

**KARL LUDWIG GIESECKE:
HIS ALBUMS AND HIS LIKELY INVOLVEMENT IN THE WRITING OF THE LIBRETTO OF
MOZART'S OPERA *THE MAGIC FLUTE***

by

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1. Introduction

Karl Ludwig GIESECKE (Figure 1), well known for his mineralogical work in Greenland, Scandinavia and Central Europe, had an early career connected with the theatrical stage long before beginning the main part of his scientific work. His work with the stage was mainly but not exclusively with Emmanuel SCHIKANEDER's Company in Vienna and comprised writing many opera libretti, and stage works specializing in comedy, travesty and parody. Opera libretti included the fairy story '*Oberon, King of the Elves*' written in 1790 (see GIESECKE 1806) with music by Paul WRANITZSKY (1756-1808), and a comedic opera with 33 performances (the first on 26 June 1792 at the Freihaus Theater, Vienna) entitled '*Das Schlaraffenland*' ['*The Land of Cockaigne*'] (see LANGE und STEINBECK, 2009) with music composed by Benedikt SCHACK and Franz Xaver GERL, who played the roles of Tamino and Sarastro respectively in productions of '*The Magic Flute*' at the Freihaus Theater. Also listed amongst Giesecke's operatic works is '*Die Pfaueninsel*' ['*The Peacock Island*'] written in 1799

In addition, GIESECKE made translations of Italian texts into German of two of MOZART's operas, '*The Marriage of Figaro*' ('*Die Hochzeit des Figaro*', 28 December 1792) and '*Così fan Tutti*' ('*Die Schule der Liebe oder So machen Sie's alle*', 14 August 1794). Other translations included several of SHAKESPEARE's works from English into German (notably Hamlet), but in travestied form. He also worked in stage management, prompting, acting and journalistic criticism for various central European newspapers.

However, after leaving SCHIKANEDER's Company around 1800 he turned to mineralogy and during the course of the Napoleonic wars spent seven years marooned in Greenland (see STEENSTRUP, 1910), on a scheduled 3 year excursion approved by the Danish Royal Greenland and Faeroes Business Commission in 1805. This Commission reported to the Finance College that he was proposing to look at the natural history of the land with a main purpose to search for copper, lead, and aluminium minerals. GIESECKE eventually arrived in Greenland in May 1806 and began his travel diary on 1st June, 1806 (GIESECKE, 1910).

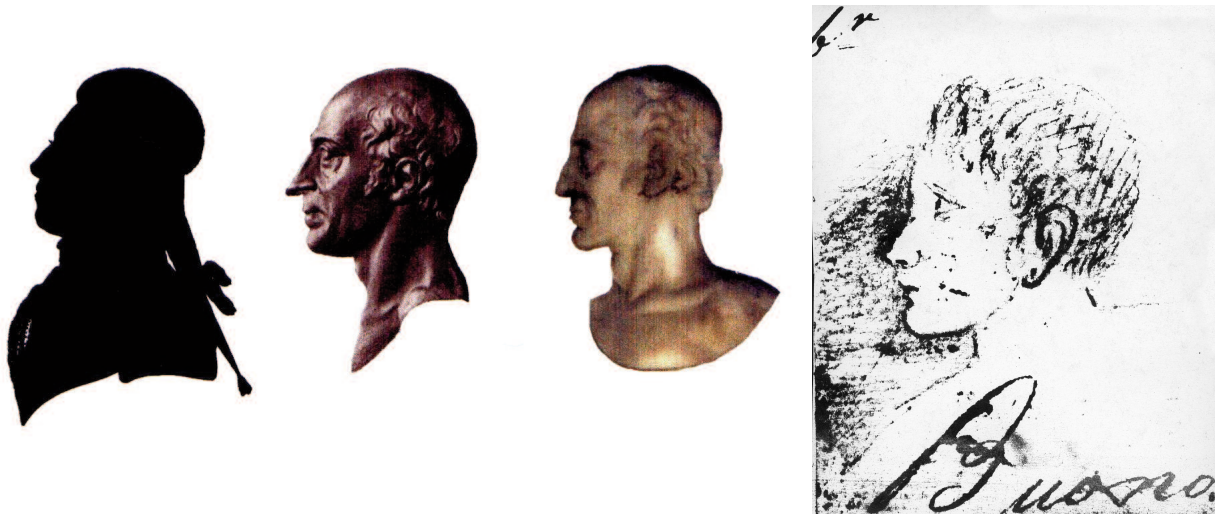


Figure 1:

