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A review of the premiere of *Don Giovanni* in Bonn (13 Oct 1789)

Dexter Edge and Steven M. Whiting

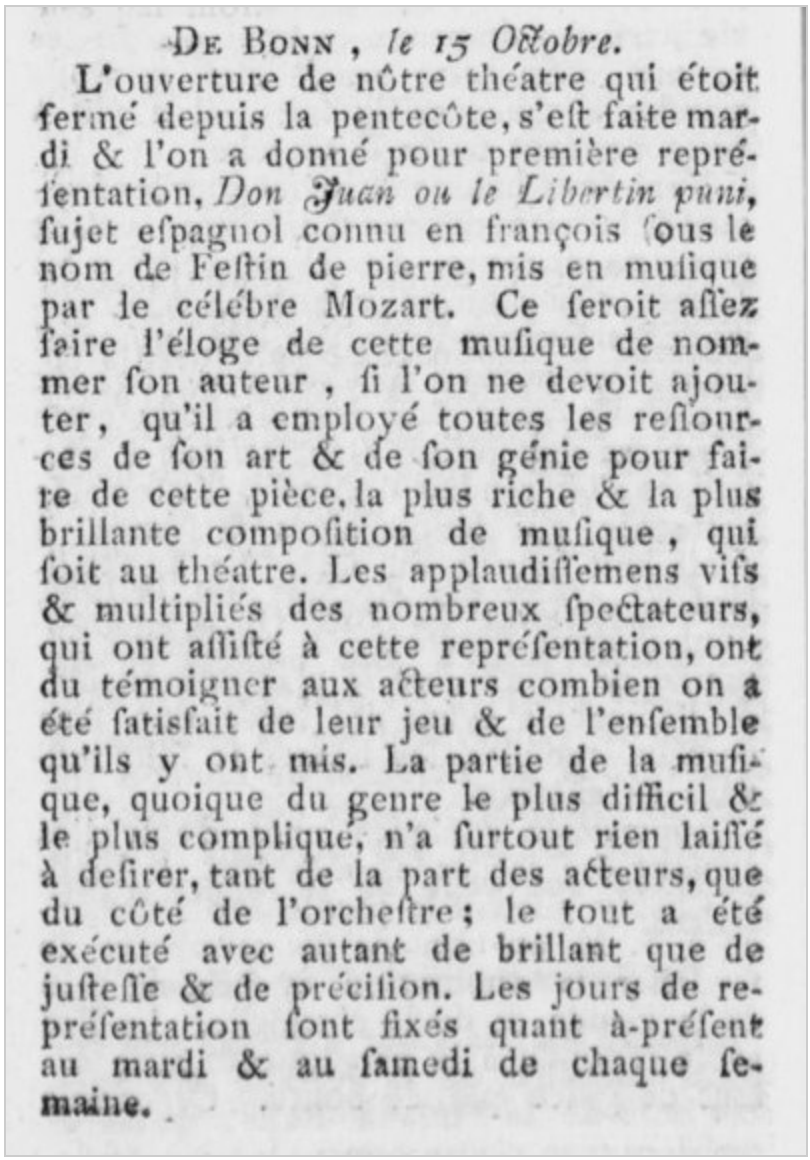
***Gazette de Bonn*, no. 165, Thu, 15 Oct 1789**

[4]

DE BONN, *le 15 Octobre*.

L'ouverture de nôtre théatre qui étoit fermé depuis la pentecôte, s'est faite mardi & l'on a donné pour première représentation, *Don Juan ou le Libertin puni*, sujet espagnol connu en françois sous le nom de Festin de pierre, mis en musique par le célébre Mozart. Ce seroit assez faire l'éloge de cette musique de nommer son auteur, si l'on ne devoit ajouter, qu'il a employé toutes les ressources de son art & de son génie pour faire de cette pièce, la plus riche & la plus brillante composition de musique, qui soit au théatre. Les applaudissemens vifs & multipliés des nombreux spectateurs, qui ont assisté à cette représentation, ont du témoigner aux acteurs combien on a été satisfait de leur jeu & de l'ensemble qu'ils y ont mis. La partie de la musique, quoique du genre le plus difficil & le plus compliqué, n'a surtout rien laissé à desirer, tant de la part des acteurs, que du côté de l'orchestre; le tout a été exécuté avec autant de brillant que de justesse & de précision. Les jours de représentation sont fixés quant à-présent au mardi & au samedi de chaque semaine.

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DE BONN, *le 15 Octobre.*

L'ouverture de nôtre théatre qui étoit fermé depuis la pentecôte, s'eſt faite mardi & l'on a donné pour première repréſentation, *Don Juan ou le Libertin puni*, ſujet eſpagnol connu en françois ſous le nom de Feſtin de pierre, mis en muſique par le célébre Mozart. Ce ſeroit aſſez faire l'éloge de cette muſique de nommer ſon auteur, ſi l'on ne devoit ajouter, qu'il a employé toutes les reſſources de ſon art & de ſon génie pour faire de cette pièce, la plus riche & la plus brillante compoſition de muſique, qui ſoit au théatre. Les applaudiſſemens vifs & multipliés des nombreux ſpectateurs, qui ont aſſiſté à cette repréſentation, ont du témoigner aux acteurs combien on a été ſatisfait de leur jeu & de l'enſemble qu'ils y ont mis. La partie de la muſique, quoique du genre le plus difficil & le plus compliqué, n'a ſurtout rien laiſſé à deſirer, tant de la part des acteurs, que du côté de l'orcheſtre; le tout a été exécuté avec autant de brillant que de juſteſſe & de préciſion. Les jours de repréſentation ſont fixés quant à-préſent au mardi & au ſamedi de chaque ſemaine.

