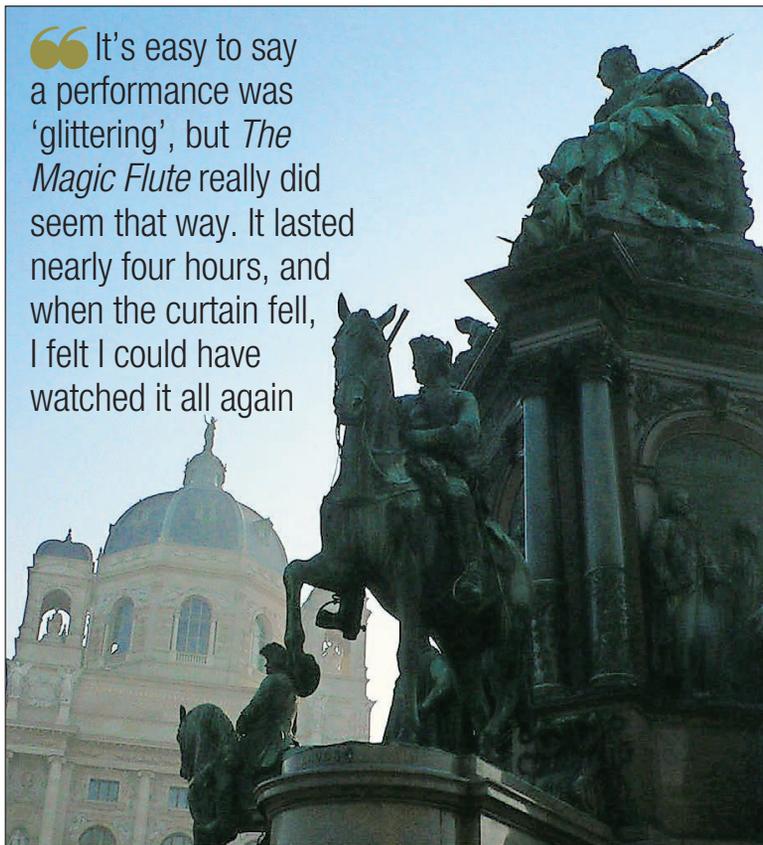


Magic of Wolfgang Amadeus lives on

“It’s easy to say a performance was ‘glittering’, but *The Magic Flute* really did seem that way. It lasted nearly four hours, and when the curtain fell, I felt I could have watched it all again



■ Vienna’s musical museums are world famous

NEED A LOCAL TREE SURGEON?



Whatever you are looking for
localsearch24.co.uk will help you find it

localsearch24.co.uk your trusted local directory

Jenny Woolf explores Vienna’s rich musical heritage, which boasts much more than Mozart to beguile the visiting tourist

It’s hard to miss the fake Mozarts in wigs and knee breeches selling concert tickets by Vienna’s Hofburg Palace, or the arrays of Mozart chocolates in every confectionary shop. Wolfgang Amadeus is one of modern Vienna’s touristic money-spinners, but when he was alive, he struggled to make a living.

Vienna was for many years a centre of European music and it still has a lively music scene. But it’s not all about waltzing, the Vienna Boys’ Choir and the Vienna Philharmonic – or even Mozart. The city’s clubs specialise in electronic music and its musical museums are world famous. The ornate Kunsthistorisches Museum building contains the world’s biggest collection of Renaissance and baroque instruments, plus curiosities such as the double guitar and one of the twistiest hunting horns ever seen. There are recordings of many of the instruments, and the museum holds interesting concerts of those which are in playing order.

Vienna is also home to the House of Music, in Seilerstätte. Spread over six floors in a palace once inhabited by an archduke, this world of sound offers a way into the lives and work of musicians and composers.

And then there is the Mozarthaus (Mozart House).

Prodigy

Mozart’s link with the city dates from 1762 when, as a six-year-old prodigy, he impressed the imperial family with his playing and charmed the Empress’s heart by scrambling onto her lap. As an adult, unappreciated and badly treated in Salzburg, he was only too glad to settle in Vienna to pursue his musical career.

The apartment house where he lived, at 5 Domgasse, is almost in the shadow of the Gothic cathedral. The now picturesque narrow alleyways that surround it would once have been dank, smelly and sunless, but now the expensively modernised house seems all bright and shiny, and almost new. Mozart probably wouldn’t have recognised it, and yet I found visiting it was surprisingly moving.

Of course there is a lift, but there are also several flights of stairs leading up to Mozart’s living quarters, and it’s good to trudge up those stairs. The cheaper apartments were always at the top, and the climb is a reminder that, while Vienna gave him fame, fortune always slipped from Mozart’s grasp.

Even though he never became wealthy, he seems to have been happy here with his wife, two children, pet dog, bird, three servants and assorted house guests. None of his personal possessions remain, though the displays give a good impression



■ Inside the Kunsthistorisches Museum



■ One of the displays at the Mozarthaus

of the background and daily life of a struggling young musician on the brink of real success.

It is the shape of the place that suggests how it was. The rooms with their little windows mostly link to each other – there are no corridors – so the place would always have been busy with people going to and fro. The details of his friends and patrons, his Freemasonry and his crowded and productive freelance existence are all described. It seems possible that one might spot his tiny, slender ghost in a corner, jotting down music or preparing for a Masonic meeting or one of the all-night billiards sessions he loved – he was, it seems, almost unbeatable.

The museum doesn’t specify which room Mozart used for his writing, but I felt pretty sure I knew which one it was. In dramatic contrast to the sober panelling of the rest of the flat, there is one study-sized space with a preposterous gilded marble ceiling like something from a huge ballroom. Before the Mozarts moved in, the apartment had been rented to a craftsman who made ceilings for palaces, and this had been his show room. How could any artist, particularly one with Mozart’s theatrical streak, resist taking this room for their very own?

Among the great works

penned in the building was *The Magic Flute*, one of the most magical, and certainly the tightest, of his operas. Since it was showing and I had a ticket, the Vienna State Opera was next on my Mozartian list.

It was dark and freezing when I arrived at the opera house that evening. People in fur coats crowded in the ornate lobby, lingering on the grand staircase or drinking little red cups of coffee and tiny pink cakes in the bar. As the bell rang for the start of the performance, quaintly cloaked ushers directed us into the auditorium, where a great crystal ring of light on the ceiling illuminated red velvet seats and tiers of white and gilt boxes.

It’s easy to say a performance was “glittering”, but *The Magic Flute* really did seem that way. It lasted nearly four hours, and when the curtain fell, I felt I could have watched it all again. The idea of Mozart staring at the ceiling in his amazing pint-sized marble fantasy room was with me throughout the performance – and stays with me still.

FACTBOX

The Mozarthaus is at
A-1010 Vienna, Domgasse 5
phone: +43 1 512 17 91
www.mozarthausvienna.at