Profiles of Karl Ludwig GIESECKE (the profile on the extreme right is from the GIESECKE albums and is reproduced by the courtesy of the National Library of Ireland). It is thought that this pencil drawing may be a self portrait by GIESECKE. The album entry itself is by Metta SCHULTZE and is dated December 7th, 1802, and was written in Bremen.

GIESECKE later became the Professor of mineralogy to the Royal Dublin Society in 1813 where he was based for the rest of his working life, and from where he carried out much geoscientific work in the British Isles.

He eventually returned to mainland Europe to present specimens to various museums, as was his known long-standing intention while in Greenland (see below, and STEENSTRUP, 1910). It was in Vienna in 1818, during this visit, that he claimed to have written parts of *The Magic Flute* libretto, for which, after his death, he suffered considerable derision from some quarters. One of the earliest commentators was a man named CORNET (1849) who reported a conversation with GIESECKE on *The Magic Flute*, together with some other friends from the earlier Viennese stage. An account of this meeting was also commented on by BATLEY (1969), who quoted the following remarks by GIESECKE from the account by CORNET. This meeting between GIESECKE and CORNET occurred in the summer of 1818 in the presence of Ignaz von SEYFRIED, and a man named KORNTHEUER, together with Julius LAROCHE, and Messrs. KÜSTNER and GNED. CORNET wrote the following:

“On this occasion we discovered a lot about the old times; amongst other things we learnt to see in him (who at that time had belonged to the prohibited order of freemasons) the real author of The Magic Flute (which moreover SEYFRIED already suspected.) I’m relating all this according to his own statement which we had no reason to doubt. He told us all about this when I sang the cavatina inserted in Der Spiegel von Arkadien. Many thought that the prompter HELMBÖCK had collaborated with SCHIKANEDER. But GIESECKE corrected us on this point too, only the figure of Papageno and his counterpart Papagena did he attribute to SCHIKANEDER.”

CORNET (1849) also stated the following:

“And above all the truly German Magic Flute by SCHIKANEDER and GIESECKE a member of the chorus who did the plan of the plot, the division of the scenes and the well known simple (‘naïve’) rhymes for him.”

A similar conclusion to this, that is, that GIESECKE did indeed contribute material of substance to the opera was reached by the Cambridge academic DENT (1911, 1913). Since then, however, other various pieces of evidence have come to light which also support his claims, including those discussed within this account.

2. The Likelihood of GIESECKE's involvement in the writing of *The Magic Flute* libretto

This opera was one of three great masterpieces composed by MOZART in his last year (1791), the other two being the Requiem, mainly by MOZART but reputedly finished by his pupil SÜSSMAYR, plus the opera *La Clemenza di Tito*. It will be remembered that GIESECKE, during this 1818 visit to Vienna, claimed to have been involved in large amounts of the writing of considerable parts of the libretto of *The Magic Flute* (WHITTAKER, 1991, 1998, 2001, 2007b). This claim was recognised as true by many of the early biographers of MOZART including major biographers such as JAHN (1856), one hundred years after MOZART's birth in 1756, but subsequently criticised or even rejected by many later writers such as KIRCHMAYER (1995, 2001) but especially by KOMORZYNSKI (1948) and HONOLKA (1990), particularly the latter, who brought forward some grave doubts about GIESECKE'S claim. However, some of the newly available data now known suggest that GIESECKE may well indeed have contributed to the libretto of the opera. This question itself (that is whether GIESECKE as well as SCHIKANEDER contributed anything of substance to the opera libretto as he claimed in 1818) remains at the present time one of the outstanding questions of MOZART-related research. Earlier contributions by WHITTAKER (1998, 2001, 2007a, 2007b) have already suggested that GIESECKE's claims for some, or at least part, of the authorship, are likely to be genuine.

