

*A note of introduction: On 23 November 2007, Dr. Braunbehrens was the keynote speaker at the 56<sup>th</sup> Deutsches Mozartfest 2007 der Deutschen Mozart-Gesellschaft that took place in Mannheim. His remarks on that occasion bring new thoughts and new focus to the significance of Mannheim in the life of Wolfgang Mozart.*

Volkmar Braunbehrens

## CHERUBINO IN MANNHEIM

From his sixth year on, Mozart was underway, spending over a third of his life travelling. Taken all together, it amounted to more than ten years<sup>1</sup>. For the 18th century, at a time when travel by carriage was tiring and uncomfortable in the extreme and astonishingly expensive besides, this was surely an extraordinary aspect of his life. You would have to search long and hard to find another of his generation as travelled as he. Seen from this perspective, the 176 days that Mozart spent in Mannheim in the course of four visits there might appear relatively insignificant, the more so since three of the visits occurred in connection with a far more important travel objective, Paris, for which Mannheim was basically a stop along the way.

And yet, more than almost anywhere else, Mannheim may with justification call itself a *Mozart-Stadt*. Apart from his birthplace Salzburg, which he came more and more to despise, and Vienna, where he chose to live his adult years, there are of course other cities where he stayed much longer periods: taken all in all, he spent more than a year in London and in Paris as well, and his visits in Milan and Munich were distinctly longer than in Mannheim<sup>2</sup>. But it is only with regard to Mannheim and Prague<sup>3</sup> (and, yes, perhaps Munich as well) that one can say, there he came *to feel at home*, there he made enduring friendships – and not solely among musicians, there he met with approval free of intrigue as well as enthusiasm without reservation and could feel completely at his ease. And all this, despite the fact that not a single one of the cities named could offer him a permanent position.

- 
1. Mozart's first trip to Munich (when he was barely six years old) began on 12 January 1762. Out of the next 10,919 days of his life, 3,720 were spent in travel.
  2. His stay in London amounted to 407 days, in Paris 390 days, in Milan 319, and in Munich 295.
  3. In all, he made 5 visits to Prague, totalling 89 days.

The special place that Mannheim came to have in Mozart's life can surely be attributed to the quality of its orchestra, one widely regarded as probably the best in Europe<sup>4</sup>. In this connection, keep in mind that this excellence was manifest not only in the technical abilities of the individual instrumentalists but also – and especially – in its uniquely realized ensemble playing in which integration of the orchestral sound and individual dynamic attack were ideally joined with a shared understanding of the music and a concerted spirit of interpretation. Here in Mannheim was a well-schooled orchestral culture hardly to be found in anywhere else in these times.

There were other things besides: although the Mannheim court belonged neither to the most politically influential nor to the most affluent of the established courts in the German-language realms of Europe, still the orchestra and the opera with its necessary complement of singers, as well as the overall level of musical training and education and other factors, all were superbly organized and receptive to innovation. The prevailing circumstances were not rooted in traditions past but grew out of the elector Palatine Karl Theodor's personal interests and a particularly efficient use of the resources available.

Nevertheless, it was not solely this constellation of music-historical circumstances that was to make Mannheim so important for Mozart. There was something more, something called *kairòs*, an ancient Greek word meaning "the right or opportune moment," that moment when many diverse and unforeseeable elements happily coalesce and come together. And during the stay in Mannheim of almost six months that took place in the winter of 1777/78, at a time when Mozart and his mother were underway on the great journey that was supposed to bring them to Paris<sup>5</sup>, this is what happened.

Mozart had already come to know many of the Mannheim musicians in his childhood fifteen years before – their names were meticulously written down by Leopold Mozart in his travel notes<sup>6</sup>. Curiosity must have reigned on both sides. For out of the *Wunderkind* from those days had come a promising musician, although one still relatively little known in Mannheim. And for Mozart, who after all was seeking an appointment, this must have seemed in many respects the place of his dreams.

