

The House Composers of the Theater auf der Wieden in the Time of Mozart (1789-91)¹

DAVID J. BUCH

Some of the most important theatrical music in Europe was produced at the Theater auf der Wieden in suburban Vienna in the years 1789 to 1801. Beginning with the immensely popular *Die zween Anton oder der dumme Gärtner aus dem Gebirge* in July 1789, Emanuel Schikaneder produced one successful singspiel after another. The most successful of these were quickly staged in other European venues, both in the original German and in translation.²

Yet, until recently, we have known only a single opera from that period, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. Because scholars have not studied this repertory,³ a myth of singularity for Mozart's singspiel has dominated the secondary literature. But Mozart's opera was in fact the fourth in a series of fairy-tale singspiels based on texts associated with Christoph Martin Wieland. And the music of Mozart's singspiel is firmly rooted in a unique style developed at the theater by a group of talented composers who interacted with Mozart, both learning from the master and influencing him in turn.

Another myth about this theater has also persisted in modern literature, namely, that the music was of an inferior quality and that the performances were rather crude. While there is one derisive review of a performance at the Theater auf der Wieden by a north German commentator in 1793,⁴ most contemporary reviews were positive, noting a high standard of musical performance. In his unpublished autobiography, Ignaz von Seyfried recalled performances of operas in the early 1790s by Mozart, Süßmayr, Hoffmeister etc., writing that they were performed with rare skill (*ungemein artig*). Seyfried describes *Kapellmeister* Henneberg conducting the orchestra from the "pianoforte . . . like a General commanding an army of musicians!"⁵

¹ An earlier version of this article was published as "Die Hauskomponisten am Theater auf der Wieden in der Zeit Mozarts (1789-1791)," in *Acta Mozartiana* 48, Heft 1/4 (2001): 75-81. This issue consisted of papers presented as a symposium of the Deutsche Mozart-Gesellschaft, "Der Stein der Weisen: Musiktheater im josephinischen Wien," held in Augsburg, 6-7 May 2001.

² The term *Freihaustheater*, so favored in modern scholarship, seems rarely if ever to have been used at this time.

³ Otto Erich Deutsch, *Das Freihaustheater auf der Wieden, 1787-1801*, zweite, verbesserte Auflage (Vienna and Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Jugend und Volk, 1937), documented much of the repertory but did not analyze the music.

⁴ *Berlinische Musikalische Zeitung* 36 (12 Oct. 1793): 142: "Mozarts treffliche Musik wird auf dem Theater des Schikaneder so genothzuechtigt daß man vor dem Jammer davon laufen möchte." Cited in Otto Jahn, *W. A. Mozart* (Leipzig, 1859), 4: 593 n. 4.

⁵ Ignaz von Seyfried, *Skizze meines Lebens: Theilnehmenden Freunden zum Andenken gereicht* [1824-41], *Am 24 Aug. 1841 erhalten*, Tobias Haslinger, Vienna, Hochschule für Musik, shelfmark I. N. 36561, 6-7: "Wenn ich nun schon eine Stunde vor dem Anfang des [das or den] Terrain an der Orchester-Barriere occupirt hatte, in der peinlichsten Ungeduld vorläufig das Lampen-anzünden—als instantia prima—harrte,—wenn sich so dann, ach Gott! wie unendlich langsam! Die Herren Musiker im amicabeln Geplauder vereinzelt herein schlichen, nach gegenseitig offerieren Tabak-Prisen, die nötigen Zurüstungen zum Einstimmen machten, meine Taschen-Uhr schon längst auf die ersehnte siebente Stunde wies; endlich das sonore Glöcklein den Moment der Erlösung verlautebarte, endlich das kleine Kommunikation-Pförtchen von der Bühne herab sich rasch öffnete, der Capellmeister Henneberg, wie immer à quatre épingles aufgedonnert, stattlich à la harrison coeffirt, im eleganten, scharlachrothen, mit größten Perlenmutter-

The quality of the musical performances at the theater benefited from three changes that occurred around the time that Schikaneder became director in 1789. First, the Kärntnertheater closed in 1788, and several members of that theater's orchestra came to the Wiednertheater.⁶ Second, Schikaneder hired two virtuoso singers for leading male roles; both were also skilled composers. Franz Xaver Gerl would be the original Sarastro, and Benedikt Schack the first Tamino. Third, the theater employed a new *Kapellmeister*, the young pianist Johann Baptist Henneberg (born Henneberger, in 1769). Along with Schikaneder himself, these three musicians became the "house composers" of the theater, providing music for the various texts. They created a particular style that became the rage in Vienna, a kind of popular theater music that employed a wide variety of musical techniques. Most of the singspiels were built around the "star" of the theater, Emanuel Schikaneder himself, who was apparently a kind of comic genius. Schikaneder's character Papageno has more music than any other role in *Die Zauberflöte*, and this is true for most of the other Wiednertheater singspiels in this period.