From what is known of GIESECKE provided by his contemporary friends and acquaintances, plus the data presented in his albums, it is perfectly clear that he was an honest man in every aspect of his demeanour (see also (JØRGENSEN, 1996), greatly respected, and hence unlikely to make up false claims. For example, in connection with GIESECKE's recommendation in favour of his appointment to the post of professor to the Royal Dublin Society, that from Mr Leslie FOSTER is of considerable relevance and importance and comments on GIESECKE's character and nature. FOSTER wrote in this statement that '*I have lately had opportunities of knowing him personally in Edinburgh and of seeing the very high estimation in which he is held by the scientific people there, he is considered as not inferior to any mineralogist in Europe, and certainly not JAMESON. I can also certify (which is important for our purpose) that his manners are peculiarly prepossessing and gentleman-like...*' (see STEENSTRUP, 1910). The information presented in this account provides confirmatory evidence for GIESECKE's claim and is strongly supported by the work of the well-known musicologist Professor Hans-Joseph IRMEN (1991 and 1996) and his co-worker the mathematician Dr Dieter WICKMANN.

Professor IRMEN stated that "The mathematician Dr Dieter WICKMANN, assistant Professor at the University of Cologne has developed a method for determining the author of an anonymous literary text. The evidence lies behind the conviction that there are author-specific language characteristics that precipitate in connection to vocabulary. This method has been applied to *The Magic Flute*, from which several of the libretti of GIESECKE and SCHIKANEDER, have emerged temporally in the direct periphery of *The Magic Flute*, and individually compared with bound and unbound text sections of it. WICKMANN undertook the computer mathematical analysis, and came to the following sensational result:"

"1. With a safety factor of 91% SCHIKANEDER composed the dialogue (unbound text) of *The Magic Flute*."

“2. With respect to the question of the bound text (arias, etcetera) a stalemate situation arises between GIESECKE and SCHIKANEDER. WICKMANN explains in a letter “in terms of safety factors, the results affirm that the section of the bound text of *The Magic Flute* can stem with 50% probability both from the one or the other authors. Thus that GIESECKE is co-author of *The Magic Flute* cannot be excluded.”

It is also worth stating again here that if GIESECKE did write important parts of the libretto, then it is likely that his words have been heard by more people than any other scientist, as noted already by WHITTAKER (2007b).

3. The evidence from GIESECKE's albums

Using the travel albums (stammbucher) of GIESECKE, two of which are held in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin, it is possible to assess the contributions of scientists (including many Geoscientists) who either knew MOZART, like GIESECKE himself, or fellow masonic brothers from the Crowned Hope Vienna lodge, such as Joseph Altgraf SALM REIFFERSCHIED-DYCK.

Below are given some of the preliminary necessary details from Act1 Scene 8 where the three ladies who are daughters of the Queen of the Night (Königin der Nacht) present the comic hero Papageno with a silver glockenspiel (bells) and the main hero (Tamino) with his golden Magic Flute. [NB Tamino's name is a near-anagram of antimon, the German word for antimony and an important direct clue for the true alchemical allegorical meaning of the opera's content (see WHITTAKER, 1998). [MOZART was very interested in word-play and the use of anagrams etc. often naming himself as 'TRAZOM' or 'ROMATZ', particularly in letters to friends and family]. The verse quoted below (Act 1 Scene17) is sung by the two main characters Pamina (the main heroine) and the comic hero Papageno, who has just used his glockenspiel mentioned above to free them from the clutches of Monostatos the dark, evil character of the plot and the slaves. (Somewhat ironically, GIESECKE played the role of the First Slave in *The Magic Flute*).