- 
4. References: (Karin v. Welck and Liselotte Homering:) 176 Tage – W.A. Mozart in Mannheim, Reiß-Museum der Stadt Mannheim, Edition Braus, 1991 (exhibition catalogue); (Ludwig Finscher:) Die Mannheimer Hofkapelle im Zeitalter Carl Theodors, Mannheim 1992; Roland Würtz: Das Mannheimer Mozart-Buch, Wilhelmshaven 1977.
  5. Attention is called to a new portrayal – albeit one with quite different emphases – that concerns itself particularly with the profound crisis in Mozart's relationship with his father and its consequences for the composer's creativity: Ulrich Drüner: Mozarts Große Reise, Sein Durchbruch zum Genie 1777-1779 (Köln-Weimar-Wien 2006).
  6. See Mozart – Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, Gesamtausgabe, Bärenreiter Kassel etc. 1962 – 1975, Vol. 1, pp. 81 f.; see also Vol. 5 (Kommentar), pp. 65 ff.

To be sure, we must go on quickly to say that he had need of fantasies and daydreams to console him for a reality that was more than harsh and unpromising. For Mozart, a temporary position of a year or two was at least not inconceivable, perhaps as piano teacher to the elector's children, or with commissions for one or two operas, or maybe some instrumental works for the court. But, in fact, nothing of the sort came about. For Mozart's musical career, Mannheim yielded pitifully little. In the five months there, he gave only one *Grosse Akademie* before the court, otherwise he was limited to four or five concerts at homes of his musician friends. An appointment was out of the question, leaving completely aside the fact that, following the sudden death of the elector of Bavaria on 30 December 1777, with the inheritance falling to Karl Theodor, the court had to move to Munich on 1 January 1778, plunging the city of Mannheim into deep depression.

Commissions in Mannheim came only from a wealthy Dutch amateur musician and those were for flute concertos and quartets, in other words, for an instrument that was not exactly Mozart's favorite. (Generally speaking, while he was in Mannheim, Mozart composed relatively little, especially when compared with other creative periods<sup>7</sup>.) And the side-trip to Kirchheimbolanden to perform before Princess Caroline of Nassau-Weilburg brought little more than gratuities (and that for a concert every day for five days).

Still, in spite of all this, Mozart seldom found so little to grouse about as in these months in Mannheim. Certainly it wasn't because of some sudden attack of modesty. And also (if I read the letters aright) it obviously wasn't simply his desire to paint a superficial, calming picture of the situation for a fretful and anxious father – for Mozart kept nothing hidden, everything that we know we learn solely from these letters. But reading them, you have a sense of buoyancy free of care or anxiety, a heart that was young and gay, a lightheartedness that keeps breaking through in the face of all disappointments. At worst, there is but an occasional sarcasm. But never does one sense in the otherwise hot-blooded and quick-tempered young Mozart the feeling of disdain or contempt, of injury to his honor, or, especially, of being surrounded by enemies – as was so often the case in the Salzburg context.

---

7. It amounted to some 35 measures a day, counting 2 piano sonatas, 2 flute quartets, 2 flute concertos, 5 violin sonatas, and 3 concert arias. That may appear to be ample. When compared with times of intense creativity, however, it looks different: For the months from October 1785 through April 1786, for example, there were an average of 55 measures a day on works of much greater weight, including 3 piano concertos, 1 piano quartet, 1 violin sonata, 3 insert arias, a concert aria, the *Maurerische Trauermusik*, the music for "*Der Schauspieldirektor*", and "*Le Nozze di Figaro*". (And added to that were numerous concert performances and demanding opera rehearsals.)

The explanation may well lie in the fact that Mozart had received a warm and friendly welcome into the colony of Mannheim musicians and made to feel one of the family. In this regard, we should particularly stress the relationship with Christian Cannabich and his family. At the time, Cannabich had taken over from Johann Stamitz and was the actual trainer of the orchestra in Mannheim; he cannot be esteemed too highly as a model and mentor for Mozart in the realm of orchestra practice. The Mannheimers' wealth of tonal color and nuance is something Mozart may have experienced for the first time here, especially given that clarinets had also long been fully integrated into the orchestra. Here Mozart's already existing inclination to provide the woodwinds with an independent role in a composition's orchestration<sup>8</sup> was confirmed anew as he listened to and reflected on the excellent performances.

