, with its historical intention, potentially can have an impact in a cultural theology (or a theologically informed modern worldview), and further, in dialogue with a recent volume discussing the "music of theology", that such a role for a piece of music must be developed in concrete musical (or music dramatic) contexts, not as a general philosophical contention. Mozart's *Idomeneo* may work in a modern cultural context because it functions as a parable, easily understandable also in a modern political or social context, because of its deep human (psychological) insight and the empathy brought to bear on all the characters of the opera.

Keywords: Mozart's *Idomeneo Re di Creta*; sacrifice drama; Enlightenment Christianity; music and theology; Christian parable

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1. Introduction: The Literary and Dramatic Background for Mozart's *Idomeneo*

1.1. W.A. Mozart and His Idomeneo

The main aim of this article is to discuss Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's (1756–1791) opera *Idomeneo Re di Creta* (Munich 1781) as a music dramatic Christian parable, although its actual storyline was couched in classical Greek mythology. Mozart's operas have also previously been discussed in the context of Enlightened Christianity. Nicholas Till's *Mozart and the Enlightenment* has influenced my understanding of Mozart's relationship

to religion importantly, also providing an understanding of how Mozart's later affiliation with freemasonry connects with his enlightened Catholicism.[1] My discussion is based on the conception and composition of the music drama as it took shape during the months up to its premiere at the Munich court on 29 January 1781.[2] Today, Mozart's *Idomeneo* is often considered to be the operatic breakthrough of the young composer who turned 25 two days before the premiere of the opera. At the end of this article, I shall discuss what an old operatic Christian parable may have to offer to a modern, generally secular society.

The protagonists of the opera are Idomeneo, king of Crete, his son Idamante, and the Trojan princess Ilia, a prisoner of the Trojan War, brought to Crete. As he is caught in a storm sailing back to Crete from the Trojan War, Idomeneo makes a fatal promise to Neptune, the god of the sea, to sacrifice the first person he will meet ashore, if saved. This person turns out to be Idamante, but Idomeneo avoids fulfilling his promise, keeping his vow a secret for all, including Idamante, who despairs at not understanding why his father avoids him. Meanwhile, Idamante and Ilia have fallen in love. Idomeneo is finally compelled to disclose his vow; Idamante willingly accepts his fate, while Ilia tries to save Idamante by letting herself be sacrificed in his place. In the end, the sacrifice is averted by a heavenly voice, demanding that Idamante take over as king, marrying Ilia. The Greek princess Electra is also in love with Idamante; she tries to interfere in the action, complicating matters further.

1.2. Fénelon's Idomeneus

The operatic plot was based on an important episode in François Fénelon's famous and (in its own time) controversial *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (The Adventures of Telemachus, first published in 1699), based on antique mythology and literature and originally written as a private textbook for the seven-year-old grandson of Louis XIV (the duc de Bourgogne), for whom Fénelon acted as tutor. The novel recounts stories freely based on the Homeric world about the young Telemachus, the son of Ulysses, and his travels around the ancient world to find his father, "guided by a tutor, who instructs him in the virtues of peaceful and enlightened kingship" (Clausius 2023, p. 32).

> Fénelon [. . .] theorized what might be called a "republican" monarchy in which the key notions are simplicity, labor, the virtues of agriculture, the absence of luxury and splendor, and the elevation of peace over war and aggrandizement. This proto-Rousseauean, demilitarized "Spartanism" led Louis XIV, of course, to read *Télémaque* as a satire on his luxuriousness and bellicosity, and Fénelon fell permanently from official favor. (Fénelon 1994, p. xvii)

The infidelity of a copyist led to the publication of *Télémaque* in 1699, without Fénelon's consent. At the same time, it was put on the index by the Church. But already before this, Fénelon had been dismissed from his tutorship in 1697, withdrawing to his archbishopric of Cambrai (to which he had been raised in 1695). "Fénelon was divested of his pension and of his tutorship to the duc de Bourgogne. He never set foot in Versailles, or even Paris, again" (Fénelon 1994, p. xv).

Fénelon's novel, however, was not only controversial because of its enlightened political contents and its (implied) criticism of the splendor and violence of absolute monarchy. It was also controversial aesthetically, by submitting the "elevated classical genre" of Homeric epic poetry to a prose narrative, something which "was inevitably understood as a critique of the ornate poetry favored at court" (Clausius 2023, p. 33):

> *Télémaque*'s hybrid style represented a political as well as an aesthetic provocation and consequently was ripe for adaptation in various other artistic media, but not before a half-century long debate involving the most prominent writers, composers, and librettists of the day. (Clausius 2023, p. 33)

This so-called Télémacomania

> [. . .] began as a literary phenomenon but immediately embroiled both opera and the visual arts in its unprecedented scandal. Countless operatic adaptations in both French and Italian staged the novel's most dramatic episodes, which Fénelon rendered so vividly they cried out for dramaturgical treatment. Some works adopted Fénelon's stylistic innovations indirectly, using French neoclassical theater as an intermediary; Mozart's *Mitridate*, for instance, used Racine's neoclassical play to experiment with a new poetics of tragedy inspired by Fénelon without citing *Télémaque* itself. Other operas, such as *Idomeneo*, tackled the novel directly, adapting its most politically contentious excerpts for the operatic stage. (Clausius 2023, p. xxx)

Mozart's *Idomeneo* is based on the episode in Book V of the *Télémaque*, in which King Idomeneus of Crete, on his way back from the Trojan War, makes a vow to Neptune to sacrifice the first person he will meet on the shore if saved from a terrible storm. The episode sheds a critical light on King Idomeneus for his premature vow, which also proved disastrous: the first human being he meets turns out to be his own son (not named in the novel). It becomes impossible for Idomeneus to accept the tender welcome of his son, and he wants to put an end to his own life, but he is prevented by those around him. However, while Idomeneus is advised to sacrifice a hundred bullocks to Neptune to appease the god, the son addresses the terrified father in the following way:

> Here I am, father; your son is ready to submit to death to appease the god; draw not down upon yourself his anger: I shall die contented, if by my death your life may be secured. Strike, my father; do not be afraid to find in me a son that is unworthy of you, who is afraid to die. (Fénelon [1893] 2009, p. 66. English translation, Fénelon 1994, p. 63).[3]

The father becomes completely insane; "torn by the internal furies", he stabs and kills his son. Later, he is driven away from Crete as his people turn against him because of the murder. He then founds a new kingdom in the "country of the Salentines" and is a recurring figure also in later books of the *Télémaque* (Fénelon 1994, p. 63; see further Books VIII, IX, X, XI, and XVII).

Among the dramas that were inspired specifically by the Idomeneus story from Book V of the *Télémaque* (many were also based on a story about Télémaque and Calypso; see Clausius 2023, p. 37), the first opera was *Idoménée* (1712), composed by André Campra (1660–1744) setting Antoine Danchet's (1671–1748) *tragédie lyrique*. This, again, was inspired by the eponymous spoken tragedy (1705) on the same story by Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (1674–1762). Both Fénelon's and Danchet's versions of the story form important backgrounds for Mozart's *Idomeneo*.

1.3. Danchet's Idomenée

Danchet's storyline included a love story between Idoménée's son, here named Idamante, and Ilione, a Trojan princess, brought to Crete as a prisoner, with whom also Idoménée is in love, complicating thus his feelings toward his son as he alternates between jealousy and fatherly love and worry (caused by the vow). Also, the Greek princess Electra (daughter of Agamemnon) is present at the court in Crete, and she is in (unrequited) love with Idamante.

In Danchet's version, Idoménée decides to send Idamante away in order to save him. In vain hope, Idamante is told to escort Electra back to Argos (in Greece). However, a terrible (new) storm prevents their departure. Later, Idamante tells Ilione about the frightful monster that ravages the people of Crete and that he wishes to combat it. Ilione

and Idamante declare their mutual love, and Idamante learns that his father is his rival. Out of fear for his son's life, Idoménée again sends him away, and Idamante now fights and defeats the monster. The king takes this as a sign that Neptune has calmed his anger. He decides to "let the lover give way to the father" (Danchet 1712, p. 50; 1992, p. 106), accepting the marriage between Ilione and Idamante and leaving the throne to Idamante. Electra, however, is furious. Disclosing her love to Idamante, and raging against his marriage to her rival, she implores the help of Neptune.

As Idoménée officially lays down his throne and the celebrations for the marriage begin, Nemesis, the goddess of revenge, appears, announcing that the gods' revenge is about to happen. Idoménée goes mad, and in his madness, he misreads the situation: "To appease Neptune enraged, I see all the preparations for a pompous sacrifice" (Danchet 1712, p. 58; 1992, p. 120).[4] While Ilione asks Idamante to flee, Idoménée slays him. Realizing what he has done, Idoménée then wants to kill himself, but he is prevented by those around him. Ilione pronounces the last words of the drama, "To punish him, let him live; I alone must die" (Danchet 1712, p. 59; 1992, p. 120).[5]

1.4. Mozart and Varesco, Danchet and Fénelon

When the Munich court decided to commission the young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to write the Carnival opera for the season in 1781, this decision did not only include the choice of the Idomeneus story from Fénelon's *Télémaque*. The *Télémaque* was well-known at court; the previous Carnival opera (for 1780) had been *Telemaco* by Franz de Paula Grua (libretto by Count Seriman), based on Book 7 of Fénelon's *Télémaque* (Böhmer 1999, pp. 171–96; Carter 2014, pp. 74–78). Indeed, as already mentioned, Fénelon's work was known all over Europe, including also by both Wolfgang and his father (Schmid 2021, p. 13).