*'Light laughter', from slaves dancing to bells:
..la la-ra-la...*

*If every good man could find such bells
Their enemies would disappear without trouble
And without them he would live in the best harmony
Only the harmony of friendship lightens the burden;
Without this sympathy there is no luck on earth*

4. 'New' Recent Evidence

The period here under consideration (late 18th Century) is roughly that corresponding to the evolution of mineralogy into geology (LAUDAN, 1987). Chemistry too was changing rapidly from alchemy to the modern science that was to prove so fundamentally important to mineralogy as the latter science itself evolved.

The ‘new’ evidence given here is taken from the quotation and accompanying signature in GIESECKE’s albums (Figures 2 and 4). The lines in question are quoted below and taken and follow immediately after the Pamina-Papageno duet quoted in English translation above.

**Nur der Freundschaft Harmonie
Mildert die Beschwerden;
Ohne diese Sympathie
Ist kein Glück auf Erden.**

Figure 2:

Quotation from the textual script of “Die Zauberflöte” Act I Scene 8.

(From the original Gothic script version of the original text prepared by Ignaz ALBERTI, and made available for sale in Vienna before the first performance of The Magic Flute on September 30 of 1791.)

Nur der Freundschaft Harmonie
Mildert die Beschwerden,
Ohne diese Simpathie
[Gibt’s] kein Glück auf Erde



Figure 3:

Image of Joseph Altgraf Zu SALM REIFFERSCHEIDT-DYCK.

This album entry is signed by Joseph Grafen zu SALM (Figure 4). The use of the word ‘Gibt’s’ in the last line is questionable. The actual accurate libretto quote from Act 1 Scene 17 is given below:-

*Nur der Freundschaft Harmonie
mildert die Beschwerden
Ohne diese Simpathie
Ist kein Glück auf Erde.*

Figure 4:

Handwritten entry of the Act I Scene 17 quote by Altgraf SALM with poor handwriting, or correction of handwriting. (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).

Nur der Freundschaft Harmonie
Mildert die Beschwerden
Ohne diese Simpathie
IST kein Glück auf Erde

That is, the word ‘IST’ is replaced by ‘Gibt’s’ in the SALM album entry. Nevertheless, the similarity of the two verses is remarkable and the two are virtually the same in meaning. Clearly SALM knew the opera extremely well and was very much aware of GIESECKE’s connection with it and indeed with MOZART.

The signature on Figure 4 is actually that of Joseph, Altgraf zu SALM REIFFERSCHIED-DYCK (1773-1861) an aristocrat and prominent geoscientist and botanist of the time, and who in the GIESECKE album quoted directly the four lines from *The Magic Flute*, Act 1 Scene 17 (Figure 5).

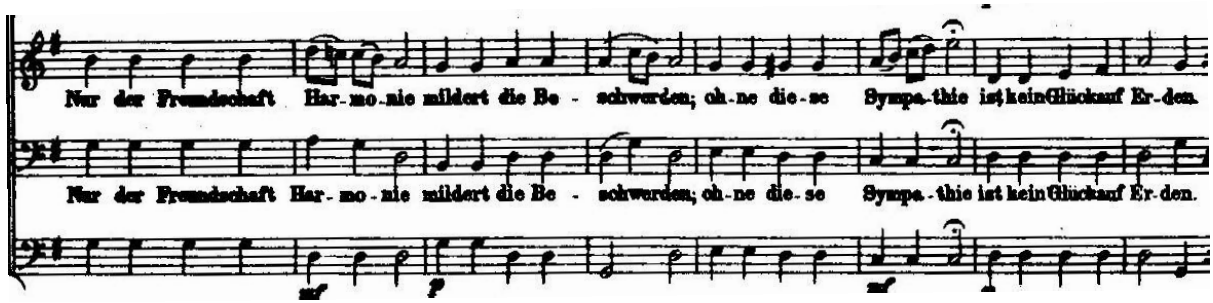


Figure 5:
Operatic context of the verse.