The mixing and merging of social gatherings and enjoyable music making – something Mozart had known only with his own family and tended to regard as rather special – he now experienced in many ways, at home with the Cannabichs and the Wendlings and in the Weber family. For Mozart, social conviviality, the ability to enjoy himself among like-minded company, far removed from rivalries or concerns of social standing, was a fundamental need, one constantly yearned for. And it was precisely this that, out of all his travels, he actually came to enjoy only in Mannheim and in Prague (and that he had sorely missed in a city such as Paris).

With the Webers – how he came to know them is not clear – here too it was evidently a matter of sociable family gatherings where Mozart felt himself drawn in as a matter of course and which he obviously enjoyed. He looked on the trip to Kirchheimbolanden and Worms, with Fridolin Weber and daughter Aloysia along, more as a holiday excursion<sup>9</sup> and not as the concert trip that it actually was<sup>10</sup>. It is hardly surprising, then, that in these close and warm-hearted surroundings he fell in love with Aloysia Weber, a gifted singer of considerable promise. The more so since Mozart was giving her lessons even though he was not an experienced teacher.

---

8. Consider, for example, the so-called Jenamy-Piano Concerto K.271 (earlier referred to as the "Jeunehomme-Concerto" as the result of a false reading).

9. "es war eine Vacans-reise, und weiter nichts." ("it was simply a vacation trip and nothing more.") (Mozart's letter to his father of 4 February 1778).

10. The further journey to Worms to visit Fridolin Weber's brother-in-law, a church deacon living there, was in any event purely a family affair. Mozart apparently felt so much a part of the Weber family that he went along without giving the matter a second thought. Testimony to his exuberant feelings in these days is a letter written from Worms to his mother in the form of a long, carefree, and rather earthy poem of 45 lines (Mozart's letter of 31 January 1778).

At the time, Mozart was just twenty-two years old. It may well be that in Salzburg there had already been a couple of infatuations but this clearly was the first time Mozart had fallen in love. (This is not the place to speculate on why it was exactly that Mozart developed rather late in this respect.) Clearly, he was admiring of Aloysia: there must have been a reason why the most difficult and demanding of his concert arias were composed for her alone<sup>11</sup>. Yet, at the same time, this love of his had something shy about it, of being beyond his reach.

Aloysia was barely seventeen years old, and her family may have put her forward as being even younger. For this love to come to actual fulfilment was out of the question – indeed, whether there might have been ways at all in these times. How far she herself returned this love of his and responded to it is unknown<sup>12</sup>. This all played itself out in the confines of the Weber household, in other words, in the presence of Aloysia's three sisters<sup>13</sup>, their mother, and the father, Fridolin Weber.

It was a love existing more in the imagination than in any tangible reality. There was something dreamy, rapturous, and unrealistic about it (and it would almost appear as though Aloysia herself recognized this before Mozart did). Yet at the same time, they were both constantly in one another's company, brought together in a relationship needing nothing of secrecy or intrigue or trysts arranged by third parties in the know (in the manner so prevalent in novels of the era). The places where they met were in the bosom of the Weber family, for one, and in the realm of music-making, for another, both so casual and innocent that Mozart never once had to declare himself. Most significantly, given the favorable circumstances, he seems hardly to have reflected on the matter at all. Instead, so it would appear, he simply delivered himself over to his bliss and its nebulous workings – the ability to recognize the difference between proximity and inaccessibility was beyond him.

Or to put it in the words of a poet:

"I no longer know what I am, or even what I'm doing. . .  
Sometimes I'm on fire, then I'm all ice. . .

. . .

I talk about love when I'm awake,  
I talk about love in my dreams.

. . .

And if there's no one round to hear me,  
I talk about love to myself."<sup>14</sup>

---

11. "Alcandro, lo confesso" – "Non sò d'onde viene" (K.294) and especially "Popoli di Tessaglia!" – "Io non chiedo, eterni Dei" (K.316/300b).