The decision in Munich indicated that the new libretto should be based on Danchet's *Idoménée*, which the court sent to Mozart in Salzburg. Most likely, the Mozarts, Wolfgang and his father Leopold, who generally functioned as a kind of manager and advisor to Wolfgang, were the ones who chose the Salzburg court chaplain Giambattista Varesco (1736–1805) to write the libretto in close contact with them both. They stripped away the part of the love story that involved Idoménée, thus making the character of Idomeneo in the new opera less ambiguous, keeping, however, the love story between Ilia (Ilione) and Idamante and also the figure (and the plot function) of Electra (Carter 2014, pp. 70–74).

In recent research, it has been suggested that Carl Theodor, the Palatinate elector, had his hand not only in the commission but also in the choice of the topic. He was a well-informed patron of not least the newest trends in opera (Böhmer 1999, pp. 129, 139, 143–69; Heartz 1990b, pp. 16–17) and had met Mozart a few years earlier in Mannheim (in 1777; see Gutman 1999, pp. 383–86). Recently, he had also become duke of Bavaria, moving his court from Mannheim to Munich in 1778. He brought with him to Munich most of the musicians from the former Mannheim orchestra, which, at the time, was considered to be the best in Europe (Böhmer 1999, pp. 198–99; Eisen 2006b, pp. 264–65; Heartz 1990b, pp. 16–17; Sadie 1993, p. 26; 2006, pp. 523–25).

In Mozart's *Idomeneo*, the most conspicuous change from the storylines of both Fénelon and Danchet was that the sacrifice of Idamante was averted in agreement with the general demand at this time that operas should have a *lieto fine*, a happy end (Sternfeld 2002).[6] Thus, the original narrative, which may be considered to be a type of the storyline of Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11: 29–40), was turned into a type of the storyline of the Aqedah (Gen 22: 1–14).[7] In collaboration, Wolfgang, Leopold, and Varesco produced a plan for the course of the drama with details concerning scenes, numbers (arias, ensembles, etc.), and recitatives, which was then presented for approval by the court in Munich in November 1780. A number of letters between Wolfgang and his father from November 1780 to January

1781 give detailed pieces of information about the compositional process, not least about the revisions that were made in the libretto while Wolfgang was in Munich during these months.[8] In this period, he finished composing the opera in collaboration with singers, musicians, and the court, the latter represented by Count Seeau, the director of the court opera (Böhmer 1999, pp. 197–201; Heartz 1990b; Mozart [1972] 2011, "Vorwort/Preface", pp. VI–XII/XXIII–XXIX; Sadie 1993; Schmid 2021, pp. 45–52).

That Mozart and Varesco's *Idomeneo* in at least one respect remained closer to Fénelon's narrative than to Danchet's is obvious as Idamante—toward the end of the opera, in Act 3—has killed the monster that ravages Crete, however, apparently in vain. Scene 9 in Act 3 opens with a *recitativo accompagnato*; the strings begin solemnly, but calmly in A flat major, as Idamante enters dressed in white, ready for the sacrifice. Here, he addresses his father, stating his love and his willingness to be sacrificed, singing:

> Father, my dear father! Ah, sweet name! Behold me at your feet. In this ultimate, fatal moment, on that right hand, which must make your blood flood from my veins, accept my last kisses. Now I understand that your agitation was not anger, but paternal love. Oh, a thousand times fortunate are you, Idamante, if he who gave you life takes it from you, and in taking it gives it to heaven, to receive from heaven his own in exchange and thus obtain lasting peace for his people and the sacred and true love of the gods! (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, *recitativo accompagnato* No. 27; English translation Johnston 2009, p. 153).[9]

There is no similar scene in Danchet's piece, and Danchet's Idamante nowhere expresses his consent or wish to be sacrificed for his father. The inspiration for Mozart and Varesco's version at this point clearly comes from Fénelon's text. The *accompagnato*, which turns into a dialogue between father and son, is followed up by Idamante's aria "No, la morte io non pavento" ("No, I do not fear death"). It was stricken by Mozart before the premiere of the opera, mainly in the interest of saving time (see Schmid 2021, p. 241).

2. Methodological Remarks

Analyzing an opera requires a combination of narrative, textual, and musical tools. It also, in this case, involves comparisons with the two works used in the construction of *Idomeneo*, concerning the deliberate changes in the plot that Mozart and Varesco undertook. Methodologically, one major tool is narrative content analysis, but it is important to point out that neither textual and plot analyses nor musical analyses can stand alone. It is one thing to point to the narrative structure of the music drama and to analyze, for instance, key statements by protagonists, but in order to understand an opera's construction, it is equally important to connect musical analysis to textual and narrative analysis. What does the music emphasize and in what way? Sometimes, the setting of individual words reveals how these were understood by the composer and what impression the composer wanted to convey to the audience. Operas are *intermedial* or *interart* works, combining signs from various media (Clüver 2009, pp. 502–7). Further, in addition to the words and the music, the staging may also influence how the opera is perceived by the audience (see further below, in Section 5).

The analyses in the main part of this article, however, aim to approach the understanding of the authors of the opera, primarily the composer's understanding of the story that he wanted to present to the audience, i.e., a historical project. The article attempts to come as close as possible to the musical dramatic impression that Mozart wanted to present to his audience. In this respect, the musical means employed to emphasize or to supplement the words are important, not as timeless indicators but as means that were understandable to the historical audiences. The analyses thus draw on music historical knowledge concerning

the significance of the use of particular musical instruments or certain stylistic means, for instance, as pertaining to liturgical traditions. An important particular compositional tool can be described by the notion of "arrested moment," the way a composer may slow down or stop the musical flow, thereby drawing attention to specific points in a text or particular moments in the plot (see Petersen 2023, pp. 84–87, 99–101). This notion is discussed below in Section 4.2.

Modern interpreters, including stage directors, may often change the way an opera appears in order to influence the perception of a contemporary audience. As pointed out by Claus Clüver, who uses the notion of text, and thus also of readers in a generalized way,

> [t]he constraints placed upon readers (and there are always constraints) may reside less in the text than in the "interpretive community/ies" to which readers belong and which both authorize and delimit the possibilities of meaning construction". (Clüver 2009, p. 517)

Already at the historical point of setting the words of the librettist, the composer may effectively change the understanding and the impact of certain words, as it will become clear below in connection with Mozart's setting of Varesco's words for the Oracle, *La voce*.

Altogether, an interpretation of an opera, here, Mozart's *Idomeneo*, depends on analyses in various media, of plot, involving close text readings and musical analyses of different kinds based on historical musicological knowledge, but, in the end, also on sensibilities concerning the interplay of all these elements. Since *Idomeneo* concerns a narrative that involves divine intervention, it is also necessary to involve knowledge about religious discourses and sensibilities at the time and for the involved authors.

3. Mozart and Varesco's *Idomeneo*

3.1. Daniel Heartz's Understanding of Mozart's Idomeneo

Daniel Heartz, the editor of *Idomeneo* in the New Mozart Edition, discusses the intentions behind the choice of the Idomeneus story for the opera (Heartz 1990a). He points to a general interest in sacrifice dramas during the eighteenth century, exemplified, for instance, in the many operatic settings based on Euripides' two plays on the Iphigenia legend, among these, especially two of Christoph Willibald Gluck's major operas, *Iphigénie en Aulide* (Paris 1774) and *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Paris 1779). Concerning the Idomeneus narrative, Heartz especially draws attention to a comment by Friedrich Melchior von Grimm (1723–1807), a German author and diplomat belonging to the circle of the Enlightenment *philosophes*, active in Paris between 1749 and the French Revolution. Grimm authored and edited the *Correspondance littéraire*, a cultural newsletter circulating in manuscript between 1753 and 1773 (after 1773 Jacques-Henri Meister took over). The *Correspondance littéraire* was aimed at rulers of German states to inform them about the cultural, intellectual, and social developments of the French Enlightenment. Grimm was a patron of the Mozarts, whom he helped during their stay in Paris in the spring of 1764, and Leopold Mozart is among the very few non-royal subscribers to the *Correspondance littéraire* in a list of subscribers for the years 1763–1766 (Eisen 2006a; Grimm and Meister 1829; Till 1992, pp. 12–13).

Heartz quotes Grimm's entry of 1 March 1764 about a new (spoken) play, *Idoménée* by Antoine-Marin Lemierre. Here, Grimm argues that the subject of Idomeneo would be better suited for an opera than for a play, comparing it also to the subject of Jephthah, which he considers more moving since it deals with "a devoted girl". For Heartz, Grimm's comment is interesting in connection with his speculation that the Mozarts may have been involved in the choice of the subject, pointing out that Wolfgang, after the death of his mother in Paris in July 1778, stayed for a while at Grimm's house, at a time when he was searching for operatic subjects in French tragedies. Heartz believes that Wolfgang "certainly must have

discussed such matters with Grimm" and asks rhetorically, "Who better than Grimm could advise him on selecting a subject?" (Heartz 1990a, p. 5; cf. Cairns 2006, pp. 35–36, and similarly Gutman 1999, p. 445). Heartz makes it clear that Wolfgang may never have read the entry. However, Leopold may very likely have read it since he subscribed at the time. Also, indeed, the whole family stayed in Paris for the first three months of 1764 and for a part of April (Eisen 2006c, p. 305). In any case, the assumption that the Mozarts had any say in the choice of the subject for the commission from Munich is convincingly rejected by Karl Böhmer (Böhmer 1999, p. 199).