[translation:]

FROM BONN, *15 October.*

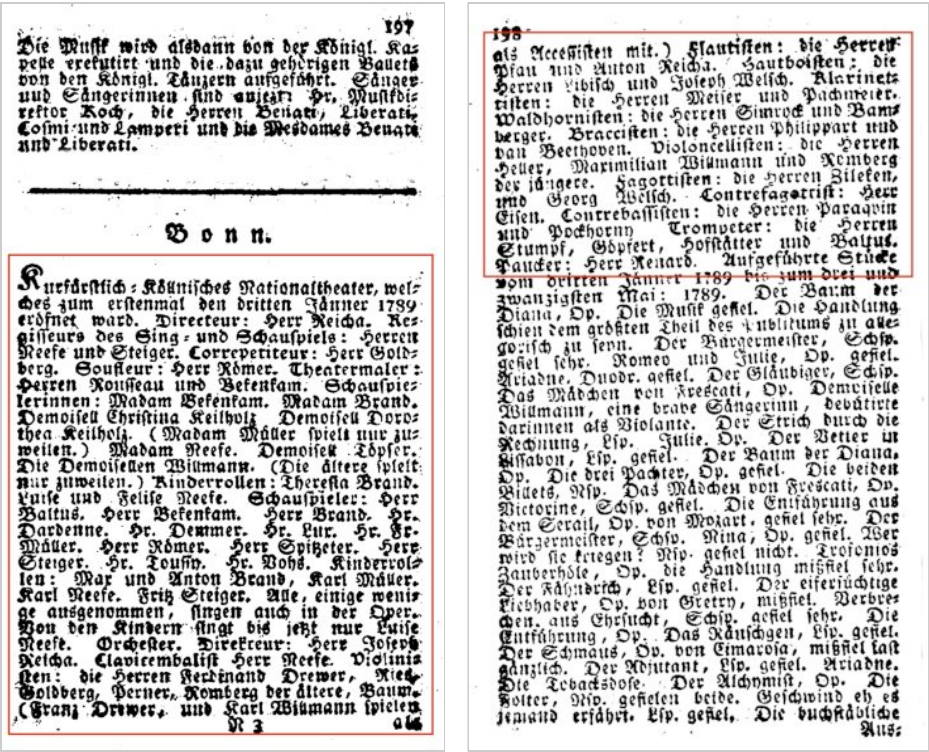
Our theater, which had been closed since Pentecost, was opened on Tuesday, and *Don Juan ou le Libertin puni* was given there as the first performance. It is a Spanish subject known in French under the title *Festin de pierre*, set to music by the famous Mozart. It would be praise enough for the music simply to name its author, if one did not have to add that he has used all of the resources of his art and his genius to make this piece the richest and most brilliant musical composition in any theater. The lively

and frequent applause of the numerous spectators who attended this performance must have shown the cast the satisfaction with the acting and the ensemble that was created. The music above all, although of the most difficult and complicated sort, left nothing to be desired, either on the part of the actors or that of the orchestra; the whole was executed with just as much brilliance as accuracy and precision. At present the days of performance are set to Tuesday and Saturday of each week.

Commentary

This laudatory review of the Bonn premiere of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* was first transcribed by Schiedermair (1925, 66–67), who noted that it had been overlooked in the Mozart literature up to that point. It is not in *Dokumente* or *Neue Folge*; it is given in full with an English translation in Reisinger et al. (2018, 159–60 and note 136). The translation here is our own.

Following his death on 15 Apr 1784, Maximilian Friedrich, Elector and Archbishop of Cologne, was succeeded by Archduke Maximilian Franz, youngest brother of Emperor Joseph II. Max Franz ordered a six-month period of mourning, during which the theater in the electoral palace in Bonn was to remain closed, and he dismissed the company of Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Großmann, which had been in residence under Max Friedrich since 1778. (For theater under Max Friedrich, see our entry for 22 Jun 1783, the Bonn premiere of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.) For the next five years, the court in Bonn had no theater company of its own, instead contracting with visiting companies during carnival season: the company of Johann Heinrich Böhm from Nov 1784 to spring 1785; a French troupe in Jan and Feb 1786; Großmann at the beginning of 1787; and the company of Christian Wilhelm Klos from 1 Nov 1787 to the end of carnival 1788. When the Klos company went bankrupt in the autumn of 1788, Max Franz took the opportunity to buy its costumes, library, and musical scores; by that point, plans were well underway to establish a new company in Bonn. (On the history of the theater in Bonn under Max Franz, see principally Reisinger et al. 2018, especially chapter 3.) Several members of Klos's defunct company were engaged for the new Bonn enterprise, including sopranos Christiane and Dorothea Keilholz; tenor Carl Demmer; basses Johann Baptist Spitzeder and (after a stint in Frankfurt) Joseph Lux; and Anton Steiger, who became co-director of the new company with Joseph Reicha. The orchestra consisted of members of the Bonn Hofkapelle, including young Ludwig van Beethoven on viola. The complete roster of the new theatrical company in Bonn and its orchestra was published in the *Theater-Kalender* for 1791, reflecting its state in 1789 and early 1790.



197

Die Musik wird alsdann von der Königl. Kapelle exekutirt und die dazu gehörigen Ballets von den Königl. Tänzern aufgeführt. Sänger und Sängerinnen sind anjetzt: Hr. Musikdirektor Koch, die Herren Benati, Liberati, Cosmi und Lamperi und die Mesdames Benati und Liberati.

Bonn.