12. On 25 December 1778 in the course of his return from Paris, Mozart reached Munich where Aloysia Weber had been engaged by the opera. Although he stayed with the Weber family, he now was met with Aloysia's rejection.

13. Aloysia (ca.1760-1839) had an older sister, Josepha (ca.1758-1819), and two younger sisters, Constanze (1762-1842) and Sophie (ca.1769-1846). In addition, there had been a brother who died an early death; his dates are unknown.

14. "Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio,/ or di foco, ora son di ghiaccio/ ... /Parlo d'amor vegliando,/ parlo d'amor sognando,/ ... /E se non ho chi m'oda, parlo d'amor con me." (Lorenzo Da Ponte: *Le nozze di Figaro*, aria of Cherubino (= Nr. 6)).

This is the first aria that Cherubino sings in Da Ponte's version of "Figaro." In it is expressed the transport of love that a page feels for an unobtainable lady, for the Countess, with the confused feelings of a youth in love with being in love. In an extended preface to his drama, "La folle Journée ou Le Mariage de Figaro", Beaumarchais characterized Chérubin so: "an attractive, high-spirited youth; confused and uncertain desires mark the principal aspects of his character; he is approaching maturity but, so far, with neither plan nor purpose, utterly open to every new event; in short, he is just what a mother at the bottom of her heart wishes her son to be, however much suffering it may cause her"<sup>15</sup> – a characterization that appears to apply perfectly to Mozart in Mannheim in 1778.

It was the first time in his life that Mozart had found himself caught up in such emotions and he surrendered to them with astounding naiveté. His startled father, on the other hand, was amazed at such credulousness when he read: "I'm so fond of this unlucky family that I want nothing more than to make them happy, and maybe I can do it."<sup>16</sup> He had a plan and it was to travel to Italy with Aloysia in the company of her father and her sister Josepha (to do the cooking). Mozart would write an opera just for his beloved that would put her forward properly as a singer, something he obviously didn't trust any other composer to do. And other travels were planned, including a side trip to Salzburg.<sup>17</sup>

When Mozart arrived back in Mannheim in November of 1778 on his way home from Paris – still deeply shaken by the death of his mother and bitterly disappointed at what the musical metropolis of Paris had had to offer – he was keenly looking forward to seeing the Weber family again. In the meantime, however, Aloysia (and indeed the whole Weber family) had relocated to Munich and joined the opera there. And most of the Mannheim orchestra as well had followed the court's move to Munich. But Mozart was not about to let himself be deterred: he was convinced that soon both the court and the orchestra would be back in Mannheim. His wishful thinking even went to the extent of seriously allowing himself to believe that he would be getting a position in Mannheim. And, one may safely add: he was still hoping for Aloysia Weber.

---

15. The translation is drawn from the edition, "Der lustige Tag oder Figaro's Hochzeit. Ein Lustspiel in fünf Aufzügen. Aus dem Französischen des Herrn Caron von Beaumarchais übersetzt. Aechte, vom Herrn Verfasser einzig und allein genehmigte, vollständige Ausgabe." Kehl 1785. p.56ff.

16. This letter that Mozart wrote to his father on 4 February 1778 goes on: "My advice is that they should go to Italy. [...] I will gladly write an opera for Verona for 50 zecchini; so that she (Aloysia) can become known; for if I don't write it, then I fear she will be taken advantage of. Until then, I'll have made so much money on the other trips we'll be taking together that it won't hurt me at all. I think we'll go to Switzerland, maybe to Holland too. Let me hear from you soon about this. If we stay anywhere for long, then the other daughter, who is the oldest (Josepha Weber), will be very helpful, for we'll be able to keep house for ourselves, because she can cook."

17. Because generally speaking, only his father's harsh reaction is cited, here is the appropriate passage from Mozart's letter as it continues: "If all goes as planned, then we, M. Weber, his 2 daughters, and myself, will have the pleasure of visiting my dear father and my dear sister in 14 days as we pass through. My sister will find a friend and comrade in Mlle Weber, for just as with my sister in Salzburg, she is highly regarded here, her father like my father, and the whole family like the Mozarts."

