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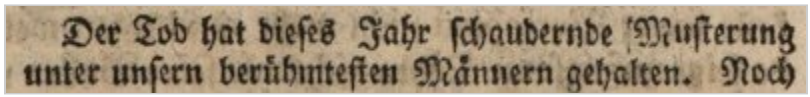
A notice of Mozart's death in Schubart's *Chronik* (23 Dec 1791)

Dexter Edge and David Black

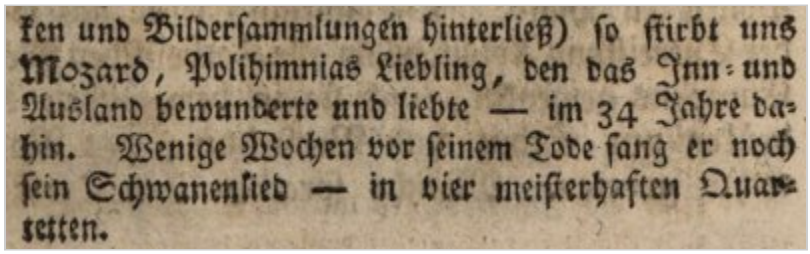
[Ludwig Schubart], *Chronik* 102, Fri, 23 Dec 1791, 833

[833]

Der Tod hat dieses Jahr schaudernde Musterung unter unsern berühmtesten Männern gehalten. *[...]*


Der Tod hat dieſes Jahr ſchaudernde Muſterung unter unſern berühmteſten Männern gehalten. Noch

[...] so stirbt uns Mozard, Polhimnias Liebling, den das Inn= und Ausland bewunderte und liebte — im 34 Jahre da= hin. Wenige Wochen vor seinem Tode sang er noch sein Schwanenlied — in vier meisterhaften Quar= tetten.


ken und Bilderſammlungen hinterließ) ſo ſtirbt uns Mozard, Polihimnias Liebling, den das Inn- und Ausland bewunderte und liebte — im 34 Jahre da- hin. Wenige Wochen vor ſeinem Tode ſang er noch ſein Schwanenlied — in vier meiſterhaften Quar- tetten.

[translation:]

This year death has taken a shuddering roll call among our most famous men *[...]*

[...] And our Mozart has died, Polyhymnia's favorite, who was venerated and loved at home and abroad—at 34 years. A few

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weeks before his death he still sang his swan song—
in four masterly quartets.

Commentary

In 1774, writer, journalist, composer, and organist Christian Daniel Friedrich Schubart (1739–1791) began publication of the periodical *Deutsche Chronik*, which appeared twice weekly. In 1777, after having insulted Franziska von Hohenheim, the mistress (and later second wife) of Carl Eugen, Duke of Württemberg, Schubart was incarcerated in Hohenasperg fortress in Württemberg. He remained confined there until 1787. Although the *Chronik* continued to appear in 1778 (now as the *Teutsche Chronik*), publication seems to have been suspended after that point. Schubart resumed publication of the periodical in July 1787 after his release, initially under the title *Schubarts Vaterländische Chronik*, then *Vaterlandschronik* (1788–1789), then simply *Chronik* (1790–1791).

Schubart died on 10 Oct 1791, as reported by his son Ludwig in the issue of 11 Oct. Ludwig promised to continue publication of the *Chronik* "nach dem bisherigen Plan und im bisherigen Tone" ("according to the previous plan and tone"); true to his promise, the periodical continued to appear through at least the end of 1792 under the title *Fortgesezte Schubart'sche Chronik*.

Schubart's Gravestone, Hoppenlau-Friedhof, Stuttgart
(Wikimedia Commons)

The notice of Mozart's death transcribed above is thus very likely by Ludwig Schubart. However, the reference to "Polihimnia's Liebling" is wholly in his father's style: in fact, his father had used that very phrase in 1784 in a laudatory ode to his jailer Carl Eugen, apparently intended to be read from the stage in Stuttgart on the occasion of Carl Eugen's name day, 4 Nov 1784 (the feast of Carlo Borromeo); the ode seems not to have hastened Schubart's release.