Kurfürstlich-Kölnisches Nationaltheater, welches zum erstenmal den dritten Jänner 1789 eröfnet ward. Directeur: Herr Reicha. Regisseurs des Sing- und Schauspiels: Herren Neefe und Steiger. Correpetiteur: Herr Goldberg. Soufleur: Herr Römer. Theatermaler: Herren Rousseau und Bekenkam. Schauspielerinnen: Madam Bekenkam. Madam Brand. Demoiselle Christina Keilholz. Demoiselle Dorothea Keilholz. (Madam Müller spielt nur zuweilen.) Madam Neefe. Demoiselle Töpfer. Die Demoiselles Willmann. (Die ältere spielt nur zuweilen.) Kinderrollen: Theresia Brand. Luise und Felise Neefe. Schauspieler: Herr Baltus. Herr Bekenkam. Herr Brand. Hr. Dardenne. Hr. Demmer. Hr. Lux. Hr. Fr. Müller. Herr Römer. Herr Spitzeder. Herr Steiger. Hr. Toussy. Hr. Vohs. Kinderrollen: Max und Anton Brand, Karl Müller. Karl Neefe. Fritz Steiger. Alle, einige wenige ausgenommen, singen auch in der Oper. Von den Kindern singt bis jetzt nur Luise Neefe. Orchester. Direkteur: Herr Joseph Reicha. Clavicembalist Herr Neefe. Violinisten: die Herren Ferdinand Drewer, Riel, Goldberg, Perner, Romberg der ältere, Baum. (Franz Drewer, und Karl Willmann spielen

N 3 als

198

als Accessisten mit.) Flautisten: die Herren Pfau und Anton Reicha. Hautboisten: die Herren Libisch und Joseph Welsch. Klarinetisten: die Herren Meiser und Pachmeier. Waldhornisten: die Herren Simrock und Bamberger. Bracciſten: die Herren Philippart und van Beethoven. Violoncelliſten: die Herren Heller, Maximilian Willmann und Romberg der jüngere. Fagottiſten: die Herren Zilefen, und Georg Welsch. Contrefagottiſt: Herr Eisen. Contrebaſſiſten: die Herren Paraspin und Pockhorny. Trompeter: die Herren Stumpf, Göpfert, Hofstätter und Baltus. Paucker: Herr Renard. Aufgeführte Stücke vom dritten Jänner 1789 bis zum drei und zwanzigsten Mai: 1789. Der Baum der Diana, Op. Die Musik gefiel. Die Handlung schien dem größten Theil des Publikums zu allegorisch zu seyn. Der Bürgermeister, Schsp. gefiel sehr. Romeo und Julie, Op. gefiel. Ariadne, Duodr. gefiel. Der Gläubiger, Schsp. Das Mädchen von Frescati, Op. Demoiselle Willmann, eine brave Sängerinn, debütirte darinnen als Violante. Der Strich durch die Rechnung, Lsp. Julie, Op. Der Vetter in Lissabon, Lsp. gefiel. Der Baum der Diana, Op. Die drei Pachter, Op. gefiel. Die beiden Billets, Nsp. Das Mädchen von Frescati, Op. Victorine, Schsp. gefiel. Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Op. von Mozart, gefiel sehr. Der Bürgermeister, Schsp. Nina, Op. gefiel. Wer wird sie kriegen? Nsp. gefiel nicht. Trofonios Zauberhöle, Op. die Handlung mißfiel sehr. Der Fähndrich, Lsp. gefiel. Der eifersüchtige Liebhaber, Op. von Gretry, mißfiel. Verbrechen aus Ehrsucht, Schsp. gefiel sehr. Die Entführung, Op. Das Räuschgen, Lsp. gefiel. Der Schmaus, Op. von Cimarosa, mißfiel fast gänzlich. Der Adjutant, Lsp. gefiel. Ariadne. Die Tobacksdose. Der Alchymist, Op. Die Folter, Nsp. gefielen beide. Geschwind eh es jemand erfährt. Lsp. gefiel. Die buchstäbliche Aus-

Roster of the Nationaltheater in Bonn (1789–1790)
(*ThK* 1791, 197–98)

The theater in the electoral palace was renovated, boxes on the main floor were improved, and two new tiers of boxes were added to provide additional seating. (A digital reconstruction of the renovated theater is given in Reisinger et al. 2018, figure 15, page 132; the book's cover shows the same image in color.) The theater was open to the paying public, and distinctions of rank in seating were largely eliminated.

The new Bonn company, now styled a "Nationaltheater," began its first season on 3 Jan 1789 with a performance of *Der Baum der Diana*, a German adaptation of Martín y Soler's *L'arbore di Diana*. The enterprise was very nearly scuttled before it got underway: the night before the first performance, an arsonist attempted to burn down the theater:

> Auszug eines Briefes aus Bonn.
>
> Sonnabends, den 3ten Jenner, ist endlich unser National=Theater mit dem Baum der Diana von Martini eröfnet worden. Die Mu= sic ist vortreflich und die Uebersetzung von unserm **Neefe** recht gut gerathen. Der Anlage gemäß wird hier die Oper in einigen Jahren so gut werden, also solche irgendwo in Teutschland seyn kann. So, wie es scheint, wird unser gnädig= ster Churfürst noch mehr daran verwenden, als er bisher dazu ausgesetzt hat. Die Musici,

welche im Orchester mitspielen, haben alle eine
Zulage von 100 bis 150 Gulden erhalten.

Abends vor der ersten Vorstellung hatte ein
Mordbrenner Lust, uns Allen hier eine schreck=
liche Tragödie zu spielen. Von der Gartenseite,
hinter der churfürstlichen Loge, hatte er eine
Scheibe eingestossen, und an den Balken mit
Stroh und Schwefelspänen das Comödienhaus
anzustecken versucht. Das mit Leimwasser be=
malte Tuch, samt den Balken, waren würklich
angebrannt. Einen Fuß weiter; so hätte die
Flamme das mit Oelfarbe gemalte Tuch ergrif=
fen, und der Boshafte hätte seinen höllischen
Endzweck erreicht. Allein es ist glücklicherweise
von selbst verlöscht. Die Reste von Schwefel=
spänen und Stroh mit den Splittern von der
Fensterscheibe fand man den folgenden Morgen
auf dem steinernen Treppchen, das vom Thea=
ter nach der churfürstlichen Loge führt. Man
untersuchte alles auf das strengste, allein bis jetzt
hat man weiter nichts ausfindig machen können.
Spuren im Schnee hat man gefunden, die an=
zeigen, daß der Kerl von dem churfürstlichen
Weinberge her über die Gartenmauer gestiegen
ist, am eisernen Thore und durch den englischen
Garten, längst der Mauer, dann grade nach
dem Fenster hin sich geschlichen hat.
[*Dramaturgische Blätter* (Knigge), no. 16, 31 Jan 1789, 248–50]

[translation:]

Extract from a Letter from Bonn.

