

The system of patronage history essay



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During the Eighteenth century, the system of patronage was such that artists depend upon a protector or sophisticated audiences to ensure the providence of necessities for their lives. It was neither unusual for a court composer to reflect his master's preference in some of his pieces, nor was it to include solo sections designed to give an opportunity to the best instrumentalists to excel in accordance with their own abilities.

[1]Compositions had to satisfy demands and were strictly regulated by conventions which were firmly defined by a specific stratum of society or by patrons in order. The expectations of patrons and audiences then, had the capacity to have an overwhelming influence on the different types of compositional output by artists of that time.[2]

Through the understanding of the different expectations, as well as considering the social context of the particular place, one can put the extent of influence on composers by the expectations of patrons and audiences into perspective and observe that such expectations did influence composers such as Haydn and Mozart to a large extent. Conversely, it may also be disputed to a smaller degree, that it was not primarily due to the expectations of patronages that fundamentally influenced the composers. Instead, there were also implications such as of the composer's own individual preference, ideological goals that led to their compositional output as I shall explore in the following essay.

In the case of Joseph Haydn, expectations of his patron did influence him and his compositional output to a large extent. With forty nine years of service to the Esterhazy family, Haydn devoted a great deal of time and effort in acceding to the expectations of his patron, especially with regards to his

compositional outputs.[3]Engaged by Prince Paul Anton as vice-Kapellmeister in 1761, his first years in service of the Esterhazy family could be said to influence Haydn considerably in his maturity as a composer, as well as the formation of his character and way of life. From his oft-quoted contract in 1781 as a Vice-Kapellmeister, Haydn had to take on multiple artistic responsibilities other than composing. The point that had been considered the most demeaning was probably the eighth point in which stipulated that all his compositional output belonged exclusively to his Highness.[4]Also during the 1770s, he attempted to write symphonies in minor keys, like Symphony no. 44 in E minor, giving more substance than the earlier ones but his patron did not like this, and Haydn had to ‘retreat to the familiar major keys’.[5]Under such circumstances one can see that Haydn was unable to control his compositions for he had to go along with his patron’s preferences and that ownership of his compositions was often vested in the patron.

Besides that, Haydn also received instructions from his patron which influenced his compositions. As Prince Nicolaus was passionately fond of music and himself a performer on the baryton, Haydn was instructed to compose pieces for the instrument for his Highness’ pleasure. There were really few pieces for the baryton at that time due to its sheer difficult and cumbersome nature, but Haydn had to compose pieces for this rare instrument, so as to serve such representational needs of the Prince. [6]Almost two hundred compositions were produced for the performance of the Prince’s favourite instrument, of which included the six Divertimenti. This shows evidently that such expectation of the Prince did influence Haydn’s

compositional output significantly. It can also be argued that Haydn had to stop his experimentation during the Sturm und Drang period in those pieces as Prince Nicolaus found Haydn's compositions too difficult, thus making Haydn feel obliged to bring an end to it as to please his patron.[7]

It is the inimitably propitious combination of these circumstances, as well as restrictions that were placed on his freedom of movement by the need to synchronize with the Prince's requirement that enabled Haydn's talent to flourish in the relative isolation of Eisenstadt and Esterhaza. This detachment from the prevailing musical climate of the 18th Century led him to contribute more than any other composer to autonomy of instrumental music.[8]

From Haydn's Symphony no. 45 in F-sharp minor ('Farewell'), expectations of his patron can be said to have influenced Haydn's compositional motive at that time. The Farewell symphony was composed in response to the situation in Esterhaza, the Prince's summer palace. In 1772, the stay there had been longer than expected and most of the musicians miss their wives back in Eisenstadt. Therefore, they sought Haydn for advice, hoping that Prince Nicolaus would not further extend his stay in Esterhaza.[9]The expectations of Prince Nicolaus in this context influenced Haydn in his composition of the Farewell symphony. Though still governed by the convention of four movements, the character of its first movement is extremely different from the 'festive fanfare mood' that usually characterizes early concert symphonies.[10]Instead, it opens in a turbulent affair in F-sharp minor, which was a highly unusual key to use during that time. The form of the movement is also eminently unfathomable, unlike Haydn's previous compositional forms. In the Adagio section of the last movement, Haydn subtly hinted to <https://assignbuster.com/the-system-of-patronage-history-essay/>

his patron that perhaps he should allow the musicians to return home. That was conveyed through the providence of little solos for the musicians to play just before they snuff out the candle on the music stand and depart from the stage, till the end where only two muted violins left on stage, fading out into silence.[11]The concluding movement is so outlandish that without the knowledge of the circumstances surrounding this composition, it would be altogether baffling for audiences listening to this symphony. From this, one can conclude that expectations of Prince Nicolaus' in his plans of an extended stay in Esterhaza, instigated Haydn to compose 'Farewell' in hope to intercede on behalf of his musicians, hence showing the depth of influence that the Prince had over Haydn's composition.

As time progressed, during 1776-84, Prince Nicolaus grew tired of the baryton, instrumental production as well as symphonies composed by Haydn. From then on, Haydn's service as a court musician and of his compositional output was determined by the 'start of regular operatic performances' as Somfai notes.[12]Haydn was not given the choice to freely compose his operas though, as the choice of subject and librettists were decided by Prince Nicolaus. The Prince also engaged external theatrical troupes in place of having the usual instrumental concerts that were held in the court. Haydn had to write accompanying music for their performances, as well as playing over scores which were obtained by the prince's agent instead of his usual role of composing instrumental works. He had to recompose those scores as necessary, providing an equal distribution of brilliant roles for each singer and that orchestra should sound as delicate as Haydn required, keeping up the original standards that were set before.