Further, however, in his interpretation of Mozart's setting of the story, Heartz builds on Grimm's opinions about the Idomeneus narrative, pointing out that Grimm makes it clear what it is about the narrative that he would like to see (and hear) represented in an operatic setting. Grimm gives a critical comment on religious superstition, and even more on priestly abuse of superstition, in the manner of Voltaire. I give a somewhat longer quotation than Heartz:

> What I want to see painted in the tragedy of Idomeneo is this dark spirit of uncertainty, of fluctuation, of sinister interpretations, of disquiet and of anguish, that torments the people and from which profits the priest. For if you show me a god who so clearly explains his will that the punishment begins and ends with disobedience, all philosophers and all sensible people, far from accusing the Cretans of superstition, would stand on their side. (Grimm and Meister 1829, premier mars 1764; English translation Heartz 1990a, p. 9 (first sentence), supplemented by me).[10]

Heartz correctly describes Grimm's point of view, but then suggests that this also provides us with an understanding of Mozart's setting of the words of the Cretan high priest, who demands (in Act 3) that Idomeneo must disclose the victim and go to the temple to perform the sacrifice. For Heartz, Mozart's setting shows the high priest in the same light as Grimm's picture of priests appropriating superstition for their own purposes, the image Grimm wanted to see painted in an opera on the subject of Idomeneus:

> Grimm's words should be borne in mind, too, as the high priest paints a horrid picture of Crete's desolation and urges King Idomeneo to carry out his sacred duty (No. 23). The ominous unison trills, repeated on various steps to the point of obsession, tell us pretty plainly what Mozart thought of this particular high priest and how we are to respond to the "holy" crime he exhorts. (Heartz 1990a, p. 9)

3.2. Discussing Daniel Heartz's Understanding

But let us look more closely at Mozart's setting of the high priest's *recitativo accompagnato*, which Heartz describes in the above quotation. The passage in question is the Allegro in No. 23 (bars 10 to 60; Mozart 1972, pp. 428–35). Prominent in the orchestral accompaniment are the mentioned unison trills, repeated on different steps for strings and woodwind instruments, each time leading into downward moving unison triads (sometimes quatrains) in crotchets. Mostly, the figure is given twice before moving on to the next step. These figures accompany the high priest as he dramatically describes the situation in Crete, where a terrible monster now is devouring people. The high priest says that he himself has seen the bloody victims die. The passage is strongly marked by modulations, beginning in c minor with the mentioned figure in the dominant G (bars 14 through 17), then f minor (bars 22–25), b flat minor (bars 28–31), and d minor (bars 35–38). From here, the musical figures move closer together. The next one, with an E major triad, follows already in bars 39–42, and so it continues: the figure in E_7 (key: a minor, bars 43–46), then a minor (bars 47–48), a diminished D_7 (bars 49–52), D_7 (bars 53–54), g minor (bars 55–58), and B $flat_7$ (bars 59–60). The passage begins forcefully but later changes between forte and

piano. At bar 61, the dramatic depiction of the suffering people leads into the high priest's solemn exhortation to Idomeneo (in B flat major; bars 60–75), followed by the heartbreaking moment of Idomeneo's surrender (discussed further below).

Interestingly, however, Mozart used very similar figures to the ones described, which Heartz interprets as a sign of Mozart's negative attitude to the high priest, also in his *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*; Vienna 1791). The *recitativo accompagnato* for Tamino, the main hero in *The Magic Flute*, at the beginning of No. 8, the Finale of Act One, constitutes a crucial turning point in the opera. Here, Tamino, naively and in good faith, approaches the temple of wisdom, following the advice of the three boys, wishing to free Pamina. A figure (here, always given in piano) consisting of a unison trill leading into a downward moving unison triad, given twice just as in *Idomeneo*, accompanies his approaches, modulating with each attempt to find an open gate (D major, g minor, c minor; bars 68–70, 75–77, and 82–84; Mozart 1970, pp. 137–38). The overall musical, as well as dramaturgical context here, is completely different from the context of the high priest's *accompagnato* in *Idomeneo*, and there is no reason at all to think of the musical figures with the trills in this scene of the *Zauberflöte* as projecting a negative view of Tamino, indeed, on the contrary.

The example from the *Zauberflöte* thus puts a question mark on Heartz's interpretation of Mozart's setting of the high priest's *accompagnato*. To interpret an individual musical figure discursively is, in any case, risky and generally in need of substantiation by other arguments. In Heartz's case, the substantiation seems to be Grimm's above-cited remarks. But how relevant are Grimm's remarks to Mozart's understanding of the high priest in his *Idomeneo*? Here is another comment:

While father Leopold had good relations with Grimm, Wolfgang did not. During their time in Paris, after the death of his mother in early July 1778, where, as mentioned already, he stayed several months at Grimm's house, he wrote to Leopold on 11 September:

> I will tell you all this in person and demonstrate clearly that M:sr Grimm is capable of helping children, but not adult people–and–but no, I will not write about it–yes, I must: on no account should you imagine that this man–is the same as he once was. (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, BD 487, including the English translation).[11]

Wolfgang continues his criticisms of Grimm at length, stating, e.g.,

> In short, he is of the Italian faction–is insincere–and attempts to suppress me himself; this is incredible, isn't it?–but it is so; here is the proof; I opened my whole heart to him as to a true friend–and he made good use of it; he always gave me bad advice because he knew that I would follow it–but he only succeeded with this 2 or 3 times, for afterwards I no longer asked him and if he did give me advice, did not do it, but always said yes to avoid suffering more displays of coarseness. (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, BD 487, including the English translation).[12]

Even if Grimm talked to Wolfgang about the suitability of the Idomeneo story as a subject for an opera, and about how he viewed the importance of this subject, it hardly seems likely that this would have influenced the way Wolfgang came to feel about the story and the high priest. And, indeed, if one looks at the high priest's lines, nothing points to a negative view of the high priest's personality. He is, of course, a high priest in the cult of Neptune at Crete in Antiquity, and thus obviously a defender of Neptune's rights, but, as it appears in his lines, for the sake of the people. After the mentioned description of the disastrous events in Crete with the monster that everyone in the narrative (unsurprisingly) believes are the works of Neptune, the high priest goes on, as mentioned, to exhort Idomeneo to do what Neptune apparently demands of him:

> On you alone depends the remedy. You can save from death the rest of your people, who cry out in dismay and implore your help; yet still you delay? To the

temple, sire, to the temple! Who and where is the victim? Render to Neptune that which is his. . . (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, No. 23; English translation Johnston 2009, p. 147).[13]

Shocked by the high priest's words, Idomeneo gives up his otherwise unceasing attempts to hide what he had promised to Neptune and which person it is that he owes to sacrifice to Neptune. So far, since he first met Idamante on the shore in Act One, covering up what has happened has been his constant approach to the disaster he set going through his vow, except in conversation with his confidant Arbace, who advised him to try to send away Idamante in order to save him. Now, Idomeneo gives in, and in an exceptionally expressive *accompagnato* (continuing the high priest's *accompagnato*), verbally as well as musically (as we shall see below) shaped as a ritual announcement,[14] he declares, as he silences the high priest:

No more. Sacred minister, and you, my people, listen: the victim is Idamante, and now you will see, ye gods, with what bearing a father sacrifices his own son. (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, No. 23; English translation Johnston 2009, p. 147).[15]

At this point, a chorus, No. 24, constituting the assembled people to whom the king has just spoken, responds, singing, not about Neptune, but about the cruelty of Idomeneo's vow. The chorus was to be repeated after a prayer to heaven by the high priest, notably not addressing or even mentioning Neptune but addressing the merciful heaven. At the very last moment, and together with other last-minute cuts, Mozart decided to save time—a constant issue in the last weeks before the premiere of the opera—by omitting the high priest's intercession and the repetition of the chorus, undoubtedly not for any other reason. Indeed, in the words of Schmid, "it cannot have been easy for Mozart to shorten it, purely for the sake of saving time" (Schmid 2021, p. 237, see also pp. 94, 235–37).[16] As also pointed out by Schmid, the chorus has a sacral character in its use of muted trumpets and timpani (Schmid 2021, p. 236). Thus, the lines of the high priest between the two parts of the chorus are relevant to draw in to characterize his role:

O merciful heaven! The son is innocent, the vow is inhuman; stay the hand of this pious father. (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, No. 24; English translation Johnston 2009, p. 147).[17]

Remarkably, the high priest of Neptune asks heaven to stop the sacrifice demanded by Neptune. In the first place, this makes it very clear that the high priest does not conform to the image of priests, profiting from the religious suppression of the people, as expressed in Grimm's remarks about the Idomeneo narrative as opera. It should also be mentioned that the entire scene 6, consisting of the now described *accompagnati* of the high priest and Idomeneo, and the chorus with the high priest's intercession on behalf of the "pious father" has no basis in Danchet's text (nor in Fénelon's; see also Schmid 2021, p. 234). The *cielo clemente* in the high priest's intercession may reflect the invocation of God in the Roman mass (*clementissime pater*), which Varesco would have celebrated daily (Kramer 1988, p. 142).

The image of the high priest is thus fundamentally different from the way it is suggested by Heartz in his article, still referenced as authoritative, concerning the mythological and theater historical aspects of Mozart's *Idomeneo* (see Cairns 2006, pp. 35–36; Schmid 2021, p. 17).

3.3. Mozart's Idomeneo, Neptune, and the Idea of a Merciful God

From the discussion of the high priest and the conclusion that Mozart did not set his role in accordance with Grimm's point of view, we must now go on to look further at the

attitudes to the demands of Neptune in *Idomeneo*. In the world of the opera, of course, everyone must heed Neptune's cult. However, the high priest apparently invoked the merciful heaven. This corresponds to some fanciful thoughts that Arbace, Idomeneo's loyal confidant, presented in a *recitativo accompagnato* (followed by an aria) in the previous scene 5, in which he sings:

> Then does heaven deny us all pity? Who knows? I still hope that some kindly god will be satisfied with all this blood; one single god is enough to make all the gods give way; sternness will yield to clemency. . . . But I do not yet see who might look pityingly on us. Heaven is deaf! (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, recitative before No. 22; English translation Johnston 2009, p. 145).[18]

It is worth pointing out that while this idea of a kind god, overruling the other gods, was formulated by Varesco, it happened at Mozart's initiative. In a letter to his father (5 December 1780), Wolfgang wrote that Domenico de' Panzacchi (1733–1805), who created the role of Arbace in Munich, wished for a longer recitative before his aria in Act 3. Wolfgang then proposed an insertion into the recitative. Wolfgang felt that this could work well, also because Panzacchi was a good actor, and he suggested that the extension could include "a faint ray of hope" ("einen kleinen schimmer von Hofnung", *Digitale Mozart Edition*, BD 555, including the English translation).