Saturday, 3 January, our National Theater
was finally opened with *Der Baum der Diana* by
Martini. The music is excellent and the translation
by our **Neefe** turned out quite well. Judging by
the investment, in a few years the opera here will
become as good as it can be anywhere in Germany.
Thus it appears that our gracious Elector will
devote more to this than he has put into it previously.
The musicians who play in the orchestra have all
received a supplement of 100 to 150 gulden.

In the evening before the first performance,
a murderous arsonist was pleased to play a terrible
tragedy for all of us here. From the garden side,
behind the electoral box, he had broken through

> a window pane, and attempted to set the theater on fire in the beams with straw and brimstone splints. The fabric painted with sizing as well as the beams were actually burned. One foot farther and the flames would have reached the fabric painted with oil colors, and the evil-doer would have achieved his infernal goal. But fortunately it extinguished itself on its own. The remains of the brimstone splints and straw, along with the shards from the window pane, were found the following morning on the stone steps that lead from the stage to the electoral box. Everything has been most rigorously investigated, but up to now nothing further has been discovered.Traces were found in the snow showing that the fellow had come from the electoral vineyard, climbed over the garden wall, and then had crept via the iron gate through the English garden along the wall, then directly through the window.

A report in the *Bönnisches Intelligenzblatt* (Thu, 8 Jan 1789, 12, cited in Woodfield 2012, 313n137) states that the arsonist appears to have waited until the night before the first performance, when the theater's lamps had already been filled, and some of the water lines from the city were cut. The identity of the arsonist and his motives remain unknown.

The company's first short season ran from 3 Jan to 23 May 1789, with a break for Lent from Ash Wednesday (25 Feb) to Easter (12 Apr). There seem to have been 28 performance days in all during the first season; five appear to have been double bills, while the rest were performances of single works. Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was given twice, once in mid February, and again around the end of April. The cast of the Bonn *Entführung* is undocumented, but the roles of Konstanze and Blonde may have been taken by Christiane and Dorothea Keilholz, who went on to sing these roles in their first guest appearance in Mannheim on 6 Jun 1790 (see our entry for 6 & 13 Jun 1790; on the cast of the Bonn *Entführung*, see also below).

After a summer break, the Bonn company gave a second season lasting from 13 Oct 1789 to 23 Feb 1790; that season was cut short unexpectedly when news arrived in Bonn of the death on 20 Feb of Joseph II in Vienna. The calendar of performances for this season can be reconstructed with a high degree of confidence (see our entry for the Bonn premiere of *Die Hochzeit des Figaro* on 14 Nov 1789). The season opened on Tue, 13 Oct 1789 with the Bonn premiere of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the subject of the review transcribed here. *Don Giovanni* was performed twice more in Bonn that season, probably on Tue, 15 Dec 1789 and Tue, 5 Jan 1790, and *Figaro* was performed four times in all. Given that the Bonn company repeated works relatively rarely during its first two seasons, the frequency of Mozart's operas suggests that they were particularly popular, and they may also have been favored by Max Franz.

The Bonn premiere of *Don Giovanni* on 13 Oct 1789 was the fourth known production of the opera in German, following those in Mainz (on 13 Mar 1789), Frankfurt (by the Mainz company on 3 May 1789), and Mannheim (on 27 1789). It seems that the music dealer Nikolaus Simrock in Bonn had acquired a copy of the score of the Prague version of *Don Giovanni*, and the theaters in Mainz and (probably) Mannheim obtained their scores of the opera from Simrock. It also seems that all three productions used a translation derived from one by Christian Gottlob Neefe (1748–1798), a director of the opera in Bonn. Neefe had apparently finished at least a first version of his translation by 21Dec 1788, when he wrote to Großmann offering to sell it to him; Simrock's acquisition of the score may have been Neefe's motivation for undertaking the translation. Although a full critical analysis of Neefe's translation and its various versions remains to be written, it seems clear that it was the basis for the text used for the productions in Mainz, Frankfurt, and Mannheim. Although no source material from the Bonn production of *Don Giovanni* is known to survive, it seems certain that Simrock's score and some version of Neefe's translation would have been used there as well. (For a more detailed discussion of Neefe's translation, see our entry for 21 Dec 1788.)

The glowing review of *Don Giovanni* in *Gazette de Bonn* contrasts with the mixed assessment in the *Theater-Kalender* for 1791:

> *[...]* Don Giovanni, Op. von
> Mozart. Die Musik gefiel den Kennern sehr.
> Die Handlung mißfiel. *[...]*
> [*ThK* 1791, 199]

> *[...] Don Giovanni*, opera by
> Mozart. The music pleased the connoisseurs
> very much. The plot displeased. *[...]*

The review in *Gazette de Bonn* betrays no dissatisfaction with the plot, and the fact that the opera was performed in Bonn three times that season suggests that it was popular there, whatever misgivings some may have had.

Little is known about the casting of theatrical performances in Bonn during the new company's first two seasons. The company was of moderate size—the *Theater-Kalender* for 1791 lists nine women (two of whom performed "nur zuweilen", only occasionally), and twelve men, one of whom, Herr Römer, was also the prompter. The focus in hiring for the new company had been on finding personnel who could both act and sing as needed; a few of the men could also play in the orchestra.