Of course the ‘Glück auf Erde!’ greeting is very familiar to geologists and miners alike and wishes, more literally, ‘a safe return to the surface’. The greeting is used by many of the signatories to GIESECKE’s albums (see for example that of E. G. BALDINGER dated 1802 from Marburg and a botanist as well as member of the famous Jena Mineralogical Society (Figure 6) of which GOETHE was also a member. (GOETHE later corresponded with GIESECKE about meteorological matters.) (see WATERHOUSE, 1933, and WHITTAKER 2001).

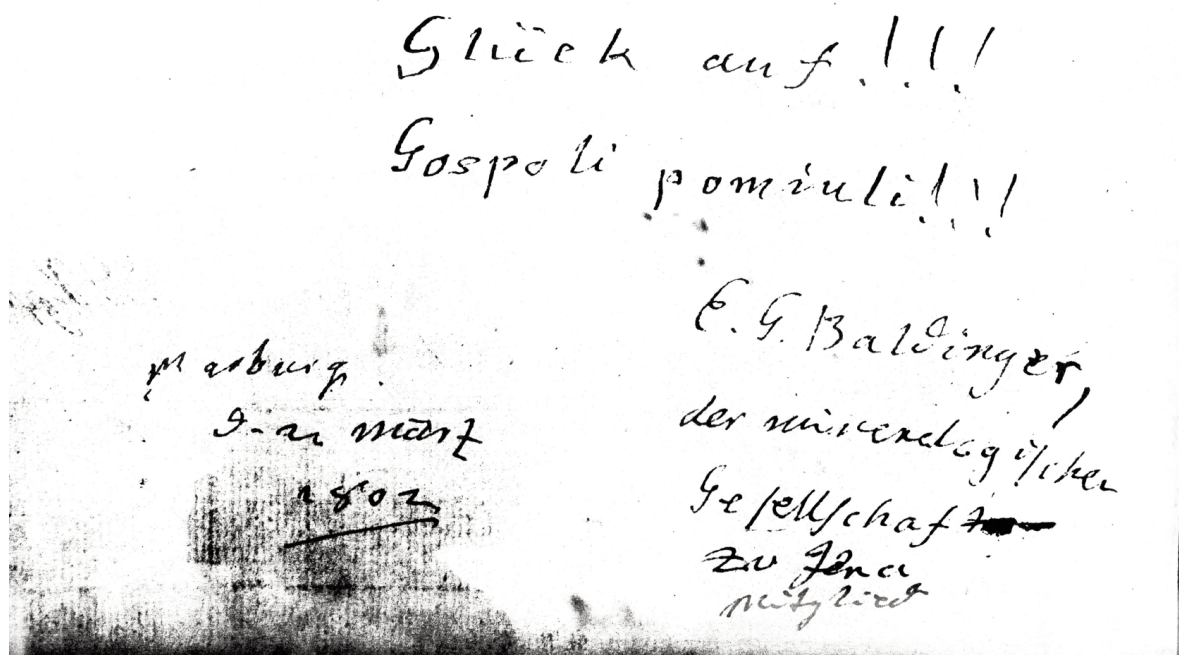


Figure 6:
Album entry of E. G. BALDINGER (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).

An English translation of the lines quoted above is as follows:

Only Friendship's Harmony
Lessens the difficulties.
Without this sympathy
There is no safe return (no Good Luck!)

From: *Die Zauberflöte* Act 1 Scene17

As noted earlier by WHITTAKER (2001), this greeting from SALM may have been given simply because the quotation combined GIESECKE's earlier close association with *The Magic Flute* (representing his previous stage-connected life) and the mineralogists departing wish 'Glück auf Erden' (representing his new scientific life).

However, the original quotation from the opera in GIESECKE's album is identical to that shown in Figure 2, and reads as follows 'Ist kein Glück auf Erde'. Despite the very difficult-to-read handwriting it is clear that SALM was very familiar indeed with the opera and must have taken a very close interest in it. This is not surprising given SALM's interest in science (see WHITTAKER [2001], [1998]) and in Freemasonry both of which make up prominent parts of the opera.