The Wiednertheater maintained a pressing schedule of new plays and operas. Writers included Schikaneder, his wife Eleonore,⁷ and Karl Ludwig Giesecke. A number of modern writers have speculated that the texts were also collaborative, but there is no compelling evidence for this assumption. From the first, Giesecke was translating librettos from German, French and Italian. Schikaneder recycled his earlier works and wrote sequels both to his operas and to those of others. He had the music of Guglielmi,⁸ Darayrac,⁹ and refashioned for these translations, and he commissioned new music by composers like Franz Teyber,¹⁰ Johann Baptist Schenk,¹¹ Johann Baptist Lasser,¹² Paul

Knöpfen garnirten Fracke flink hindurchschlupfte, sich schnell ans Pianoforte setzte, alles seines Winkes gewärtigte, nun der stattliche Rosenring in seiner Rechten aufblitze, diese, hoch emporgehoben, nach einer kurzen Pause, im Nu aufs Pult niedersank, und zugleich der erste, volle Akkord in seiner ganzen Kraft und Fülle erklang. Wie bebten da nicht alle meine Nerven, wie zitterten, die Pulse, wie durchströmte mit elektrischem Feuer ein Wonnegefühl mein Innerstes! Nein! In meinen Augen gab es nichts schöner's, größer's, herrlicher's, als so, gleich einem Generalissimus, eine Tonkünstler-Armee zu kommandieren!"

⁶ These include the concert master Joseph Suche, the flutist Anton Dreissig, the cellist Franz Deabis, and the double bassist Felix Stadler. These are listed as members of the Kärntnertheater Orchestra in documents cited in Dorothea Link, *The National Court Theatre in Mozart's Vienna: Sources and Documents 1783-1792* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), they are then listed as members of the Wiednertheater Orchestra in Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld, *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag* (1796), facs. ed. Otto Biba (Munich/Salzburg, 1976). I am indebted to Theodore Albrecht for pointing out this information to me. *Kapellmeister* Henneberg and *Konzertmeister* Suche are first mentioned in Theater posters in 1791. 13 April 1791 (poster, Vienna, Archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde [henceforth A-Wgm]) Musikalische Akademie zum Vorteil Joseph Suche. Henneberg plays a concerto by Koseluch (on the "Fortepiano"). "Herr Henneberg Kapellmeister dieses Theater ein Concerte auf dem Fortepiano spielen, von Herrn Kozeluch."

⁷ An announcement for the play *Ernst Rüdiger, Graf von Starhemberg* appeared on a poster from 2 August 1791 (A-Wgm). "Morgen haben wir die Ehre aufzuführen: *Ludwig Herzog von Steyermark, oder Samäts Feuerbär*. Ein ganz neues Schauspiel in Akten nach einem alten Volksmärchen bearbeitet von Mad. Eleonore Schikaneder." Apparently, no scholar has taken notice of this important attribution to Eleonore.

⁸ 2 September 1790, *Robert und Kalliste oder der Triumph der Treue* (1777), is a translation of Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi's three-act *dramma per musica*, *La sposa fedele* (P. Chiari, 1767).

⁹ 27 August 1791, *Renaud d'Ast*, P.-Y Barré & J.-B. Radet (based on La Fontaine), with music by Dalayrac, translated and arranged by Karl Ludwig Giesecke as *Georg von Asten, oder Der gemahlten Liebhaber*.

¹⁰ 5 September 1789: *Die Indianer oder Fernando und Jariko*.

Wranitzky,¹³ and Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf.¹⁴ But the staple of the repertory would be the new singspiels produced by the house composers.