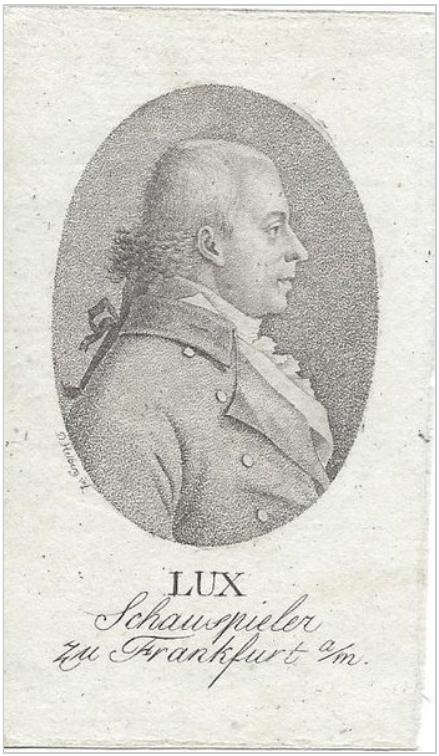
It is possible, however, to make informed guesses about the casts of Mozart's operas in Bonn, based on our knowledge of the singers in the company, their voice types, and other roles they sang (for speculation on the cast of *Figaro* in Bonn, see our entry for 14 Nov 1789):

- At the time of the premiere of *Don Giovanni* on 13 Oct 1789, the Bonn company had two bass singers, Johann Baptist Spitzeder (also Spitzeter, 1764–1842) and Joseph Lux (1756–1818). Both

had been in the short-lived company of Christian Wilhelm Klos in 1787 and 1788, Lux as principal bass and Spitzeder as second (*ThK* 1789, 173). After the collapse of Klos's company, Spitzeder became one of five male singers named in the initial contract for the new Bonn company on 13 Aug 1788 (Reisinger et al. 2018, 139 and 143), and he joined the electoral Hofkapelle as a bass singer and violinist (*Hof-Kalender* 1790).

Following the collapse of Klos's company, Lux sang for a time with the Mainz Nationaltheater (which performed in Mainz and Frankfurt) before joining the new company in Bonn. He was officially engaged in Bonn as a bass singer in the Hofkapelle and the theater on 2 Oct 1789, with pay retroactive to the beginning of July (Thayer 1917, i:240); he also became a violist in the orchestra. Because Lux was not yet a member of the company for the first short season in Bonn (3 Jan to 31 May 1789), Spitzeder must have sung the role of Osmin in the two performances of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* that season. He also sang the role later in his career: it was as Osmin that Spitzeder made his debut with the court theater in Weimar on 27 Mar 1799. (On Spitzeder as Osmin, see also Thayer 1917, i:241)

Lux had sung Leporello in the Frankfurt premiere of *Don Juan* on 3 May 1789 (see Mohr 1968, 110, and the facsimile of the premiere poster on 99), so it is very likely that he reprised the role in the Bonn production. With Lux as Leporello, Spitzeder would probably have taken the roles of the Commendatore and Masetto (at that time these roles were often doubled by one singer).



Joseph Lux, stipple engraving, D. Helberg (wikimedia)

- The Bonn company had two possibilities for the role of *Don Giovanni*: Carl Demmer (1766–after 1824) and Friedrich Müller (dates unknown). Both seem to have been high baritones who could sing roles such as the Count in *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, but also tenor roles, such as Belmonte, Pedrillo,

and Tamino. Such crossovers were not uncommon on the German stage in the late eighteenth century.

Müller and Demmer were among the five male singers named in the Bonn contract of 13 Aug 1788 (Reisinger et al. 2018, 139 and 143). Müller also became a violinist in the electoral Hofkapelle. When the Bonn theater closed in 1794, Müller joined the court theater in Weimar for the season 1794/95 (replacing Demmer, who had been in Weimar since 1791); with that company Müller sang Don Juan (10 Sep 1794), Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (22 Jun 1794), and Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* (29 Aug 1794; all dates are Müller's first appearances in these roles in Weimar). With the Bonn company, Müller had similarly taken both baritone and tenor roles: for example, he sang the baritone title role in *König Theodor in Venedig* (a German adaptation of Paisiello's *Il re Teodoro in Venezia*), but also Michel, a tenor role, in Umlauf's *Die schöne Schusterin* (*ThK* 1792, 336–37).

There is considerable confusion in the secondary literature over the identity of "Demmer" in the new Bonn company. He is sometimes said to be "Joseph Demmer" (see, for example, Reisinger et al. 2018, 147 and the index). However, this is incorrect: Joseph Demmer (d. 1811) was a bass, who at this time was a member of the Nationaltheater in Mannheim (Würtz 1975, 67); Joseph Demmer's Mozart roles included Masetto in the Mannheim premiere of *Don Juan* on 27 Sep 1789 (just sixteen days before the Bonn premiere), and Bartolo in the Mannheim premiere of *Figaro* on 24 Oct 1790. The notion that Joseph Demmer was a member of the Bonn company in 1789 seems to have arisen because he was born in Cologne, and in the early 1770s he had substituted in the electoral Hofkapelle for the bass Ludwig van Beethoven (the composer's grandfather; see Schiedermair 1925, 46). Thus Joseph Demmer did have a connection to Bonn, but he was certainly not the Demmer who became a member of the new theater company there in 1789. (That Joseph was not the Demmer in the Bonn theater in 1789 is already noted in Thayer 1917, i:240–41.)

Carl Demmer was likewise born in Cologne; one imagines he may have been related to Joseph Demmer (perhaps his son), but to our knowledge, no relationship has been documented. Carl is said to have begun his career singing in churches in Cologne. His first documented theatrical engagement, however, was with the Bellomo company in Weimar, from Oct 1786 to Mar 1787; with that company he sang romantic tenor leads, such as Sumers in *Die Italiänerin in London* (a German adaptation of Cimarosa's *L'Italiana in Londra*) on 7 Oct 1786, his operatic debut in Weimar, and Alcindor in *Die schöne Arsene* (a German adaptation of Monsigny's *La Belle Arsène*) on 29 Mar 1787, the last opera performance of that season and Demmer's last before leaving the company.