From his father came clear orders to get himself back to Salzburg and resume drudging away for the Archbishop. It was like the marching orders sending Cherubino off to military duty. It was only with his arrival in Munich on 25 December 1778 when he went to stay with the Weber family that the bubble of Mozart's dreams burst. As a token of his feelings, he even had brought with him a bravura aria composed just for Aloysia Weber<sup>18</sup>. But distressing disillusionment was to be his fate: his beloved turned him down.

Given all this, then, what is it that entitles us to view the stay in Mannheim in the winter of 1777/78 as an auspicious moment in Mozart's life? A time that career-wise was more or less useless, that yielded so little in the way of compositions, that saw his first serious love affair come to a painful end?

The payoff was not one that came in cash; it came instead in the form of a long-term investment, one whose worth was perhaps not fully calculable at the outset. This was most evident in his engagement with the members of the Mannheim orchestra. It found its first expression in the so-called "Paris" symphony (K.297=300a) and was followed closely thereafter by the early masterworks of those last days in Salzburg, culminating ultimately in "Idomeneo". The Mannheim experiences provided the finishing touches to his coming of age as a composer; without them, something essential to Mozart's mature musical language would have been lacking. They were experiences that – with all due respect – the rather humdrum Salzburg circumstances could not match. They were a kind of post-graduate course bringing a crowning end to his musical education.

And then too Mozart's personal experiences would turn out to benefit him significantly, this young man who had grown up in a close-knit family with every non-musical decision made for him by others, where he was closely guarded and watched over, at considerable cost to his self-reliance. For the friends in Mannheim were ones he had made for himself. It was a decisive first step in the direction of becoming an autonomous person. He found the Weber family especially sympathetic (a family, by the way, that even today suffers from a "bad press", something deserving separate, close examination), which suggests the direction Mozart's ways of life and thinking were taking.

In this connection, it seems clear that he would not have found happiness with the rather aloof and standoffish Aloysia, although he maintained friendly relations with her for the rest of his life. It should not surprise us that at first he was infatuated with her and scarcely gave her sister Constanze a second thought: after all, Constanze was barely fifteen years old at the time and could hardly have shown those qualities that later were to make him so happy with her. (I say this in deliberate opposition to the widely held view that finds its most extravagantly blatant expression in Wolfgang Hildesheimer's highly biased condemnation of Constanze<sup>19</sup>.)

---

18. "Popoli di Tessaglia!" – "Io non chiedo, eterni Dei" (K.316=300b).

19. Wolfgang Hildesheimer: Mozart, Frankfurt/M. 1977, see especially pp.252-279.

Stated succinctly, these Mannheim months were in every respect the beginning of a fundamental and decisive process of coming of age. Or to be more precise: they were the exuberantly relaxed part of this process; the bitter part would come later, in the Paris months that followed.

When, seven years later, Beaumarchais's "Figaro" came into his hands<sup>20</sup> and Mozart encountered the figure of Chérubin, memories of the time of his first rapturous love may have come flooding back. For never before (and perhaps never again) was the emotional turbulence of a youth in late puberty – the outpouring of feelings little understood pulling this way and that, the sensations running hot and cold – given such telling musical expression as in Cherubino's first aria in "Le nozze di Figaro"<sup>21</sup>. The musical portrayal of this character's psyche followed no stock role but represented rather a highly individualised characterization drawn from a most perfect understanding of the gathering emotional storm. Where else would Mozart have had the opportunity to observe such ambivalent feelings except in the memories of his own experience? Cherubino's aria is a resounding echo of the months in Mannheim.

It was almost five years later, in the fall of 1790, that there came a postlude of sorts to "Cherubino in Mannheim". Following the coronation festivities for Leopold II in Frankfurt, Mozart went first to Mainz to give a concert. Then he planned his return to Vienna by way of Munich. To be sure, the route taking him through Mannheim was the shortest way but, in addition, Mozart may well have been eager to know more about what might have happened there in the meantime, who of his old friends might still be around. And as chance would have it, the *Nationaltheater* (no longer a court theater) was fully engaged in final rehearsals for – *mirabile dictu* – "Die Hochzeit des Figaro". In German<sup>22</sup>, of course, because Italian as the language of opera was now a jettisoned burden from the court theater's past.