The singspiels at the Wiednertheater were particular to conditions there, starting with the manager of the theater before Schikaneder, Johann Friedel. In its review of Friedel's adaptation of Paisiello's comic opera *Die eingebildeten Philosophen* in early 1789, the *Kritisches Theater-Journal von Wien* notes:¹⁵ "It is well known that Herr Friedel has enlisted a company of German opera singers so that, starting next Easter season, he can alternate operas with comedies." Critics in *Der Spion von Wien* and the *Kritisches Theater-Journal* noted the increased schedule of Friedel's productions; the latter cited nine new pieces in fourteen days.¹⁶ A few weeks later, the same journal reported poor ensemble owing to the continued lack of a *Kapellmeister*.¹⁷ Some months later, the theater engaged the young Henneberg in this capacity. Schikaneder employed a team of composers to accommodate his many new singspiels. This team approach was not new: the earliest operas were collaborations, and such team work was also common on Parisian stages. The particular team approach at the Wiednertheater was first discussed in 1794, in an anonymous Viennese article entitled "Ueber den Stand der Musik in Wien." Citing Schack and Gerl's collaborations, the author notes: "Herr Schack, a former member of this theater, wrote a sequel to *Cosa rara*, and *Don Quixote*; with Herr Gerl, who was also in this company, he composed [*Das*] *Schlaraffenland* and *Die Wienerzeitung*.... In the case of the six parts of the *beyden Anton* or the *dummen Gärtners*, each of which has a specific title, in the case of the *Schellenkappe* or the *Derwisch*, and in the case of [*Der*] *Stein der Weisen*, several [persons] composed them at the same time; one constructs these operas like a house, and it is not to be denied that this is the best approach when an opera must be written quickly."¹⁸ Schikaneder began

¹¹ 9 December 1789: *Das unvermuthete Seefest*, 11 July 1791: *Der Aerndtekrantz oder Das Schmitterfest*, November 1791: *Das Singspiel ohne Titel* (autograph score in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musiksammlung, shelfmark Hs. 16480A, und copy in A-Wgm, shelfmark VI 17615).

¹² 2 July 1790: *Der Kapellmeister*.

¹³ 7 November 1789: *Oberon, König der Elfen*. An important early Viennese copy, formerly in Donaueschingen, Fürstliche Fürstenbergische Hofbibliothek, is now in Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe.

¹⁴ Later February 1791: *Der Schiffspatron oder Der neue Guttscherr*.

¹⁵ *Kritisches Theater-Journal von Wien. Eine Wochenschrift* (Vienna: Matthias Ludwig, 1788-89). I. Quartal, Zweites Stück (5 February 1789), 3-9 (24 January premiere). A single copy in one volume survives in the Sammlung von Inkunabeln, alten und wertvollen Drucken (Augustinerlesesaal), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, shelfmark 6.080-A – Alt. "Es ist bekannt, daß sich Hr. Friedel auch einer Gesellschaft deutscher Operisten verschrieben hat, die künftige Ostern eintreffen, da er dann Komödie mit der Oper abwechseln lassen wird."

¹⁶ *Kritisches Theater-Journal*, zweites Vierteljahr, Zweites Stück, 19 February 1789, p. 52.

¹⁷ The *Kritisches Theater-Journal von Wien* (Matthias Ludwig [1788-1789]) II. Quartal, Nr. 5 (March 5, 1789), pp. 85-87, reports on the Wiednertheater performance of the singspiel *Die schlaue Nanette* on 21 February 21 1789: "Von seinem Gesange läßt sich noch nicht viel sagen; er kam selten mit dem Orchester überein; wovon die Schuld zum Theil auch an diesem liegen mochte; weil ihm noch ein Kapellmeister mangelt."

¹⁸ *Wiener Theater Almanach* (Vienna: Kurzbeck, 1794), 188: "Herr Schack, ein gewesenes Mitglied dieses Theaters, schrieb eine Fortsetzung der *Cosa rara*, und den *Don Quixote*; gemeinschaftlich mit Herrn Gerl, der ebenfalls bey dieser Gesellschaft engagirt war, schrieb das *Schlaraffenland* und die *Wienerzeitung*.... Bey den sechs Theilen der *beyden Anton* oder des *dummen Gärtners*, die jeder für sich einen besondern Titel führen, bey der *Schellenkappe* oder dem *Derwisch*, und bey dem *Stein der Weisen* componirten

crediting his composer teams in 1791 on theater posters.¹⁹ He continued to use collaborative composition, even at Theater an der Wien (See Fig. 1 at end of article).²⁰

Although we cannot be sure of his precise role, Mozart joined the house composers in producing *Der Stein der Weisen oder die Zauberinsel* in September 1790.²¹ The following year, Mozart wrote an aria for Franz Gerl and the theater's double bass player, Friedrich Pischelberger, "Per questa bella mano," K. 612 (8 March 1791), then a set of variations on the aria "Ein Weib ist das herrlichste Ding auf der Welt," from the *zweiter Theil der zween Anton*, called *Die verdeckten Sachen, oder der dumme Gärtner aus dem Gebürge* (K. 613). He may have also written the lost aria, "Ohne Zwang, aus eignem Triebe," K. 569 (January 1789), for performance in this theater. This seems to be the case with the incomplete soprano aria, "Schon lacht der holde Frühling," K. 580 (17 September 1789), written for Josepha Hofer. The autograph manuscript bears the name "Henneberg" written in the upper right-hand corner of the first page.