Another relevant pointer to the importance of alchemy in the opera comes from the 1794 Brno/Prague production illustrated (see figure 7) in the colour drawings by the brothers Peter and Joseph SCHAFFER of parts of the opera, especially that representing the arrival of Sarastro exactly and immediately after the lines quoted above at the finale of Act 1 (Scene18). At this stage of the opera the characters on the stage sing the following lines:

Es lebe Sarastro, es lebe Sarastro

That is, 'Long live Sarastro, long live Sarastro', and importantly Sarastro arrives in a Triumphal Chariot ("Triumph-Wagen") drawn by six lions, which matches rather precisely the illustrations accompanying the classical alchemical work of early chemistry known as "The Triumphal Chariot of Antimony" by Basil VALENTINE. This is the point in the opera where most of the cast and audience realize for the first time that Sarastro represents goodness as a very wise leader rather than evil, as thought hitherto.



Finale, Act I; première in Schikaneder's Freihaustheater, 1791; by Geyl and Nessthaler.

Figure 7:

A representation of one of six colour illustrations by the brothers Peter and Joseph SCHAFFER from the 1795 'General European Journal' Brno/Prague account of the production of *Die Zauberflöte* showing the Sarastro stage entry at the beginning of the finale of Act 1 to the music accompanying "Es lebe Sarastro, es lebe Sarastro". The entry closely recalls the alchemical illustration from the medieval "Triumphal Chariot of Antimony" by the famous alchemist and chemist Basil VALENTINE.

5. Other Vitally Important Recent Evidence

In addition to the SALM quotation mentioned above there is another album entry (see Figure 8) by Dr Pehr AFZELIUS (1760-1843) in Uppsala, a President of the Swedish Academy of Sciences, and medical doctor/physician to the Swedish Royal Family or Royal ARKIATER, as well as chief medical attendant to the Swedish Army. The entry shows his image and his motto *Prudenti Audacia* (Figure 8). This entry (dated 1804) by AFZELIUS also gives a quotation from Pietro METASTASIO's (1698-1782) work *La Clemenza di Tito*. It is included here because METASTASIO of course was a fundamental influence on the libretto of MOZART's famous opera *La Clemenza di Tito* and thus gives another connection with MOZART's operatic achievements and the year 1791. This opera is also of special interest to geoscientists because of MOZART's musical representation in Act 1 scene 4 of the AD79 Vesuvius volcanic eruption and the shaking of the associated earthquakes. In short, several of GIESECKE's international intellectual scientific contacts as well as his immediate contacts in Vienna were very much aware of his operatic and theatrical links with MOZART.