Demmer then became second tenor in the short-lived company of Christian Wilhelm Klos (*ThK* 1789, 173); Klos's first tenor was Adolf Keilholz (see our entry for 6 & 13 Jun 1790). When that company collapsed, Demmer was one of several refugees to join the new company in Bonn, along with Christiane and Dorothea Keilholz, Müller, Spitzeder, and (after a detour to Mainz and Frankfurt) Lux. Demmer was one of the five male singers named in the initial Bonn contract of 13 Aug 1788 (Reisinger et al. 2018, 139 and 143). He left the company after the end of the second short season on 23 Feb 1790, joining the company of Jakob Johann Albert Dietrichs in Amsterdam for one season, playing "Liebhaber und junge Helden im Singspiel" (romantic leads and young heroes in singspiel; *ThK* 1791, 205). In the spring of 1791 Carl Demmer returned to the court theater in Weimar, where his Mozart roles included Don Juan (30 Jan 1792), Pedrillo (5 Dec 1792), Count Almaviva (24 Oct 1793), and Tamino (16 Jan 1794; all dates are Demmer's first appearances in Weimar in these roles). Demmer had a long and fairly successful (if persistently B-list) career.

Notably, he sang the role of Florestan in the disastrous first performance of Beethoven's *Fidelio* at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna on 20 Nov 1805.

Friedrich Müller and Carl Demmer were both singers who took baritone or tenor roles as appropriate. Because Demmer sang Pedrillo in Weimar, he seems a plausible candidate for that role in the Bonn *Entführung* of 1789. Both Demmer and Müller are known to have sung the title role in *Don Giovanni* later in their careers, Demmer in Weimar in 1792 and Müller in Weimar in 1794, where he was Demmer's replacement. Without additional evidence, we cannot say which of the two took the role in the Bonn production, but one of them certainly did.

- The casting of Don Gusmann (Ottavio) in the Bonn production of *Don Giovanni* is perhaps the most uncertain of the major roles. During the first two short seasons, the Bonn company had two tenors, Christoph Hermann Joseph Brandt (1747–1818) and Johann Jakob Dardenne (also Dardener, b. 1763 in Bonn), and two singers—Carl Demmer and Friedrich Müller—who could take baritone or tenor roles as appropriate for their voices and acting skills. Little is known about Dardenne in Bonn; later in his career he was described as a second tenor or buffo in opera, so he seems unlikely to have sung Ottavio (Don Gusmann) in Bonn. Brandt was a native of Bonn, and began singing on stage there already by the early 1770s. He became principal tenor with Großmann's company during its residency in in Bonn, taking romantic leads. Brandt is briefly described in an anonymous report on Großmann's company in Kassel in 1783:

  > Hr. **Brandt** spielt erste Liebhaber im Singspiel, und
  > Nebenrollen im Lustspiel, als den Prinzen im Graf Wall=
  > tron. Er hat eine recht artige Stimme, und singt sehr
  > gut und angenehm, daher ihn alle Liebhaber der Musik
  > bey einer Gesellschaft immer gern sehen werden.
  > [*Litteratur- und Theater-Zeitung* (21 Jun 1783), 393]

  > Herr **Brandt** plays first romantic roles in singspiel,
  > and secondary roles in comedies, such as the prince in
  > *Graf Walltron*. He has a quite agreeable voice,
  > and sings very well and pleasantly, thus all music lovers
  > are always glad to see him at a social gathering.

  (*Graf Walltron* was the title of a tragedy by Heinrich Ferdinand Möller and a singspiel by Ignaz Walter. "Der Prinz" is a secondary role in both, and it is not entirely clear from the context which one the anonymous correspondent means here.) Brandt remained a member of the Bonn theater company from 1789 until its closure in 1794, and he was also a violinist in the orchestra of the Hofkapelle. However, he would have been 41 or 42 at the time of the Bonn premiere of *Don Giovanni* on 13 Oct 1789, so he was perhaps an unlikely choice for a young romantic lead like Ottavio. On the other hand, Demmer and Müller are known to have sung romantic tenor leads in Mozart operas later in their careers. Because Müller is known to have sung Belmonte with the Weimar company (see the poster for 22 Jun 1794) whereas Demmer is known only to have sung Pedrillo in that opera, we might tentatively suggest that Müller is more likely to have sung Ottavio in Bonn than Demmer or Brandt. But this is just a guess.
- The role of Donna Anna in the Bonn production of *Don Giovanni* was probably sung by Christiane Keilholz, who went on to appear in this role during her astonishing series of tryouts in Mannheim the following year (see our entry for 6 & 13 Jun 1790). She very likely sang Konstanze in the Bonn

Entführung earlier in 1789, the role with which she made her debut in Mannheim on 6 Jun 1790. She was an excellent singer and a compelling actress in both opera and spoken theater, an unusual combination, even at that time. However, Magdalena Willmann (see below) cannot be ruled out for Donna Anna.