---

20. He probably was familiar with the German translation by Johann Rautenstrauch, which appeared in Vienna in February 1785 and was the textual basis for Schikaneder's planned presentation. The emperor's displeasure caused its performance to be forbidden, but the theater text was allowed to be published and through it Mozart may have first become aware of the play. Rautenstrauch's translation (by 1785, at least 5 had appeared) slightly cut and revised the original. It was published, without Beaumarchais's preamble, under the title, "Der närrische Tag oder die Hochzeit des Figaro", Wien 1785. At the bottom of the title-page with an etching of Cherubino in the garden came the following derisive remark aimed at the ban on a theater performance: "Stupidities that are published only strike home when one tries to hinder their free distribution: Act Five, Scene Three". Mozart undoubtedly also knew the original French text with its 44-page preface by Beaumarchais, which was the basis for Da Ponte's adaptation of Mozart's "Le nozze di Figaro": "La Folle Journée ou le Mariage de Figaro, Comédie en cinq Actes, en Prose, par M. de Beaumarchais", (Paris) 1785. (A copy of a German translation of Beaumarchais's play was listed in Mozart's estate; O.E. Deutsch (ed.), *Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, p.510, item 41.)

21. In Beaumarchais's preface, Chérubin is presented as being thirteen years old. This would appear to have been a cautionary measure, for in the discussion that follows the author was keen to defend himself against any charge of indecency in the relationship of this character with the countess and he referred specifically therefore to this youthful age. An age of 17 or 18 would be more believable, according better with Cherubino's projected military service.

22. This footnote appears at the bottom of page 9.

Mozart didn't have to be asked twice and proceeded on 23 October to "[give] numerous tempos at the rehearsal of Figaro"<sup>23</sup>. And on 24 October, the very next day, Mozart personally conducted the first performance<sup>24</sup>. Surely it was not just for sentimental reasons or out of a feeling of gratitude for this place. Once more, *kairòs*, Mannheim's propitious moment. There could hardly have been a single musician or singer still in Mannheim whom Mozart had known five years before. It must have been, rather, a kind of eager curiosity about the recasting of his Italian opera buffa into a German-language Singspiel – one without recitatives but with spoken German text instead. The singers now engaged at the theater were less the kind of vocal virtuosos as before and more the sort of singer-actors who would be equally at home in pieces for the spoken theater as for opera or Singspiel. In no way did this contradict Mozart's concept of musical theater. Even so, it represented a change, a transformation – and one not only in another language with its own spoken cadences and turns of speech. More than that, it was another kind of musical theater, one with its own traditions. Not that Mozart would have had a clear preference either way: he had provided unquestioned masterworks in both opera forms. But he was surely interested to see how, and how well, such a transformation might succeed, one aimed at a completely different audience and taking place in a theater that itself had been transformed – in short, from an historical point of view, Mozart was well on his way to the idea of municipal theater (and ultimately "Die Zauberflöte" at the Freihaus-Theater auf der Wieden in Vienna).

22. (*The textual reference is on page 8.*) To this day, it not clear which German-language libretto was being used for this performance. As early as June 1787 "Figaro" was already being presented in German at the Rosenthal-Theater in Prague, as it was also in Graz on 9 August 1788. Another version for Donaueschingen (23 September 1787) can be documented. In the regions of north Germany, the Grossmann theater company was using the translation by Knigge and his daughter (performances in Lübeck, Hannover, Braunschweig(?) and Hamburg), while the Vulpius version that had already been published illegally in 1787 in Cologne was being used in Mainz(?), Stuttgart and Berlin (24 September 1790). Which of the two versions was used in Mannheim – Vulpius or Knigge – is not something to be determined on the basis of geographical proximity; only surviving theater records would help. It is clear that in Bonn (January 1790) the version by Knigge as adapted by Christian Gottlob Neefe was given. Neefe had long worked closely with the Grossmann theater enterprise and was personally known to his brother Mason Knigge. (The first reduction for piano to appear in print was published in both languages – "Translated into German by Baron Knigge and arranged for piano by C. G. Neefe" – by Nicolaus Simrock in Bonn in 1796.) Interestingly enough, Mozart owned editions of the "Dramaturgischen Blätter" published by Knigge in Hannover between October 1788 and June 1789 in which Knigge had reviewed the Hannover presentation of "Hochzeit des Figaro" that took place on 18 May 1789. In these "Dramaturgischen Blätter", Cherubino's two arias had been printed in Italian with a German translation by Knigge. How these remotely published theater editions came into Mozart's hands is not known. Almost certainly they had been sent to him as a gift; he could not have bought them in Vienna because of the law against the importation of books. One possibility is that they came to him directly from Knigge himself, or perhaps he was given them in connection with the performance in Mannheim.