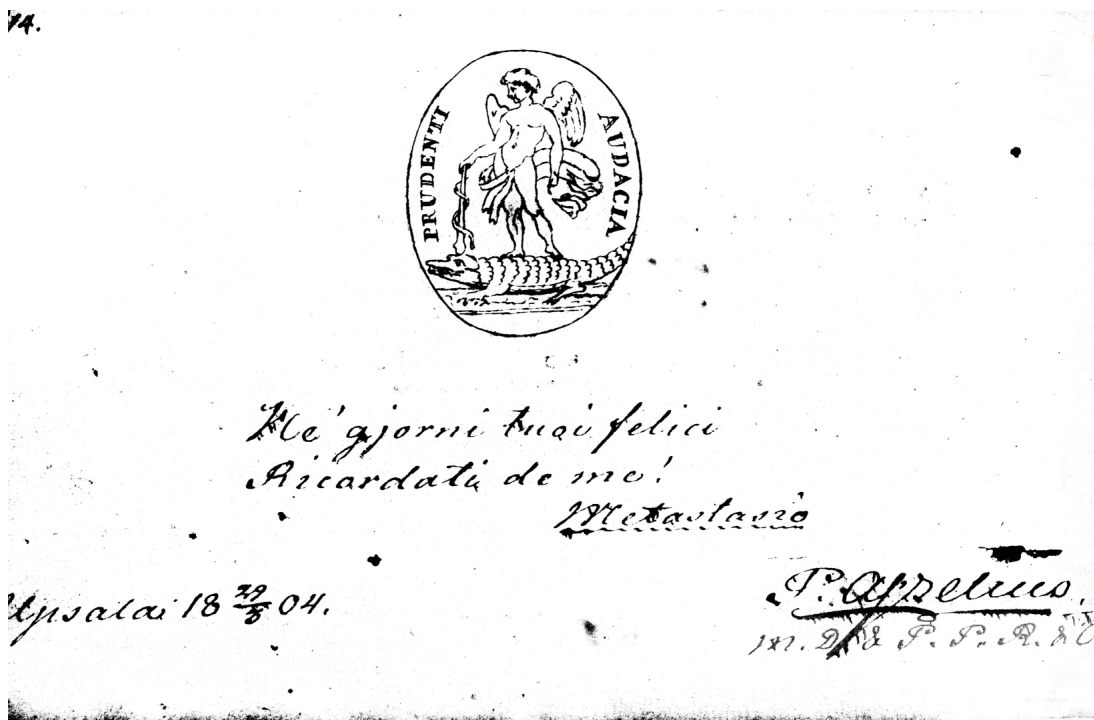


Figure 8:

Album entry by Dr. Pehr AFZELIUS (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).

6. Recent New Evidence -? Album 4

In addition to the 2 albums in the National Library of Ireland Dublin (see WATERHOUSE 1936), it is thought that originally GIESECKE owned a total of 5 albums over his lifetime, two of which may well have belonged to him as a schoolboy. Because of the numbering of the two preserved albums (3 & 5) in Ireland of which I have copies on microfiche, it seems likely that there originally should have been an album number 4.

Two volumes of GIESECKE's albums were originally found in the Royal Dublin Society (3 and 5) so that 1, 2 and 4 were presumed lost. However, STEENSTRUP, (1910, p.VIII) mentions purchase made at the auction of the estate of a Mr LANGFIELD. Following some wider research, Mr R J MOSS, Registrar of the Royal Dublin Society, apparently obtained volume 5. It was found with an elderly lady in London, Miss HUTTON, who in a letter to Mr MOSS wrote: "My father was named his (GIESECKE's) Executor when he died in 1833. I was nine years old, and I remember what a great deal of anxiety [sic] and trouble my father had. There was a sale, but I suppose all his notes and observations were sent to the various Societies to which he belonged, for my father had nothing of the kind, only fossils and stones set or unset. I remember my Mother had one set in a brooch, also albums full of quotations and little pictures stuck in, not of any interest. Most of them have been given away, but the only one we have, I will send you to show your friend, if I receive an assurance that it will be sent back intact." Mr HUTTON had also retained the GIESECKE albums without having an idea of their significance and they were then later 'given away', with the exception of volume 5 which carried the designation 'Souvenir for Karl Ludwig GIESECKE, Royal Prussian Mining Adviser' (see STEENSTRUP, (1910, pp. VII, VIII).

In connection with album 4, WATERHOUSE (1970) reported contact with a Professor G. RADDATZ of Berlin and Herr Gerd IBBLER of Augsburg who reported a record in the municipal archives of Vienna of proceedings against GIESECKE for non-payment of rent. RADDATZ and IBBLER reported to WATERHOUSE (1970) that the Viennese records show that in 1801 distraint was levied against GIESECKE for non-payment of a year's rent. Professor RADDATZ found a catalogue of the books and papers sold, amongst them 'An album with some paintings...' ('*Ein Stammbuch mit einigen Gemälden...*') This was the only evidence for album number 4 until recently when it was apparently possibly mentioned in a sale catalogue of the SOTHEBY's Auction Rooms in London in the year 2004 (see SOTHEBY's, 2004). This album was announced as 'Musical Manuscripts, including the album amoricum of Carl Ludwig GIESECKE and autograph inscriptions by SCHIKANEDER and others from MOZART's circle. 7th December, 2004, Lot 87.' This album contains amongst other things drawings and paintings, including an engraving of SCHIKANEDER's theatre. It has a painted titlepage inscribed "*Der Freundschaft und Liebe Geheiligt. J. G. MEZLER*" ("of Friendship and Love Sanctified. Johann Georg METZLER [GIESECKE's birth name]"). and is contained in a contemporary slipcase with the Latin inscription "*Absint notae et obscoena*" ("Let there be no marks of shame or ugliness"). The album apparently has many captions and annotations made by GIESECKE himself as do the Dublin albums.