- Christiane's sister Dorothea Keilholz, a soubrette, sang Zerlina in Mannheim on 13 Jun 1790, and so probably already knew the role before arriving in Mannheim; this in turn suggests that she might have sung Zerlina in the Bonn production. But Bonn had another soubrette, Christiane Sophie Henriette Brandt, née Hartmann (b. 1761), the wife of Christoph Brandt, and she might also have sung Zerlina. Dorothea Keilholz sang Blonde in the performance of *Entführung* in Mannheim on 6 Jun 1790, and she may well have sung the role in Bonn in 1789. But again, Christiane Brandt cannot be ruled out.
- At the time of the premiere of *Don Giovanni* in Bonn, the company had two sopranos in addition to Christiane Keilholz capable of taking leading roles. Veronika Bekenkam (Bekenkamp, b. 1754) had sung romantic leads with Großmann's company when it was resident in Bonn, and she remained in the city after the company was dismissed in 1784. She was a member of the Hofkapelle in Bonn from 1785 until 1794, and a member of the new theater company from 1789 to 1794. Magdalena Willmann (1771–1801) was a member of the theater company in Bonn from 1789 to 1793 and a soprano in the Hofkapelle from 1790 to 1793. Because Willmann and Christiane Keilholz were rivals (see our entry for 6 & 13 Jun 1790), it is attractive to think that they might have shared the stage as Donna Elvira and Donna Anna in Bonn. But Willmann was the youngest of the three principal sopranos in the Bonn company by several years (Keilholz was born in 1764 and Bekenkam in 1754), so she might not have seemed an appropriate casting choice for the older and unhappily experienced Donna Elvira. Bekenkam seems more likely.

In summary, our current best guesses for the cast of the Bonn premiere of *Don Giovanni* on 13 Oct 1789 are:

Role	Performer
Don Giovanni	Carl Demmer or Friedrich Müller
Leporello	Joseph Lux
Donna Anna	Christiane Keilholz (or Magdalena Willmann)
Donna Elvira	Veronika Bekenkam
Don Ottavio	Friedrich Müller, Christoph Brandt, or Carl Demmer
Commendatore	Johann Baptist Spitzeder
Masetto	Johann Baptist Spitzeder
Zerlina	Dorothea Keilholz or Christiane Brandt

Five of these identifications are relatively certain (Leporello, Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, the Commendatore, and Masetto), there is some uncertainty about Zerlina, and Don Giovanni and Don Ottavio are more problematic, especially given the fluidity between baritone and tenor roles on the German stage at the end of the eighteenth century.

The *Theater-Kalender* for 1791 prints a long poem by Neefe that was read at the opening of the new theater in Bonn on 3 Jan 1789. The opening lines give the flavor:

> Sonst zog die arme Schauspielkunst
> in lieben deutschen Vaterlande,
> (gesaget sei es hier mit Gunst!)
> so wie Nomaden, gleich der Zigeunerbande,
> von einem Ort
> zum andern fort.
> Ihr ganzer Kram
> war wundersam *[...]*
> [*ThK* 1791, 10]

Neefe may not have been a great poet, but he had a knack for clever rhyme, evident also in his translation of *Don Giovanni*. The poem in the *Theater-Kalender* includes a long footnote, very likely also by Neefe; it was clearly intended to flatter the Elector, but it is also informative:

> *) Der Kurfürst ist nicht blos ein Freund
> der Bühne und der Tonkunst, wie die
> Meisten seines gleichen; sondern er ver=
> dient unter den Kennern seinen Platz. Er
> weiß Stücken, Schauspieler, musikalische
> Kompositionen und praktische Tonkünstler
> mit Einsicht und Geschmack zu beurtheilen.
> Er besitzt selbst einen ansehnlichen Vorrath
> (den er immer noch vermehrt) der neuesten
> und besten Opernpartituren, die er sehr
> fertig ließt, und womit er sich zuweilen
> Nachmittags nach besorgten Regierungsge=
> schäften im Kabinet amusirt. Die Arien
> singt er dann selbst: das Klavier, ein Vio-
> loncell, zwei Violinen und eine Viola be=
> gleiten ihn. Mehrstimmige Gesänge ver=
> theilt er unter die Accompagnateurs, die
> singen können.
>
> Er hat im Komödienhause drei Reihen
> Logen über einander bauen lassen, die nach
> seiner eignen Angabe, gustös und bequem
> eingerichtet sind. Sonst hatte man nur
> eine Gallerie für den Adel, und an den
> Seiten des Parterres einige ofne Logen.
>
> Er besoldet eine sichre Anzahl von Thea=
> tersängern. Die übrigen werden aus der
> Einnahmen bezahlt oder beschenkt. Die be=
> sten Sänger müssen auch in der Kirche und
> Kammer singen.
>
> Den im Theater arbeitenden Musicis ist

ihre sonstige Besoldung erhöht werden.
Uebrigens muß sein leutseeliges Betragen
jeden Künstler entzücken.
[*ThK* 1791, 13–14]

[translation:]

*) The Elector is not merely a friend of the stage and of music, like most of his peers; but he also earns a place among the connoisseurs. He knows how to judge works, actors, musical compositions, and practical musicians with insight and taste. He himself possesses a sizeable stock (which he is continually increasing) of the newest and best opera scores, which he reads quite readily, and with which he sometimes amuses himself in the afternoon after the business of government has been taken care of. He sings the arias himself, while the keyboard, a cello, two violins, and a viola accompany him. He distributes songs with multiple parts among the accompanists who can sing.
In the playhouse he had three rows of boxes built one above another, which are tastefully and comfortably furnished according to his own specifications. Prior to this, there had been a gallery for the nobility, and along the sides of the parterre some open boxes.
He pays salaries to a certain number of theater singers. The rest are paid out of the receipts or as gifts. The best singers must also sing in church and chamber.
The musicians who work in the theater have received an increase in their usual salary.
In addition one is charmed by his genial behavior to the artists.

This bit of puffery is counterbalanced by a more critical report from an outsider, Joseph Gregor Lang (1755–1834), who visited Bonn around this time and described the theater and its company in his *Reise auf dem Rhein*, published in 1790.

[...] Gerade unter dem grossen Akademiesaal ist das Theater, das einem jeden Fremden, weil es so zu sagen unterirrdisch wie eine Gruft angebracht ist, und einen schlechten Eingang hat, auffallen muss.

Logen, Dekorationen und überhaupt alles,
was in einem Schauspielhause glänzen soll, ist
für den Hof eines solchen erhabenen Fürsten,
als MAX FRANZ ist, zu schlecht, zu buntschäk-
kigt, zu kleinlicht. — [Lang 1790, 174]

Der Kurfürst hält sehr viel auf jene Belusti-
gungen, die populär sind, woran jeder Unter-
than Theil nehmen kann.