23. Diary of Johann Wilhelm Backhaus, cited by Roland Würtz: *Die Erstaufführungen von Mozarts Bühnenwerken in Mannheim*: (Roland Würtz:) *Das Mannheimer Mozart-Buch*, Wilhelmshaven 1977, p.181.

24. From a written note on the list of performers at the Mannheim performance: „Motzardt dirigitte selbst. Und reißte den folgenden Tag von hier ab.“ Cited in Roland Würtz, see above. See also *Dokumente*, p.331.

It probably had not escaped Mozart's attention that the wide-spread performances of „Figaro“, and of „Don Giovanni“ as well, were largely in the form of Singspiels.<sup>25</sup> In Mannheim, however, it was not a matter of one of the numerous traveling theater groups with all their frequent deficiencies and make-do improvisations, but rather a well-established ensemble with skilled theater direction and an excellent reputation. For Mozart, this sufficed for him to endow such a performance with the final personal touches. And it was – by today's measures – an unusually youthful ensemble whose ages were mostly less than thirty; with the exception of the Count Almaviva and Antonio, the gardener, they were all younger than Mozart himself<sup>26</sup>.

The foundation for the enduring popularity and success of Mozart's operas was not based on their performances in Italian but rather on those performances given in German with translated librettos<sup>27</sup>. And in Mannheim, at the very beginnings of this success, it was Mozart himself who had dictated its march tempo. We are surely right to assume that the tempo he gave was brisk.

For Mozart, the city of Mannheim, in what it gave him and in what he took from it, was an altogether beneficial and maturing experience. Other places we can say that about are few.

Volkmar Braunbehrens

---

25. Conversion of Italian operas into German Singspiels had been going on for a long time, especially from the early 1770s. Even Mozart had encountered this practice in connection with „La finta giardiniera“/„Die Gärtnerin aus Liebe“ (K.196) and had a hand in it. But because of the generally deficient theater staging and musical handling, these Singspiel versions of Italian operas played no independent aesthetic role for a long time. Now, however, conditions were changing and developing in the direction of greater professionalism. And in just this way, the Viennese opera successes of Salieri, Martin y Soler and Paisiello in particular had become well known. The industry and enterprise of the corps of Viennese copyists also played a role in this.

26. The cast: Graf Almaviva: Franz Anton Epp (1747-1805) – Gräfin: Josepha Beck-Scheefer (ca. 1762/64-1827) – Susanna: Christine Elisabeth Keilholz (1764-1820) – Figaro: Johann Georg Gern (1757-1830) – Cherubino: Dorothea Keilholz (ca. 1766/67-1804) – Marcellina: Henriette Nicola née Kirchhöfer (1767-1795) – Bartolo: Joseph Demmer (1764-1811) – Don Curzio: Carl Theodor Haßloch (1769-1829) – Barbarina: Marion Boudet (1764-1824) – Antonio: Johann Wilhelm Backhaus (ca. 1755-1834). By the way, the singers for the Vienna première of „Nozze di Figaro“ on 1 May 1786 also averaged less than thirty years old.

27. This means that the variations in interpretations, with all the misunderstandings and the ideologically driven recastings of the libretto translations, must be viewed as part and parcel of Mozart reception history. The „Urtext“ was only rediscovered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is even now being overlaid by far-reaching regie-theater interpretations.