What Arbace then hopes for is exactly what the high priest seemed to pray for a little later. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that all the characters in the opera are described as part of a culture in which the cult of Neptune and the idea of human sacrifice constitute normal reality. But Arbace, the high priest, and all the characters of the opera also wish for mercy and peace (maybe except Electra), without being able to express anything else but regret at the present state of things. Accordingly, in scene 7 (Act 3), opening with a short, subdued march for strings and oboes (*sempre sotto voce*), while the sacrifice is being prepared, Idomeneo, who is to perform the sacrifice, prays to Neptune together with a chorus of priests (also shortened just before the premiere, see Schmid 2021, p. 239):

> Receive our vows, O king of the sea, abate your anger, your severity! (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, No. 26; English translation Johnston 2009, p. 149).[19]

However, at the end of the opera, the prayer for mercy is granted. I will not go into details with the complex scene 10 (Act 3), in which Idamante (as in Fénelon) agrees to be sacrificed in order to save his father's life (after having returned victorious in scene 9 from his fight with the monster) and Ilia interferes, claiming herself as the victim (since she belongs to Troy). The sacrificial scene turns into turmoil. I want to focus on the abrupt intervention by the Oracle (as the Mozarts call it in their correspondence); in the libretto and the score, it is named *La voce*. Four versions are found in the preserved sources; in the New Mozart Edition, they are named Nos. 28a, 28b, 28c, and 28d (Mozart 1972, pp. x–xi; see Mozart 1972, pp. 472–73, 566–68). Recent research involving a paleographic investigation of handwritings and close examination of several of the earliest, but also some later, copies of the score have conclusively excluded that version 28b was written by Mozart (Jonasova 2011; see also Schmid 2021, pp. 83, 244–50). This confirms a strong suspicion raised by Schmid some years earlier (Schmid 2001, pp. 118–20, 126–29).

3.4. The Oracle—La Voce—In Idomeneo

I shall not discuss the complex details of the textual, musical, and paleographical analyses, which are clearly and convincingly presented by Jonasova and Schmid. It is, however, important, in the context of this article, to point out that the existence of different

versions to some extent reflects the problem of the length of the opera, at least as seen by the Munich court, but also that Mozart himself, at an earlier point, presented dramaturgical ideas about the Oracle that led to revisions. In a letter to his father (10 January 1781), Wolfgang mentions a conflict with Count Seeau:

> I had |: besides many other little points of friction: | a hefty argument with Count Seeau concerning the trombones–I call it a hefty argument because I had to be coarse with him, otherwise I would not have got what was needed–on the coming Saturday the 3 *acts* will be rehearsed in the room. (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, BD 577, including the English translation).[20]

From Wolfgang's formulation, it is clear that he did not consider the question of the trombones a small point. The trombones were to be used only for the Oracle, and presumably, Count Seeau felt that this extra expense could be avoided. One of the preserved versions of the Oracle, the (only) one, indeed, found in the Munich performance score (however, as an inserted separate sheet), used woodwinds instead of trombones, whereas the three versions found in Mozart's autograph score all use trombones and horns. Therefore, many have assumed that in the end, Count Seeau won the day (seemingly even as recently as Clausius 2023, p. 163; see also Hammerstein 1998, pp. 161–62; Heartz 1990b, pp. 29–30; Mozart 1972, pp. x–xi). In that case, Mozart would have had to make (or let someone else make, cf. Schmid 2001, pp. 120, 129) a new version with woodwinds replacing the brass. In view of Schmid's and Jonasova's recent research, the matter now seems closed, and Mozart did indeed obtain the trombones, as his remark in the letter also indicates.

Another important point for Mozart (regardless of the general need to shorten the opera in the last phase before the premiere) was that the voice representing a divine Oracle needed to be short and succinct. An often-quoted letter to Leopold from Munich, dated 29 November 1780 (see Hammerstein 1998, p. 159; Heartz 1990b, p. 29; Petersen 2008, p. 120),[21] makes Wolfgang's dramaturgical understanding of the Oracle clear:

> Tell me, do you not find that the speech by the subterranean voice is too long? Consider it thoroughly.–Imagine the stage, the voice must be terrifying–it must penetrate–one must believe that it really is so–how can it achieve this if the speech is too long, a length which will increasingly convince the listeners of its emptiness?–If the speech of the ghost in *Hamlet* were not so long, it would have an even better effect.–The speech here can furthermore be shortened easily, it gains more from that than it loses. (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, BD 545, including the English translation).[22]

Leopold agreed with Wolfgang, and Varesco did shorten his first text. Wolfgang, however, felt that it was still too long and made an even shorter version, No. 28a, which, in view of the latest research, must be considered to be the final one that was also performed at the premiere (Schmid 2021, p. 248). Varesco's original text (set as No. 28c) and also the abbreviated version he made on Wolfgang's demand (set as No. 28d) both textually underline the Christian message of forgiveness and love, as well as a reward for innocence, while demanding that the king must resign. In the first version (No. 28c), it is further stated that his failure to keep his promise to Neptune is incompatible with his status as a king. Wolfgang, however, as already mentioned, decided to cut even further in view of his dramaturgical idea of how to present the divine on stage. Realizing that it would be difficult to convince Varesco to cut even further, he even suggested that he would do it himself without telling Varesco, which seems to be what he actually did (letter of 11 January 1781; see Schmid 2021, p. 45). In the printed libretto, it was Varesco's shorter text that was printed, but, as argued by Schmid and Jonasova, it was Wolfgang's very brief version (which in several ways mutilated Varesco's literary work; see Schmid 2021,

pp. 244–48), No. 28a, that was finally performed, which, in nine measures, only states the absolutely necessary:

> Idomeneo ceases to be king. Let Idamante take his place and Ilia be his wife. (Mozart 1972, p. 472; my translation).[23]

> Schmid pointed out, however, that

> Mozart did not show Varesco's text, which was rich in allusions, much honor. The reason for the rather disrespectful decisions may have been that the words in any case were secondary for the theatrical effect. The main interest concerned the one who pronounced the words and the place. The voice of a sonorous bass, unusual in an opera seria, was supposed to sound from its own place far away. The singer was probably situated together with the accompanying instruments backstage. (Schmid 2021, p. 248; my translation).[24]

In all three versions composed by Mozart (28a, 28c, and 28d), the instrumental accompaniment consists of three trombones and two horns, thus establishing what Schmid calls an "external" sound with a sacral character. *La voce* recites his text in a formal recitation, reminiscent of liturgical recitation tones for psalms and lessons (Schmid 2021, p. 249; cf. Petersen 2008, pp. 120–21; Hammerstein 1998, 151–83).[25] Clausius, who is not aware of the research by Jonasova and Schmid, not only (as many others before her) considers No. 28b to be the final version but also seems to think of *La voce* as Neptune's voice (as did also Till 1992, pp. 66–71, Cairns 2006, p. 38; Carter 2014, p. 79).[26] She contextualizes the lines of *La voce* with Idomeneo's first aria in Act One, where he is still ignorant that his victim will be Idamante. She asserts that "Idomeneo's tormented soul and the enigmatic figure of Neptune—are inextricably linked and direct the whole opera, instigating the action in act 1 and finally resolving it in act 3" (Clausius 2023, p. 163). There is, however, an important observation behind her comparison, to which I shall return in Section 4.1.

My contention is that Mozart used liturgical musical means to achieve the dramaturgical goal he had in mind with *La voce*, in order to convince the audience about the frightening reality of a truly divine voice. In *Idomeneo*, Neptune only appears visually (as mentioned in the stage directions in the libretto in connection with the storms, undoubtedly manifested in Lorenzo Quaglio's staging; see *Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, beginning of Scene VIII, Act One). *La voce*, by contrast, only appears in sound, so the impression of divine transcendence needed to be achieved by aural means. At the same time, here—as opposed to the churchyard scene in *Don Giovanni*—the voice is not threatening; it is not ominous (except maybe to Electra who sees her last hopes of winning over Idamante disappear, leading to her last and terrifying aria). Rather, it is the realization of the hope that Arbace was longing for (and, indeed, of all the characters, except Electra, although they mainly express this hope negatively, through fear and suffering).

Wolfgang noted that the voice should be terrifying. This must be understood as terrifying in the biblical sense, e.g., in Gen 28:17, about God's perceived presence at Beth-El, where Jacob exclaims *terribilis est locus iste* (in the Vulgate Bible), this place is terrifying. This expression was used for the introit of the mass of the dedication of a church throughout the Middle Ages and beyond in Roman Catholic liturgy (Petersen 2016, col. 75), characterizing thus the experience of a holy place.

It is likely such an experience and expression of holy terror to which Mozart alludes, well-acquainted as he was with Roman Catholic liturgy, having grown up as a church musician. This is corroborated by the stage direction just before the lines of *La voce* in the printed Munich libretto. Here, it is stated that the "statue of Neptune shakes; the high priest stands before the altar in ecstasy. Everyone is astonished and frozen with fear. A

deep grave voice pronounces the following judgment of heaven". (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, prior to No. 28).[27]

Such an experience is comparable to Edmund Burke's notion of the sublime in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757, revised 1759). Mozart most certainly did not know Burke's discourse, but the notion of the sublime (also through Kant's philosophical appropriation of it) came to characterize many of Mozart's most famous works shortly after his death (see Petersen 2015, pp. 301–2; 2023, pp. 95–98). Burke separated the sublime from the beautiful by its being based on power and terror, tracing such ideas to their biblical origin: "In the scripture, wherever God is represented as appearing or speaking, every thing terrible in nature is called up to heighten the awe and solemnity of the divine presence" (quoted from Petersen 2015, p. 298).