Of particular interest is an entry by SCHIKANEDER denoted as "...*Wenn Du die Gipfel der höchsten Berge besteigste, so blicke nach Osten und dencke der geheiligten Halle...*" and translated as, "... when you have climbed the peak of the highest mountain then look east and think of the Holy Portals..."

This inscription is particularly of interest in association with *The Magic Flute* because of Sarastro's well known aria "*In diesen heiligen Hallen*" ["within these holy portals"]. It is also akin to some of GIESECKE's, writings in his travel diaries, which bring together his time in Greenland and his devotion to freemasonry and its patron SOLOMON (see GIESECKE 1910 and the quote below). Very relevant to this quotation is a letter written on 25 May, in 1807, to Bishop Friederich MUENTER in Copenhagen (see STEENSTRUP 1910, pXXI), in which GIESECKE wrote "*I have already lived through one winter in this great stony frozen theatre and play comedy in the morning with gusto with which tomorrow morning I go to sea... I am now busy doing field work where I hew and slog from morning till night. Stone collecting and distributing has its moment says the wise SOLOMON our protective patron.. I come with luck to Copenhagen so as to disperse over the whole world.*"

Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this account to Mr Andras LUX {1921-2008} (see LUX [1996]) and also see references to Professor Zoltan HORVÁTH [1921-2004], [HORVÁTH1986, &1996], in references below. Mr. LUX (see also ECKELMEYER [1991]) was originally from Hungary but more recently of Cleveland, Ohio, USA. Andy LUX very much loved *The Magic Flute* and was a great expert on the Hungarian Selmec banya (Schemnitz) Mining Academy, the oldest such institution in the world, on which he gave me a great deal of information over many years, and an institution (Selmec, that is,) of which he was a very proud graduate. Sadly Mr LUX passed away in

2008. LUX's influence on MOZART's *The Magic Flute* was described in HORVÁTH (1996) by reference to a 1985 concert in Blossom, Ohio, USA, where the famous Cleveland Symphony Orchestra performed and interpreted *The Magic Flute* in an unusual way to reflect the relevance of mining to the story, including the inspiration of several of the operatic characters by the mineralogists Nicolaus JACQUIN and Ignaz von BORN (both contemporaries of MOZART). I am grateful to Professor Zoltan DÖRNYEI of Nottingham University and his wife Mrs Sarah DÖRNYEI for translating the original version of HORVÁTH's (1996) account from Hungarian into English; I am also grateful to Professor Ekkehart TILLMANN of Vienna University, Professor Gordon HERRIES DAVIES of Trinity College Dublin, Emerita Professor Judith ECKELMEYER of Cleveland, Ohio, USA, and my wife Jane, Dr John MEYER and Dr Elisabeth LEBENSFT of Vienna, and also Caroline ADKIN of BGS for preparation of the Giesecke images in Fig.1, Mr Jan REIMER of Ringsted Denmark and the Staff of the Royal Irish Academy. I am particularly grateful also to Mr Fintan QUINN, and the former Director Dr Noel KISSANE, and other Staff of the National Library of Ireland for much assistance over several years: Drs Bernd MOSER and Walter POSTL of Graz, Austria have also been very helpful over many years. I am also greatly indebted to the staff of SOTHEBY's (London, New Bond Street) for help and approval to publish material related to ?Album 4 and in particular to Dr Simon MAGUIRE (SOTHEBY's Senior Specialist, printed Manuscripts and Music) for help and for approval to publish the information contained herein. This account is published with the approval of the Director, British Geological Survey (NERC).

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