In 1991, the Hamburg City Theater collection came to light, a collection of manuscripts that were part of the booty taken by the Soviet army in World War II. These materials were returned to the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, and they provide an indication of the range of musical styles at the Theater auf der Wieden. Especially significant is the manuscript collection of the Stadttheatersammlung, which includes six unique pieces from the Wiednertheater repertory, all Viennese copies from a circle of scribes that seem to be associated with the theater. From these materials we learn that there was a far greater variety of singspiels in the repertory, from comedies to spectacles and tragedies. Many of these stage works included instrumental and vocal music. One example of this kind of "semi-opera" is the "Lust- und Zauberspiel" *Der wohlthätige Derwisch oder Die Schellenkappe*. There were also melodramas and full-length singspiels in one or two acts, such as Paul Wranitzky's *Oberon König der Elfen*, *Der Stein der Weisen*, and *Die Zauberflöte*.

With its equal balance of dialogue and music, and with its absorbing of Italian influences, *Die zween Anton* strongly resembles the contemporary *opéra comique* then popular in Vienna. The *Sinfonia* provides a good example of the frenetic pace associated

mehrere zugleich, man arbeitete an diesen Operetten wie an einem Hause, und es ist nicht zu läugnen, dass diese Manier die allerbeste ist, wenn eine Oper bald zu Stande gebracht seyn soll. "

¹⁹ The two collections of Wiednertheater posters are found in Vienna. The most important collection, once owned by Josef Dietrich, is now in A-Wgm (1790-1801, 2 volumes). A smaller set of playbills, formerly part of the Franz Trau estate, is found in Vienna's Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, Druckschriftensammlung, Theater auf die Wieden, 1789-1801, shelfmark 77250 C.

²⁰ A poster in the Druckschriftensammlung of the Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, dated 16 January 1795, announces Karl Ludwig Giesecke's adaptation of Favart's ballet *Cythère assiégé* as *Die Belagerung von Cythere, oder: Die Macht der Liebe. Die Musik ist von dem berühmten Ritter Gluck. Die neuern eingeschalteten Singstücke von Hrn. F. Anton Hoffmeister*. A score of this singspiel survives in Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Carl von Ossietzky, Musiksammlung, shelfmark ND VII 145; it was produced by the same circle of Viennese copyists as the same library's Viennese copy of *Der Stein der Weisen* (shelfmark ND VII 174). Like the *Stein* manuscript, it has attributions to the different composers. Two years later, Schikaneder advertised his new opera, *Babilons Piremiden*, with music by Johann Mederitsch and Peter Winter. On the theater poster, dated 25 October 1797, he notes that the singspiel was "wegen Mangel der Zeit von zween Meistern verfaßt." On the poster for Joachim Perinet's *Liebe macht kurzen Prozeß* (premiere 26 March 1798) Schikaneder announced that "Die Musik ist von verschiedenen beliebten Meistern." Posters for Perinet's later singspiels also use this same sentence.

²¹ For details see my "Mozart and the Theater auf der Wieden: New Attributions and Perspectives," in *Cambridge Opera Journal* 9 (1997): 195-232, and "On Mozart's Partial Autograph of the Duet 'Nun, liebes Weibchen,' K. 625/592a", in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 124 (1999): 53-85. The latter contains a list of surviving Wiednertheater scores and their present locations.

with this Italian influence. Like other Viennese theatergoers, Mozart found the singspiel extremely attractive, and he praised it in a letter to his wife Constanze from late spring 1790.²² The succinct choruses and ensembles are equally engaging, and the arias use popular song styles as well as longer, virtuoso pieces. *Der wohltätige Derwisch* uses similar elements, along with Turkish and exotic allusions. Karl von Zinzendorf heard the singspiel at the Wiednertheater on 14 March 1791, and he deemed it a “farce singulière.”²³ Choruses for whirling dervishes and magic marches are conjured up by the bells of an enchanted fool’s cap. Solemn and moralistic bass arias for the dervish (likely composed and sung by Gerl) clearly influenced the music of Sarastro. The “feierlich” style was another important element in Wiednertheater singspiels, one that was associated with solemn ceremonial occasions at the Viennese Church, court and lodges.

The house composers seem to have been attracted to the violent and powerful music of Gluck and his contemporaries, music in the *terrifying* style. We hear this in “Die Seeschlacht” of *Der wohltätige Derwisch* and the choruses of *Der Stein der Weisen*. Counterpoint was not foreign to the musical composition either. The *Sinfonia* to Benedikt Schack’s *Der Fall ist noch weit seltner* is but one example of the skillful use of polyphony, as well as a broad harmonic palette. This is an ambitious, full-length singspiel in two acts, with multiple references to the score of *Una cosa rara* by Vincenz Martín y Soler.