La voce thus represents a holy, divine voice passing judgment, in this case, a merciful judgment that overrules Idomeneo's unjust vow and the cruel demands of the gods in the Cretan world of Antiquity. It is not surprising, then, that Mozart used liturgical musical means to achieve this experience of divine mercy to which all must bow. The final parts of the opera (after Electra's exit aria) celebrate this mercy, as Idomeneo carries out the benign divine demand, and the opera ends (as in French opera tradition) with a celebratory ballet. In the *accompagnato* before his aria No. 30 (the aria was skipped in the end to save time), Idomeneo states that "the sacrifice is fulfilled; I am released from my vow. Neptune and all the gods look kindly on this kingdom. It remains only for Idomeneo to do their bidding" (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, No. 30; English translation Johnston 2009, p. 165).[28] Mentioning Neptune and the other gods as those whose demands he now fulfills is only natural seen from his perspective, although perplexing in view of all that has gone on. For those who see and hear the opera, however, the new order clearly stands in complete opposition to the order reigning in Crete until the intervention of *La voce*, who represents Christian mercy and love, historically, of course, an anachronism in the plot. It is only representable as a theatrical parable, set with musical liturgical means that were recognizable to Mozart's audience.

Moreover, the mentioned liturgical musical devices for *La voce* were not the only ones that Mozart borrowed from liturgical traditions in *Idomeneo*.

4. Arrested Time in Mozart's *Idomeneo*

4.1. Idomeneo's Warning

As mentioned before, Katharina Clausius compares certain aspects of the Oracle in Act 3 with Idomeneo's aria in Act One, "Vedrommi intorno" (scene IX, No. 6). In this (his first) aria, he imagines the innocent victim (at this point, not yet knowing who it will be), whom he has promised to sacrifice to Neptune through his "impious vow" ("empio voto"; *Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, recitative prior to No. 6):

> I will see around me the sorrowing shade who, night and day, will say to me: "I am innocent". On his pierced breast, on his pallid corpse, the blood I have shed will show me my crime. What horror, what sorrow! In its torment, how many times this heart will die! (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, No. 6; English translation, Johnston 2009, p. 93).[29]

Thus, from the first time Idomeneo appears in the opera, he is aware of his guilt and its terrible consequences, already before he knows that the victim will be his own son. For her comparison, Clausius points out that in the Oracle,

> [. . .] the fragments of speech are offset by rests that frame each pronouncement, giving the whole scene a formality that suits the epic momentum of the opera's

> dénouement. The vocal style, orchestral texture, and pacing of the scene are thus strikingly similar to Idomeneo's brief encounter with the supernatural in "Vedrommi intorno". In a sense, these two unseen voices—Idomeneo's tormented soul and the enigmatic figure of Neptune—are inextricably linked and direct the whole opera, instigating the action in act 1 and finally resolving it in act 3. (Clausius 2023, p. 163)

We now know that No. 28b, which Clausius uses for her discussion of the Oracle, was not written by Mozart. It was adapted from Mozart's original versions and copied at a later time by the Czech composer Johann Baptist Kucharž, probably in connection with a performance in Prague in the 1790s (Jonasova 2011, pp. 78–80, 127–28). However, much of what Clausius writes about No. 28b is valid also for the last version Mozart actually made, No. 28a, as well as for his two first versions, not least the point that "the fragments of speech are offset by rests that frame each pronouncement" (see Mozart 1972, pp. 472–73, 566–68). While Mozart gave up the idea of systematic crescendos and decrescendos in the brass instruments, which Leopold had recommended and Wolfgang used in 28c and 28d (Schmid 2021, p. 250), the general style of the recitation and the phrasing of the individual parts of (ever shorter) texts remained the same. And, in particular, the rests, which frame each part of the pronouncement, run through all Mozart's versions (as well as the non-Mozart No. 28b). This is a main point for the comparison between the Act One aria and the Oracle that, for Clausius, is important for her understanding of the opera. I will now take a closer look at the mentioned aria (Mozart 1972, pp. 97–105).

The comparison Clausius makes points to the lines where Idomeneo imagines the victim, "who, night and day, will say to me: 'I am innocent'". The victim's imagined words, "I am innocent" in bars 20–24 (Mozart 1972, p. 98) were set in a way that sets them apart from the phrase they belong to:

> Even the punctuation of the line isolates it from the rest of the phrase; the words "sono innocente" are framed on either side by bar-long rests in the tenor part, so that the line is set apart aurally from the rest of the stanza. (Clausius 2023, p. 158, see, further, pp. 158–61)

Indeed, the whole phrase (bars 15 to 27) stands out from its musical context also by way of a sudden change from C major to c minor, in addition to the mentioned substantial rests around each part of the phrase. These rests are filled in by the woodwinds, just like the brass instruments fill in the rests surrounding the different parts of the pronouncement of *La voce* in the Oracle scene. It is important to point out that the mentioned framing devices, in the Oracle as well as in Idomeneo's Act One aria, are far from the only places where similar kinds of framing occur. They belong to what may be termed "arrested moments" or "arrested time," which can be found in many places in *Idomeneo*, as well as in other works by Mozart, and, indeed, in compositions by other composers (Petersen 2023, pp. 86–87, 93–95, 98–101; 2024a, pp. 44–45).

4.2. Arrested Moments

Arrested moments may be achieved in different ways. The point is to arrive at a perceived slowing down of the musical flow. In vocal music, this is often performed to alert the listener to particular words or particularly important emotions or ideas. Pauses and silence altogether may be used to stop the flow conspicuously. In the two cases just mentioned, however, the rests are only rests in the vocal line, which is interrupted by small instrumental interludes. Also, sometimes, a sudden change to a slower tempo or to longer note values, or the sudden thinning out of the instrumentation to create a hushed effect, a diminuendo, or a combination of some of the mentioned musical means, may have similar impacts.

Arrested moments, as presented here, are to a high extent a matter of interpretation. In musical settings of texts in an overall dramatic or liturgical context, arrested moments are well suited to emphasize ideas, words, emotions, and, not least, ritualized moments of particular significance, holiness, or sublimity (see Petersen 2023, pp. 95–98). Similar effects can also be obtained in instrumental music, but their interpretation in such cases is much more difficult since they cannot easily be connected to a verbal discourse.

4.3. Arrested Moments in Idomeneo

In Mozart's *Idomeneo*, musical moments representing ritualized announcements have been set in arrested time. The Oracle in Act 3 is the most evident example. Not only does the setting itself employ such framing of the individual parts of the announcement as already explained, but the fact that *La voce* and the brass instruments were performed from behind the stage would have necessitated a clear break and a moment of tension before and after the actual lines of *La voce*. In addition, the new ("external") sound with sacral connotations, of course, would contribute further to emphasize the interruption of the dramatic flow.

In Act One, another unmistakable example is in scene 10, following Idomeneo's aria (No. 6), where Idamante and Idomeneo meet on the shore. Idamante goes to the shore in despair because he is told that Idomeneo died in the storm. However, as he realizes that Idomeneo is alive, standing right before him, he is overjoyed. Oppositely, Idomeneo is terrified when he realizes that his son is standing before him, the first person he has met ashore. The ensuing *accompagnato* confronts their opposite reactions (Mozart 1972, pp. 109–13). While Idamante wants to embrace his father, Idomeneo withdraws from him. Idamante, taken aback, asks why Idomeneo shuns him. Idomeneo then responds:

> Do not follow me, I forbid it: It would have been better for you not to have seen me. Beware of seeing me again! (*Exit in haste*). (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, recitativo accompagnato before No. 7; English translation, Johnston 2009, p. 99).[30]

Musically, the tension between Idamante and Idomeneo's reactions is set in a dramatic opening of the *accompagnato* (marked presto), moving forward with fragmented utterings. Suddenly, the tempo changes to Andante, as Idomeneo issues his warning (bars 27–30). Woodwinds and horns (in piano) play a threatening fanfare-like figure repeating a c minor chord, followed by Idomeneo's "paventa" (fear), mimicking the rhythm of the figure and its melody. The "paventa" is repeated twice, each time a step higher in the c minor triad, which constitutes the melodic and harmonic contents of these bars (Mozart 1972, pp. 111–12).

Idomeneo's warning creates a full stop in the dramatic and musical progress. The means are close to those in the Oracle and in Idomeneo's Act One aria. However, the heightened repetitive structure of the warning enhances its ritualized character, in the sense of a solemn conjuration, leaving Idamante not only confused but horrorstricken, while Idomeneo hastens away. The arrested moment stands out from the dramatic course of events while, of course, contributing to these.

At the previously mentioned turning point after the high priest's description of the terrible state of Crete and his exhortation to the king to disclose the victim in Act 3, scene 6, there is another, similarly distinctive example of arrested time. Here, Idomeneo makes the formal declaration to the assembled people in front of the temple and the high priest in desperation, as discussed previously (at note xiv; see also Mozart 1972, pp. 435–36). The *accompagnato* of the high priest was marked allegro. As Idomeneo steps in to stop the high priest from going on, the tempo changes to andante. Idomeneo asks everybody to listen, and the tempo slows down to adagio; Idomeneo is silent for a moment while the strings play a short descending motif in c minor quietly. This short motif occurs in

different variants on many occasions in the opera. Although it often seems to appear in connection with Idamante and his sacrifice, it also appears in other contexts (Rushton counts 19 versions of the motif, which he names motif C; Rushton 1991, see, especially, Ex. 1, p. 3, Ex. 4: 23, p. 11, and p. 18).