Die Komödien werden auf dem schon oben
berührten Hoftheater von einer Art National-
schauspielergesellschaft aufgeführet. Die bei-
den *Demoisellen Keilholz* sind die besten Aktri-
zen, *Willmann*, eine gute Sängerin, und
Steiger, *Müller*, *Lux* und *Spitzeter* sind schon
als brave Akteurs bekannt. *Reicha*, der Hof-
musikdirektor, und *Steiger* führen die Direk-
tion. — Der Entreebetrag wird zu Kleidungen
und den übrigen Nothwendigkeiten verwendet,
die sich täglich verbessern, und das Alter des
Theaters und der Dekorationen ausser Augen-
merk sezzen. Die Gesellschaft stehet in der
Besoldung des Fürsten, ist aber noch zu klein,
noch zu unvollständig; es scheint aber, sie
soll sich nur in geschikten Personen langsam
also mehren. — Die Beleuchtung ist noch sehr
mangelhaft, die Musik aber gut. Das Thea-
ter wird stark besuchet, nicht allemal des Stük-
kes wegen, sondern um von Loge zu Loge
mit den Augen zu duodramatisiren. Noch
ist man etwas eigensinnig in der Auswahl der
guten Stükke, und verstümmelte Operetten
verdrängen oft die besten vaterländischen
Schauspiele. Man klatschet sehr leicht, öfters
unangewendet, öfters kindisch zu. —
[Lang 1790, 206–7]

[translation:]

[...] Directly under the
large Akademiesaal is the theater, which must
astonish any stranger, because it is set underground,
so to speak, like a tomb, and has a poor
entrance. Boxes, sets, and absolutely everything
that should shine in a theater, is too poor, too
motley, too small for the court of an exalted
prince such as MAX FRANZ. —

[...]

> The Elector is very devoted to those popular amusements in which every subject can take part.
>
> Plays are performed in the court theater mentioned above, by a sort of national theater company. The two *Mesdemoiselles Keilholz* are the best actresses, *Willmann* a good singer, and *Steiger*, *Müller*, *Lux*, and *Spitzeder* are already known as good actors. *Reicha*, the director of music at court, and *Steiger* are the directors. — The entrance fee is used for costumes and other necessities, which are improving daily, and make one forget the age of the theater and the sets. The company is paid by the Elector, but is still too small, too incomplete; it appears, however, that it is meant to grow only slowly with capable people. — The lighting is still very deficient, but the music is good. The theater is well attended, not always on account of the plays, but rather for couples to play scenes with their eyes from box to box. The choice of pieces is still somewhat idiosyncratic, and mutilated operettas often displace the best homegrown plays. One applauds here very readily, often inappropriately, often childishly. —

Lang makes Bonn sound rather like a cultural backwater, with a dilapidated theater and an unsophisticated audience. And there may have been some truth to this—but the company's opera productions in 1789 and 1790, including Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Die Hochzeit des Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni*, evidently made a profound and lasting impression on one young violist in the theater's orchestra, Ludwig van Beethoven.

Notes (⇧)

Schiedermair's transcription of the review in *Gazette de Bonn* matches ours except that he has changed "&" in the original to "et", and added a circumflex to the 'a' in "théâtre" that is not present in the original. Woodfield (2016, 6n18) gives two extracts from the review, but no translation, likewise replacing "&" with "et". The review is given complete with an English translation in Reisinger et al. (2018, 159–60 and note 136).

Productions of *Don Giovanni* in German in the eighteenth century most often used the title *Don Juan* (or sometimes *Dom Juan*), the title used in the review transcribed here. However, the Bonn repertory list in the *Theater-Kalender* consistently uses "Don Giovanni," so we have retained that form in the commentary.

The article on Carl Demmer at de.wikipedia is unusually well researched. However, it places him with Großmann-Kloß in 1786; the source for this claim is unclear, but it seems to be incorrect. Demmer is not listed on the roster for the Großmann-Klos company in the *Theater-Kalender* for 1787 (186–87), and he was with the Bellomo company in Weimar from Oct 1786 to Mar 1787. The confusion between Joseph and Carl Demmer is already present in that volume of the *Theater-Kalender*, where the listing for Carl Demmer in Bellomo's company reads:

> Herr Denner *[sic]*, ersetzt die Stelle des noch fehlenden Liebhabers in der Oper, ist sonst als guter Baßsänger bekannt. Spielt auch Vertraute im Lust= und Trauerspiel. [*ThK* 1787, 175–76]

> Herr Denner fills the still empty position of the romantic lead in the opera; he is otherwise known as a good bass singer. He also plays confidants in plays and tragedies.

One has the impression that this report was submitted to the *Theater-Kalender* before Demmer had actually arrived in Weimar, and the writer was not yet aware that the new addition was this young and unknown tenor, rather than the older and well-known bass Joseph Demmer. After leaving Weimar, Carl Demmer joined the short-lived company formed by Klos after his break with Großmann (*ThK* 1789, 173). After the collapse of Klos's company, Demmer became a member of the new company in Bonn.

The footnote to Neefe's poem in the *Theater-Kalender* in 1791 is reproduced in Reisinger et al. (2018) with an English translation; it is broken into two pieces: the initial paragraph on the Elector serves as the epigraph for their Introduction (page 1), while the rest is given later on (pages 134 and 136). Reisinger et al. attribute the footnote to Neefe without qualification, although strictly speaking his authorship is an assumption, albeit a plausible one. Reisinger et al. (2018, 137–38) also publish with English translation Lang's description of the Bonn theater, but embedded in the extensive supplementary material (provided by a Dr. Knickenberg) published as appendix 6 of the first volume of Thayer (1917, here i:427–30). The translations in this commentary of Lang's original and the "Neefe" footnote are our own.

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