Mozart was not the first individual composer that Schikaneder commissioned to write operas for his theater. Paul Wranitzky composed the successful *Oberon, König der Elfen* (7 November 1789), and Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf wrote *Der Schiffspatron oder Der neue Guttherr* (conducted by the composer, in late February 1791). He commissioned three operas written by Johann Baptist Schenk, and one by his old collaborator, Franz Teyber. Schikaneder occasionally staged singspiels from other theaters, such as Peter Winter’s *Helena und Paris* (24 November 1791), and had singspiel adaptations made from popular French and Italian operas.

Unfortunately, only a few of these scores survive; but they indicate that unlike Mozart, Wranitzky, Dittersdorf and Schenk stood somewhat apart from the musical style of the house composers of the Wiednertheater. *Oberon, Der Schiffspatron* and *Das Singspiel ohne Titel* lack the characteristic tunefulness of the typical Wiednertheater singspiel. A comparison of *Die Zauberflöte* to *Die zweien Anton*, *Der Fall ist noch weit seltner*, *Der Stein der Weisen*, and *Der wohltätige Derwisch*, reveals the high degree to which Mozart absorbed the style of this stage, and how the master contributed to this popular theatrical tradition.

²² Mozart. *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Wilhelm A. Bauer, Otto Erich Deutsch and Joseph Heinz Eibl, 7 vols. (Kassel, 1962-75), IV, 110 (No. 1129): “gestern war ich in dem zweyten theil von der Cosa rara—gefällt mir aber nicht so gut wie die Antons.”

²³ “Den Derwisch [, une] farce singulière avec les nés qui viennent aux hommes et femmes.” The Zinzendorf diaries are preserved in Vienna’s Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv. For a modern edition, see Link, *The National Court Theatre in Mozart’s Vienna*, 372.


Zu hochfürstlich Stahrenbergischen Frey
 Heute Mittwoch den 12ten Jänner 1791.
 Werden die Schauspieler in dem kaiserl. königl. privilegierten Theater auf der
 Wieden die Ehre haben aufzufahren.
 Zum Besten für Mad. Hofser, Hrn. Schack und Gerl.
Zum Erstenmale:
 Die
Wienerzeitung.
 Eine neue komische Oper in 3 Akten, von Karl Ludwig Giesecke, Schauspieler.
 Die Musik hierzu ist von Herrn Schack und Gerl.

P e r s o n e n.	
Michael Stark, Tischlermeister.	• • • • • Hr. Schlander.
Hanna, seine Frau.	• • • • • Mad. Schack.
Margarethe, seine Tochter.	• • • • • Mr. Gottlieb.
Michael, ein Tischlergesell.	• • • • • Hr. Schlander.
Hannsel, Michaels jüngerer Sohn, Lehrling.	• • • • • Mr. Schlander.
Marquis le Pibre.	• • • • • Hr. Hofner.
Ranette Freulich, Marchande des Modes.	• • • • • Mad. Hofser.
Rittmeister von Grismar.	• • • • • Hr. Schack.
Lieutenant von Rorrmann.	• • • • • Hr. Gerl.
Gelehrte von Luz.	• • • • • Hr. Schlander.
Eva von Luz, seine Frau.	• • • • • Mad. Schlander.
Bildhauerey, seine Tochter.	• • • • • Mad. Richter.
Jakob, Grismars Bedienter, bey Luz unter dem Namen Hans.	• • • • • Hr. Brenner.
Siffette, Ranettes Stubenmädchen.	• • • • • Mad. Gerl.
Therese Freunlich, eine von Ranettes Mädchen.	• • • • • Mr. Heimold.
Steffen, Tischlergesell.	• • • • • Hr. Koster.
Viele Tischlergesellen.	
Viele Pappmachereyen.	

Die Gesänge zu dieser Oper sind bei der Kasse gestempelt das Stück für 14 kr. zu haben.
 Die Loge-Schlüssel sind bei der Madame Hofser im Freyhauß über dem 2ten Thor im 2ten Stock abzuholen.
Der Anfang ist um 7 Uhr.

Figure 1. Poster for the premiere of *Die Wienerzeitung* (12 January 1791); text by Karl Ludwig Giesecke, music by Benedikt Schack and Franz Xaver Gerl. The author wishes to thank the Archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, Austria for its kind permission to reproduce this photograph of the poster.