At Idomeneo's confession, this motif is repeated between fragmented parts of Idomeneo's brief statement. His announcement is cut up, as he seems almost incapable of stating what he must state. First comes the c minor motif in the strings; then, Idomeneo announces "the victim is Idamante". The c minor motif is repeated, followed by "and now you will see". The motif is again repeated, now in d minor. Then follows "ye gods", and the d minor motif is almost repeated, now leading into a diminished seventh. Then follows "with what bearing", and this time, an extension of the motif follows, beginning in g minor, and developing into a two-bar long chromatic string sequence, before Idomeneo finishes his sentence "a father sacrifices his own son" leading into the chorus "Oh voto tremendo" (previously discussed; No. 24).

As pointed out already, arrested moments in music can appear in many ways and variations. Without discursive contexts, they are difficult to interpret. But in the examples dealt with here, they occur in such marked ways to musically emphasize and lend emotional strength to the words they set, in accordance with the overall dramatic context. All three examples constitute ritualized, formal announcements with great impact on the course of the dramatic action. Also, Clausius' aforementioned example from Idomeneo's Act One aria can be seen as such a ritualized, imagined announcement in Idomeneo's mind.

In the example where Idomeneo warns Idamante, his attempt to keep his son away from him represents a repudiation of his vow to Neptune, which further accentuates how Idomeneo, at the same time, is at odds with the worldview of antique Crete, the society in which the action is set, and yet belongs to it. It stands as a formal (although private) announcement of the king's policy to avoid heeding his own vow, which, of course, he has regretted. Idomeneo follows this policy throughout the remainder of Act One and all of Act Two, until this policy finally breaks down in Act 3, where the just-discussed example of a marked arrested moment occurs, as Idomeneo publicly announces the identity of the victim.

Here, we have come to the nadir of the drama; there seems to be no way out anymore for Idomeneo (nor for Idamante), except through Arbace's hope, a hope that appears unlikely from within the portrayed world of the opera. Idamante's victory over the monster, while giving rise to a brief triumph, is immediately understood by Idomeneo to even further undermine any hope of a resolution to the conflict with Neptune. However, the tension between father and son has now disappeared, everything is in the open, and Idamante knows why his father shunned him. As already referenced, Idamante then tells his father, heroically and lovingly, that he accepts, indeed, that he is even happy, to be sacrificed for his father's sake. As described in the introduction above, Idamante's readiness to be sacrificed follows Fénelon's but not Danchet's narrative. Intertwined with the love story between Ilia and Idamante, this leads to the final turmoil at the intended sacrificial scene, where also Ilia heroically and lovingly wants to take Idamante's place.

4.4. The Dénouement in Idomeneo

They are all interrupted by *La voce*'s intervention, constituting the most conspicuous example of an arrested moment. Here, the point of the operatic parable is finally announced. The vow was unjust, and the old order must end. Now, a new order, an order of love and mercy, is established through Idamante and Ilia's reign. The old order, represented partly by the revengeful Electra and partly by the loving, but dishonest and weak King Idomeneo, must resign (cf. Hoxby 2015, p. 195).[31] Altogether, mercy, love, and justice are

installed by *La voce*. Idomeneo accepts and obeys the announcement, believing, as pointed out above, that this is the will of his old gods. When Ilia, a little earlier, attempted to take over Idamante's role as the victim during the sacrificial scene, she argued, exclaiming:

> The gods are not tyrants. You are all false interpreters of the divine will. Heaven wishes to rid Greece of her enemies, not of her sons. (*Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, recitativo accompagnato before No. 28; English translation, Johnston 2009, p. 159).[32]

The interpretation of the gods that Ilia gives is not, however, in line with *La voce*'s message. Ilia, like all the characters in the opera, is firmly based in the Cretan world of Antiquity. Ilia thinks of the gods as the gods of the Greeks, and since she belongs to Troy, she thinks of herself as belonging to Greece's enemies, a thought that goes through her role from the very beginning of the opera. So, even though she acts out of love (for Idamante), the solution she proposes is not in line with *La voce*, who is not the god of Greece, nor of Troy, but the expression of a new heavenly order, the one Arbace hoped for, manifesting an overall message of love and forgiveness. As mentioned, both Nicholas Till and Katharina Clausius (and others) understand *La voce* as the voice of Neptune, but *La voce*'s message undercuts all sacrificial discourse, all the guilt of Idomeneo, and re-establishes hope and love in the world of the operatic characters.

When seen from outside the perspective of the characters in the opera, the operatic conclusion is a basic Christian message of mercy. What Varesco formulated in two original versions of the Oracle text was a Christian ethical comment to the story. Mozart shortened it, so little was left except the actual practical consequences of the divine intervention: a new order based on love and mercy. Through its quasi-liturgical and ritualized setting in arrested time, thus outside the ordinary world of the characters, Mozart ensured the effect on listeners and spectators: relief through mercy and divine acceptance of what, within the universe of the Cretan worldview at the time, would have been an illegitimate love affair between Idamante and Ilia. Varesco's many words explained but did not contribute to acting out the mercy, as would a brief quasi-liturgical pronouncement. The opera needed to be, and became, a musical parable, not a lecture on Christian ethics.

In liturgical ceremonies in the long Christian tradition from the Middle Ages to modern times, there have always been oscillations between narrative texts in readings and songs, on the one hand, and elements of sacramental direct contact between the divine and the congregation, *hic et nunc*. These elements could be prayers, blessings, and whatever was thought of as having a sacramental character, not least, of course, baptism and the Eucharist. In such sacramental moments (as, for instance, the institution of the elements of the Eucharist), the narration (of, for instance, the story of the last supper), on which the sacramental moment depends, would be arrested in a direct confrontation with the holy, seemingly taking place in a timeless spiritual *hic et nunc* (Petersen 2007, pp. 340–41). Arrested moments were a fundamental feature of medieval (and, thus, also later Catholic) liturgy. The oscillation between two different modes, a narrative and a celebrative or sacramental, was further cultivated in what came to be known as "liturgical drama" within and on the margins of medieval liturgy. These were practices that would also be possible to read as part of a historical narrative combining medieval liturgy with European theater (Petersen 2019a, pp. 120–23; 2019b, pp. 203–6; cf. also Petersen 2022).

Mozart had been a church musician since childhood until he freed himself from his position at the archiepiscopal court in Salzburg soon after returning to Salzburg from Munich (Eisen 2006c, p. 312). It is reasonable to see Mozart's use of such ritual technologies in his music, as described above, the use of arrested time in connection with ritualized announcements, as a possible influence from his experiences as a church musician, also

since he used such features prominently in his church music (see Petersen 2023 and also Petersen 2024a, p. 44).

In *Idomeneo*, the combination of musical means derived from contemporary liturgical use (trombones and liturgical recitation), and the use of arrested time as a ritual technology, are essential to the music dramatic construction of the opera as a Christian parable. While Mozart and Varesco used many elements from Danchet's Idoménée, they rather based their opera's fundamental message on Fénelon's enlightened Christian narrative, transforming, however, Fénelon's critical and sensual prose into a highly sensitive and nuanced, ritualized music dramatic parable.

5. Concluding Remarks: A Potential Impact of Mozart's *Idomeneo* in Modern Culture

In this article, I have attempted to give a historical reading of Mozart's *Idomeneo* as a Christian parable, in the context of Enlightened Christianity. I have argued that not only the plan for the opera, which Wolfgang and his father worked out in collaboration with Varesco (for approval by the Munich court) and the libretto (written by Varesco in accordance with the plan), but also Mozart's setting was essential for the outcome of the opera as a Christian parable. This also includes the main revisions of the libretto demanded by Wolfgang during the final composition (but not the last-minute revisions made in order to save necessary time, as required by the court).

In a modern opera and theater context, it is not obvious that a historical reading, such as I have tried to present, has much influence or may seem relevant to modern performers, nor to a modern audience, in a largely secular modern Western culture where ecclesiastical boundaries and religious doctrines often seem to matter little. In modern times, classical operas are often staged more in order to respond to contemporary political or social issues than to communicate the original intentions of their creators (the so-called *Regieoper*). Thus, an opera will often be moved out of its original setting in order to shed new light on the historical opera by the stage director (Petersen 2024b, col. 438–40). A remarkable example was the controversial staging (by stage director Hans Neuenfels) of Mozart's *Idomeneo* at the *Deutsche Oper* opera house in Berlin in September 2006, causing protests and even more fear of Islamic terrorism (as related by Westphal), where the emphasis at the dénouement was taken out of its original, historical context:

> At the close of the opera, King Idomeneo, who has been subject to the whims of the Greek god Poseidon throughout the story, "turns from victim to liberated humanist who simply stops believing and takes his fate into his own hands. That results first in the gods unmasked—stripped to their underwear in an allusion to the emperor with no clothes. Then they are beheaded by Idomeneo, who pulls their heads from a bloody sack before he himself expires as the final curtain falls". (Westphal 2006)

If the above description of the production is correct, it seems to have taken up the critical point against religious abuse of superstition (sort of the point of Grimm and Heartz), turning it into a general criticism of religion.

I do not want to comment on the Berlin production of *Idomeneo*, since I have not seen (or heard) it. I simply want to point to the interpretive power of stage directors over the (re-)presentation of an opera. There may be important or interesting perspectives in staging an opera against its historical intentions, or in dialogue between those intentions and the world of a modern stage interpreter. As Nicholas Till has asserted,

> An operatic text should perhaps be seen as a pretext for a performance, rather than the performance serving to realize the operatic "work". (Till 2012, p. 70; see also Petersen 2024b, col. 438–40)

What then is the interest—or *is* there any interest—in the historical intentions of those who composed the opera in a modern performance context or for a modern audience altogether? First, the modern performer (or director) must in some way relate, possibly in opposition, to the historical product that is to be reinterpreted. Thus, historical consciousness and knowledge ought to be necessary, and productive, even for a critical reinterpretation. But I would also like to point to the possibility of a modern cultural relevance of a historical work such as Mozart's *Idomeneo*, in accordance with its historical intentions.