From this we can draw possible conclusions that expectations such as the shift in liking of the musical genres by Prince Nicolaus did had an effect on the roles of Haydn as a court musician. Haydn had to stop composing symphonies or baryton pieces but instead, recompose scores and compose operas to suit the preference of Prince Nicolaus.

On the other hand, in the case of Mozart, expectations of his patrons such as Gottfried Van Sweiton in influencing his works can be seen in the same extent as compared to the patron-composer relationship of Haydn and the Esterhazys. The works of the two great Baroque masters- Handel and Bach were Sweiton's favorite. He often gave Mozart the task of transcribing a number of fugues by these masters for instrumental ensembles, who apparently had strong influence on Mozart. This led to Mozart's composition of works that ' have the character of studies in contrapuntal technique'.

[13]Though many were left incomplete, Olleson suggests that they had ' a dryness which is absent from most of Mozart's music'.[14]An example being the fugue of the unfinished C major Suite(K. 399), which had a prominent semblance between Allemande and that of Bach's G minor English Suite.

Later, Mozart incorporated such baroque writing more wholly into his individual fashion, which played a role in his creation of some of his most extensively admired works. Of these, Olleson mentions the F minor Fantasia (K. 608) and the chorale prelude sung by the two armored men in The Magic Flute.

Joseph II like many of the ' enlightened monarchs' of his time, was also a lover and patron of the arts. He commissioned the German language opera, Die Entfuhrung aus dem Serail, composed by Mozart in the 1780s. It was in a

new genre, a singspiel as opposed to opera seria which was more widely performed then. Joseph II did not enjoy opera seria due to its expensive production fee and thus influenced Mozart to stop composing in the ‘tragic style’.[15] On the contrary, due to Joseph II’s increasing interest in vernacular comedies, it instigated Mozart to compose such comic opera in hope to satisfy his patron’s expectations.

However, one can also argue that it was not the expectations of patrons that influenced the composers such as Haydn but rather, the physical constraints that composers faced. In the case of Haydn, the physical conditions of the halls in Esterhazy where he was privileged to work in played a significant role in stimulating his compositional ideas. The larger concert room was of really exceptional size, with a lengthy reverberation time like that of a church. That may be a significant influence on the earlier works by Haydn, when he began experimenting with augmented orchestras, particularly with a complement of four horns that shows up in several Esterhazy symphonies such as Symphony no. 31 in D major.[16]

With reference to Mozart’s Mass in C minor, one can also claim that expectations of his patron then did not greatly influence his composition of this Mass. The interchange between ‘secular’ and ‘sacred’ music in this piece, where there was some incorporation of Solfeggio per la mia cara Constanza, originally a singing exercise for his wife, shows that it was Mozart’s own preference in writing what he liked, rather than being restricted to write specifically for the commission of the archbishop.

[17] Therefore, based on the arguments of the prevailing physical conditions

and artistic preference of composers, we cannot account fully that it was the expectations that wholly influenced the composers in the 18th Century.

The rise in bourgeois culture in the mid 18th Century also saw a growth in publishing industry and public concerts. Success in terms of publication can be said to be a reliable criterion of artistic influence.[18]The development of public concerts affects the cultural life of the whole society and the status of the composers in that society. Public concerts bring immediate contact with a paying public and concert program, and were generally altered to cater to the preference for the audiences. Composers aimed to please an audience and saw nothing degrading in matching their creative impulses to perceived taste. Expectations of audiences then, play a significant role in influencing the composer's work. As Schroeder suggests, the connection between authors and their audiences plays an important role in shaping the nature of literary works.[19]

Haydn's approach of his late symphonies had close relationship with the new audience whom the works were intended for. Especially with reference to his London symphonies, influence of audiences was the most prominent as compared to other works. Haydn wished to understand his audience as much possible so that his works would have the appropriate reception. His interactions with the audiences aided him in making alterations to cater to their preferences.[20]It was evident in Haydn's use of some techniques which were specifically intended to garner praises of the audience. After corroborating the fact that those were well received by the audiences, he then gradually raises the level of intricacy so that more complicated impressive measures could be infused.[21]

Conversely, one may disagree that the expectations of audiences was not the primary factor that influenced the composers during the 18th Century but rather, expectations which usually involve ideological motive, which in this case is the goals of Enlightenment. The commonly held expectations and goals had links with the age of enlightenment and led middle-class audience to expect the work to encompass some sort of a 'moral function'. [22] This directed Haydn to feel compelled to portray 'moral characters in his symphonies' in concerts such as the Salomon Concerts where there were more middle-class audiences who were receptive to the Enlightenment. [23]

In conclusion, by and large, the expectations of patrons and audiences did influence the composers during the 18th century to a large extent. It was necessary to uphold those expectations and composers had to satisfy these demands through their compositions to at the least be granted a job or to gain popularity among the audiences. However, it will be supererogatory to insist that it was solely the expectations of patrons and audiences play a part in influencing the composers. Factors such as ideological goals, physical constraints such as concert venues or size of orchestra, as well as the composer's individual preference also play a part in influencing the composers during the 18th Century.