

Abstract

Culture Promotion Caused by Popular Culture: The Revaluation of Antonio Salieri after 2018

Moe OTSUKA

This paper provides an overview of the trends in cultural promotion originating from popular culture, such as video games and animation productions. The focus is on lectures, publications, and performances in Japan from 2018, about Antonio Salieri, who was active as a composer mainly at the Viennese court in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In 2018, Antonio Salieri featured in video games and anime productions, creating a phenomenon in Japan called “the Antonio Salieri boom,” triggered by fans of popular culture wanting to learn more about Antonio Salieri. The entry of popular culture fans, particularly the youth and women, into the field of history and academic books, which has traditionally been dominated by middle-aged and older men, took the industry by surprise. Though not all anime and gaming fans are interested in history and academic content, there are some who use popular culture as a gateway to more specialized content. The following is a description of the cultural activities during the Salieri boom around 2018-2020.

The spark that ignited the Salieri boom was the smartphone app game *Fate/Grand Order*. The game is a role-playing game in which players explore with mythological and historical figures from around the world as “Servants,” containing themes that trigger interest in not just Salieri, but the legends and history in general. Fans wished to learn more about Antonio Salieri, appearing as a new character, by following his image portrayed in *Amadeus*—the stage and film production that made him popular worldwide. However, they were troubled by the lack of information about the kind of person he was. There is only one comprehensive academic book on Salieri available in Japanese that was out of print as of 2018. In terms of research, there have been only few discussions on Salieri or opportunities to perform his works.

In response to such demand, Akira Mizutani’s *Salieri: Court Music Director Erased by Mozart* (『サリエーリ モーツァルトに消された宮廷楽長』、*La vita e le opere di Antonio Salieri*), the only scholarly book on Salieri written in Japanese, was reprinted in early 2019. The decision to reissue this book was due to fans who contacted the publisher and voted to request that the book be reprinted on

Fukkan.com, an internet-based service for requesting reprints of out-of-print books. Mizutani, the author of this book, a researcher specializing in music and opera, and perhaps the only Salieri scholar in Japan, appeared in lectures and courses on Salieri in 2019 to help restore Salieri's profile.

The Salieri boom has also contributed to the revival and performance of Salieri's works, which have rarely been performed in Japan or even across the world, and were now getting more opportunities to be performed since 2019. In addition to the increase in performance opportunities, the lack of circulation of full scores or parts of his works, especially operatic works, due to the almost complete lack of performance opportunities, led to the transcription of scores for performances in the orchestrated reading performance held in Tokyo in 2020.

Moreover, several stage productions made after *Amadeus*, featuring Mozart and Salieri, were being performed in Japan in 2019 and 2020.

In response to these cultural activities, Salieri's name was mentioned in the magazines and newspapers, and a book on Salieri was also released.

Thus, it is not uncommon today to see developments that transcend media boundaries originating in popular culture; the Salieri boom that occurred in 2018 is one such example. Against this backdrop, we believe that attention should be paid to what information can be provided from the academic field, and to providing ongoing access to this information.

A link to the full text of this article written in Japanese is below:

大塚萌 (2020) 「ポップカルチャーを発端とする文化振興: 2018年以降のアントニオ・サリエリブームをめぐる動向を例に」『千葉大学大学院人文公共学府研究プロジェクト報告書』352、pp. 12-26

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