As unsurprisingly made clear by the political turmoil around the 2006 staging of *Idomeneo* at Deutsche Oper in Berlin, and even more by general political circumstances in later years, religion and confrontations between religions, also including the rejection of religion, have (again) come to be a highly relevant discourse in modern society. The parable of *Idomeneo*, as I understand it in its historical context, however, does not confront religions against each other. The high priest of Neptune in Crete is not an oppressor. On the contrary, as argued above, he defends his people as well as he can, in his (of course limited) perspective of the cult of Neptune, to which not only he but all of the characters in the opera subscribe.

The opera, in the particular adaptation of the story, which Wolfgang, possibly also Leopold, and Varesco constructed together, is a product of Christian Humanism, or Enlightened Christianity, where the characters live and engage emotionally in what happens in front of them. They have empathy; they take part in what happens. Idomeneo himself, who is, in a sense, the one who sets the action in motion by his terrible vow, does this, if not innocently (cf. his Act One aria), in terror of the imminent danger of perishing. The opera, which, in accordance with Fénelon's narrative, does not diminish his guilt but rather exposes it, still shows much empathy with his figure, emphasized not least in the numerous expressions of his desperation and regret. Even the vindictive Electra is given occasion to show her feelings, of desperation and revenge but also of love for Idamante, in her three arias. She is the antithesis of the heroic and self-effacing love of both Idamante and Ilia, but even she is portrayed as a real human being, with big faults and also with big emotions (cf. Hoxby 2015, p. 191). Including Arbace, with his loyalty to Idomeneo and his possibly vain hope of help, all the characters in the opera are portrayed as living people, however different they are in their various dispositions.

Also, the heroes (unsurprisingly) expose their emotional conflicts and their suffering. Not least Idamante, as it appears at his first encounter with his father on the shore (as discussed above), but also, musically, one of the most memorable items in the opera, in the quartet in Act 3. Here, Idamante expresses his despair and loneliness. He must (again) leave the royal court and everyone, still without knowing why his father avoids him, deciding to go into the world to fight the monster that, in everyone's belief, ravages Crete on Neptune's order. The quartet is one of the great achievements in Mozart's operatic output altogether, and, apparently, he had a particular affection for this piece, also in later years (Schmid 2021, p. 227). The four characters in the quartet, Idamante, Idomeneo, Ilia, and Electra, all, individually and (musically) as a group, express their emotions, sometimes shaped as generalized truths. This concerns the relationship between suffering, death, and life, e.g., "such great grief is worse than death" ("peggio è di morte / sì gran dolore"; *Digitale Mozart Edition*, Kritische Edition des vertonten Textes der Münchner Fassung, Quartetto No 21; English translation, Johnston 2009, p. 141). Musically, as pointed out by Schmid,

> The progression is repeatedly broken, not only tonally but also rhythmically. An outward sign of this is the surprisingly large number of rests beyond the

> usual breathing pauses. This is already suggested in the orchestral introduction (bars 1–6), which comes to falter with the subdominant in bar 5. This brings a subsequent dominant particle to stand on its own, letting a fermata replace the expected cadence. (Schmid 2021, pp. 228–29, and see Mozart 1972, pp. 386–411).[33]

The quartet may, as clearly suggested by Schmid's discussion (Schmid 2021, pp. 227–30) also be analyzed with recourse to the notion of arrested time. Arrested moments occur in several places, especially in connection with the settings of the above-mentioned "peggio è di morte /sì gran dolore," lending them a ritualized character. Schmid also points out how the quartet in its later part associates with sacred music, possibly in an allusion to the hopeful prayer of Arbace's soon-to-come accompanied recitative (discussed above; see Schmid 2021, p. 230).

The parable thus paints a picture of humans in impossibly difficult situations. Mutatis mutandis, this should not be hard to identify with for modern audiences used to news about insolvable conflicts, wars, famines, political turmoil, etc., even if the modern circumstances have completely different backgrounds. The message of the parable, however, is a hope, derived from a Christian belief, which may be seen as either unrealistic or just strangely unfamiliar to some while familiar to others. Interestingly, the strangeness of the solution, the divine message of the Oracle, is equally unfamiliar to the characters in *Idomeneo*. In any case, the opera as a whole stands as a parable of hope against hope, and since it is a parable, not an account of Christian doctrine, such a parable, if staged convincingly, in all its alterity, may be a viable way of communicating a theological content, free of dogmatic gravity or philosophical complexity.

Individual pieces of music and individual music dramas may be able to play such a cultural (and/or religious) role in modern Western societies, just as this can happen through literature and film. Such musical pieces, music dramas, or parts of them may work as what the philosopher theologians Andrew Hass, Laurens ten Kate, and Mattias Martinson seek in their recent volume *The Music of Theology*. Here, they present a radical new idea of a musical approach to theology. The notion "music of theology" stands as a kind of reversal of well-known theological discourses of music, subsumed in the volume under the notion "the theology of music":

> This reversal, from the theology of music to the music of theology, is at the heart of what follows: music as the margin of language, as a liminality of space, and as the limit of silence. [...] we want to explore an idea of musical critique of theology that begins in what might be called—as a first variation—a musicology of theology. (Hass et al. 2024, p. 2)

What is investigated in the book is *theology* rather than *music*. The notion of theology itself is approached in a broad way, attempting to get around traditional doctrinal systematics, whether Christian or other, as this is made clear by the opening "sforzando" (as it is termed) definition of the concept of theology:

> Theology is here understood as a discourse that, in speaking about God, is intended to free us from ourselves. In this sense theology does not prescribe any revelatory foundations or dogmatics, but it does indeed reverberate with the question of what it means to be human and what it means to hope in the open space of our ineffable whole. (Hass et al. 2024, p. 1)

Toward the end of the book's "Overture", the focus (in the sense just given) on theology through a musical discourse is reconfirmed:

> To approach theology musically, or music theologically, is thus not to offer yet another study of this or that musical piece, subsuming it under a concept: theology of music. Neither is it an analytic discussion about the religious nature of

> music. It is rather an attempt to continue in attunement a theological reflection of the meaning of being in this overdubbed nonidentical world by approaching a phenomenon—music—that, on the one hand, is resistant to integration within standard theological discourses, and yet, on the other hand, is very susceptible to that temptation, [. . .] (Hass et al. 2024, pp. 28–29)[34]

Not least the discussions of silence in musical compositions by Thomas Tallis (16th century) and György Ligeti (20th century) in the Coda of the book hint at possibilities for theologically relevant musical observations. Here, the authors arrive at a kind of conclusion, stating:

> We must listen not merely to incidental sound, which is around us continually, but to a sonority that yields a music. That is, we need to develop a listening ear attuned to a language that enhances a space founded in—and ultimately comprising—silence. At the very heart of our praxis of living, we must learn to hear the music within music that is the rhythm of our being, which no theology of music can express. It is toward this end that a music of theology will intend. (Hass et al. 2024, p. 166)

To learn such a way of listening, however, is to point to *specific* musical experiences that illuminate a theological–existential awareness of being a human in a world ultimately not controlled by ourselves. This is what I have pointed to in Mozart's *Idomeneo*. The arrested moments there, just as well as the silences of Cage, Tallis, Ligeti, and others, suggested by Hass et al., move us in that direction. But when we do point to such experiences, musical or lyrical, the question is whether we are not then performing the theology of music in some way. As a first approximation to the relationship between music and theology, there must be a dialectic between understanding a particular piece of music theologically (i.e., a theology of music) and how to come to a musical theology, what Hass et al. term a music of theology.

What I have proposed in this article is a reading of Mozart's *Idomeneo* from a theological perspective, suggesting this opera is a music dramatic parable of Christian theology.

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Notes

1 Mozart joined the masonic lodge *Zur Wohltätigkeit* in December 1784. Although he had previously been in contact with the circle around Ignaz von Born, the master of the most important lodge for the Viennese Enlightenment, *Zur wahren Eintracht*, he decided to join Otto von Gemmingen's *Zur Wohltätigkeit*, "the meeting place for those who believed in a *Catholic* Enlightenment in Vienna. It was, undoubtedly, for this reason that Mozart chose to join Gemmingen's lodge rather than the more radical and secular *Zur wahren Eintracht*". (Till 1992, pp. 124–25, original emphasis).

2 *Idomeneo* was never again publicly staged during Mozart's lifetime, although he very much wished to have it performed in Vienna. However, some private performances at the house of Prince Auersberg took place in March 1786, for which Mozart made some revisions. The role of Idomeneo's son Idamante, sung by a castrato in Munich, was now sung by a tenor (see Schmid 2021, pp. 53–65). In this article, I only deal with the original version composed for the Munich court. Unfortunately, we do not know much about the staging of the opera. Katharina Clausius, however, has ventured to discuss the visual perspectives of the Munich staging, as suggested not only by the text and its stage directions but also as suggested by the music (see Clausius 2023, pp. 130, 133–43). In this article, the focus will be on the text and its musical setting.

[3] Original French text: "Me voici, mon père; votre fils est prêt à mourir pour apaiser le dieu; n'attirez pas sur vous sa colère: je meurs content, puisque ma mort vous aura garanti de la vôtre. Frappez, mon père; ne craignez point de trouver en moi un fils indigne de vous, qui craigne de mourir".

[4] Original French text (essentially identical in both the 1712 and the 1731 version): "Pour calmer Neptune irrité, Je vois tous les apprêts d'un pompeux sacrifice!"

[5] Original French text (identical in both the 1712 and the 1731 version: "Pour le punir laissez-le vivre: C'est à moy seule de mourir".

[6] Manfred Hermann Schmid also mentions a school drama *Idomeneus* in Salzburg from 1755, in which the high priest at the end prevents the king from killing his son; see (Schmid 2021, pp. 13–14).

[7] Cf. also (Clausius 2023, p. 121) n. 35. Mozart was well aware of the story of the sacrifice of Isaac. In a letter to his father written in Munich in October 1777, he refers to an oratorio, the *Abramo ed Isacco: figura del Redentore* (Abram and Isaac: Type of the Redemptor; by Josef Mysliveček) that he heard there (Dowling Long 2013, p. 184). In G. F. Handel's last oratorio *Jephtha* (1751) to a libretto by Thomas Morell, Jephthah's daughter's fate was made more acceptable to the sensibilities of eighteenth-century England by changing it from death to perpetual virginity, a change which Ruth Smith has characterized as "neither novel nor unacceptable in his day" (Smith 1995, p. 343).

[8] All the relevant letters are printed in (Schmid 2021, pp. 24–45). All the letters are available with English translation in the *Digitale Mozart Edition* (DME) (2009).

[9] Original Italian text: "Padre, mio caro padre, ah dolce nome! Eccomi a' piedi tuoi: in questo estremo periodo fatal, su questa destra, che il varco al sangue tuo nelle mie vene aprir dovrà, gl'ultimi baci accetta. Ora comprendo che il tuo turbamento sdegno non era già, ma amor paterno. O mille volte e mille fortunato Idamante, se chi vita ti diè vita ti toglie, e togliendola a te la rende al cielo, e dal cielo la sua in cambio impetra, ed impetra costante a' suoi la pace e de' numi l'amor sacro e verace!"

[10] Original French text: "C'est donc cet esprit sombre d'incertitude, de fluctuation, d'interprétations sinistres, d'inquiétude et d'angoisse qui tourmente le peuple et dont profite le prêtre, qu'il fallait me peindre dans la tragédie d'Idoménée; car si vous me montrez un dieu qui explique si nettement sa volonté que le châtiment commence et finit avec la désobéissance, bien loin d'accuser les Crétois de superstition, tous les philosophes, et tous les gens sensés se rangeront de leur côté".

[11] Original German text: "Dieses werde ich ihnen alles mündlich sagen, und klar vor die augen stellen, daß der M:r grimm im stande ist kindern zu helfen, aber nicht erwachsenen leüten–und–aber nein, ich will nichts schreiben–doch, ich muß; bilden sie sich nur nicht ein, daß dieser–der nemliche ist, der er war".

[12] Original German text: "Mit einen wort, er ist von der welschen Partie–ist falsch–und sucht mich selbst zu unterdrücken; das ist unglaublich nicht wahr?–es ist aber doch so; hier ist der beweis; ich habe ihm, als einen wahren freünd, mein ganzes herz eröfent–und er hat guten gebrauch davon gemacht; er hat mir allzeit schlecht gerathen, weil er wuste daß ich ihm folgen werde–das hat ihm aber nur 2 oder 3 mahl gelungen, denn hernach habe ich um nichts mehr befragt, und wenn er mir etwas gerathen, nicht gethan; aber allzeit ja gesagt, damit ich nicht mehr grobheiten noch bekommen habe."

[13] Original Italian text: "Da te solo dipende il ripiego, da morte trar tu puoi il resto del tuo popolo ch'esclama sbigottito e da te l'aiuto implora, e indugi ancor?. . . Al tempio, sire, al tempio! Qual è, dov'è la vittima?. . . A Nettuno rendi quello ch'è suo. . . "

[14] I use the notions of ritual, or ritualization, heuristically, as in Petersen 2023, pp. 99–100, based on Clifford Geertz's idea that in ritual life experiences and world view meet, reinforcing each other: "in a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined [. . .] turn out to be the same world" (quoted in Petersen 2023, p. 99), corresponding to the basic Christian liturgical tradition that Christian doctrine must agree with what is experienced in the liturgy.Catherine Bell points out that there is no general agreement about how to define a ritual among anthropologists (Bell 1997, pp. 1, 21–22). She discusses ritual-like features also in theatrical performances, pointing (in general) to characteristics of ritualization in human activities, among these formalism, traditionalism, invariance and repetition, and sacral symbolism, concluding that "[r]itualization is generally a way of engaging some wide consensus that those acting are doing so as a type of natural response to a world conceived and interpreted as affected by forces that transcend it—transcend it in time, influence, and meaning, if not in ontological status. Ritualization tends to posit the existence of a type of authoritative reality that is seen to dictate to the immediate situation" (Bell 1997, p. 169, see altogether pp. 138–69).

[15] Original Italian text: "Non più. . . Sacro ministro e voi popoli, udite: la vittima è Idamante, e or or vedrete–ah numi! Con qual ciglio?–svenar il genitor il proprio figlio".

[16] Original German text: "Es dürfte Mozart nicht leicht gefallen sein, ihn reiner Zeitersparnis wegen abzukürzen".

[17] Original Italian text: "Oh cielo clemente! /Il figlio è innocente, /il voto è inumano: /arresta la mano /del padre fedel".

[18] Original Italian text: "Dunque è per noi dal cielo sbandita ogni pietà?. . . Chi sa?. . . Io spero ancora che qualche nume amico si plachi a tanto sangue: un nume solo basta tutti a piegar. . . alla clemenza il rigor cederà. . . ma ancor non scorgo qual ci miri pietoso. . . Ah sordo è il cielo!"

[19] Original Italian text: "Accogli, o re del mar, i nostri voti: /placa lo sdegno tuo, il tuo rigor".

[20] Original German text: “Ich habe |: nebst vielen andern kleinen streittigkeiten:| einen starcken Zank mit dem Graf Seeau wegen den Posaunen gehabt–ich heiss es einen starcken streitt weil ich mit ihm hab müssen grob seÿn, sonst wär ich nicht ausgekommen.–künftigen Samstag werden die 3 Ackte in zimmer Probirt”.

[21] In (Petersen 2008), the quotation is used in the context of a discussion of the lines of the *Commendatore* in the churchyard scene in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (1787), in some respects, analogous to *La voce* in *Idomeneo*.

[22] Original German text: “Sagen sie mir, finden Sie nicht, daß die Rede von der unterirdischen Stimme zu lang ist? Ueberlegen Sie es recht.–Stellen Sie sich das Theater vor, die Stimme muss schreckbar seyn–sie muss eindringen–man muss glauben, es sey wirklich so–wie kann sie das bewirken, wenn die Rede zu lang ist, durch welche Länge die Zuhörer immer mehr von dessen Nichtigkeit überzeugt werden?–Wäre im Hamlet die Rede des Geistes nicht so lang, sie würde noch von besserer Wirkung seyn.–Diese Rede hier ist auch ganz leicht abzukürzen, sie gewinnt mehr dadurch, als sie verliert”.

[23] Original Italian text: “Idomeneo cessi esser re, lo sia Idamante ed Ilia a lui sia sposa”.

[24] Original German text: “Mozart hat Varescos anspielungsreichem Orakeltext wenig Verehrung entgegengebracht. Die eher respektlosen Entscheidungen mögen damit zusammenhängen, dass die Worte für den Effekt des Theatralischen ohnehin sekundär waren. Das Hauptinteresse galt dem Sprecher und dem Ort. Die Stimme eines sonoren Basses, ungewöhnlich in einer Opera seria, sollte fern aus einem eigenen Bereich erklingen. Der Sänger war deshalb vermutlich zusammen mit den begleitenden Instrumenten hinter den Kulissen postiert”.

[25] Hammerstein discusses Mozart’s setting of the numinous in a historical context ranging from Monteverdi to early Romanticism, without reference to liturgical traditions. Petersen discusses the setting of the lines of the Commendatore in the churchyard scene of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, contextualized with the Oracle from *Idomeneo*, focusing on the use of liturgical recitation tones for the singer, instrumental homophonic settings that may be perceived as chorale-like, and the prominent use of trombones, all associating with liturgical music.

[26] If Mozart and Varesco thought of La voce as Neptune’s voice, one wonders why they would not just have written so.

[27] Original text in Italian: “La statua di Nettuno si scuote; il Gran Sacerdote si trova avanti l’ara in estasi. Tutti rimangono attoniti ed immobili per lo spavento. Una voce profonda e grave pronunzia la seguente sentenza del cielo”.

[28] Original Italian text: “Compiuto è il sacrifizio e sciolto il voto. Nettuno e tutti i numi a questo regno amici son”.

[29] Original Italian text: “Vedrommi intorno /l’ombra dolente /che notte e giorno: /”sono innocente” /m’accennerà. //Nel sen trafitto, /nel corpo esangue /il mio delitto, /lo sparso sangue /m’additerà.//Qual spavento! /Qual dolore! /Di tormento /questo core /quante volte morirà!”

[30] Original Italian text: “Non mi seguir, tel vieto: meglio per te saria il non avermi veduto or qui. Paventa il rivedermi. (*Parte in fretta*)”.

[31] Hoxby summarizes the dénouement through the Oracle in this way: “Its message is redemptive: Love has conquered, Idomeneo shall cease to be king, and the young couple–the representatives of a new generation that has refused to accept the sacrificial economy of its elders–will rule”.

[32] Original Italian text: ”Tiranni i dèi non son, fallaci siete interpreti voi tutti del divino voler. Vuol sgombra il cielo de’ nemici la Grecia, e non de’ figli”.

[33] Original German text: “Ansonsten ist der Verlauf immer wieder gebrochen, nicht nur tonal, sondern auch rhythmisch. Äußeres Zeichen dafür sind die erstaunlich vielen Pausen über gewöhnliche Atemzäsuren hinaus. Das kündigt sich schon im Vorspiel an, das bei der Subdominante in T. 5 ins Stocken kommt und ein nachgeliefertes Dominantpartikel für sich stehen lässt, die erwartbare Kadenz durch eine Fermate abbrechend”.

[34] The authors reference Robert Hullot-Kentor for the idea of a Schoenbergian “non-identity beteen the universal and the particular” (Hass et al. 2024, p. 28; Hullot-Kentor 2006, p. 76).

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