In ancient Greek mythology, Polyhymnia was the Muse of sacred poetry and hymns. References to Polyhymnia are not infrequent in Schubart's writings. In the *Chronik* of 19 Nov 1790, for example, in describing the festivities in Heilbronn at the time of the coronation of Leopold II, Schubart refers to music composed by "*D.* Weber, ein Liebling der Polyhymnia, wie der Hygäa" ("Dr. Weber, a favorite of Polyhymnia, as well as Hygieia"), probably referring to the medical doctor Friedrich August Weber (1753–1806), an amateur composer.

Like many early notices of Mozart's death, the one in the *Chronik* is not very accurate. Mozart was a little over 35 years and 10 months old at the time of his death, not 34, as stated in the *Chronik*. This error in Mozart's age and the perplexing reference to "vier Quartetten" (four quartets) as his final compositions are in fact found together in several other early German and English notices of Mozart's death. (See the notices in the *Freytägige Frankfurter Kaiserl. Reichs-Ober-Post-Amts-Zeitung* on 16 Dec 1791 and the *Musikalische Korrespondenz* on 28 Dec 1791, given in *Neue Folge*, 76 and 77–78. On 24 Dec 1791, the English *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* reported Mozart's death, giving his age as 36, but referring to "four pieces" completed just before his death; see our entry "Notices of Mozart's death in various English periodicals".) "Four quartets" seems to be a garbled reference to the impending publication by Artaria in Vienna in late Dec 1791 of the three "Prussian" quartets, K. 575, K. 589, and K. 590, which, however, Mozart had actually composed in 1789 and 1790.

In a passage omitted from the transcription here, the *Chronik* also notes the death in 1791 of "Präsident v. Hagen". This apparently refers to Johann Hugo Freiherr von Hagen (see note 7 here), member of the Reichshofrat from 1735, its vice president from 1754, and its president from 1778. He died on 24 Nov 1791 in Vienna.

Mozart's death is mentioned again in the *Chronik* (now the *Fortgesezte Schubart'sche Chronik*) in the issue of 13 Mar 1792, in a note following a report on the unexpected death of Emperor Leopold II on 1 Mar. The note reads:

> Schon das vorige Jahr war ein Gerichtsjahr für
> außerordentliche Menschen, denn da starben die: Mi=
> rabeau, Potemkin, Michaelis, Karschin, Schubart,
> Tischbein, Mozard, Semmler, Gemmingen, Born,
> Pichler; soll dieses neue Jahr auch so fürchterlich un=
> ter Geister greifen? [*Chronik,* 13 Mar 1792, 165]

> Last year was already a year of judgment for

> extraordinary people, for among the dead were:
> Mirabeau, Potemkin, Michaelis, Karsch, Schubart,
> Tischbein, Mozart, Semler, Gemmingen, Born,
> Pichler; will this new year also grasp so
> dreadfully among the great minds?

Besides Mozart, the famous names mentioned here are:

> Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau (1749–1791), orator
>
> Prince Grigory Potemkin (1739–1791), Russian military leader and statesman
>
> Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791), theologian and Biblical scholar
>
> Anna Louisa Karsch (1722–1791), poet
>
> Christian Daniel Friedrich Schubart (1739–1791)
>
> Johann Jacob Tischbein (1725–1791), painter (the "Lübecker Tischbein")
>
> Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791), theologian
>
> Eberhard Friedrich von Gemmingen (1726–1791), poet, composer, politician
>
> Ignaz von Born (1742–1791), prominent Freemason
>
> Giovanni Pichler (1734–1791), gem engraver

Notes (⇧)

Dokumente includes three items from various incarnations of Schubart's *Chronik*:

• 138 From *Deutsche Chronik*, 27 Apr 1775, no. 34, 267

> An eyewitness report on the performance of Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* in Munich

• 274 From *Vaterlandschronik*, 11 Jan 1788, no. 4, 30

> An erroneous report that Mozart had been appointed Kapellmeister to Archduke Franz; the notice concludes with the opinion (attributed to "Krittler," or fault-finders) that Mozart had invested his entire genius in the keyboard, and that his compositions in larger genres did not exhibit the same fire.

• 348f *Chronik*, 24 May 1791, no. 41, 344.

A brief review of a keyboard sonata with 9 variations "in Mozart's style" by Ludwig Abeille (1761–1838). The text of the review is omitted in *Dokumente*; it reads in full:

> Tonkunst.
> Klaviersonate mit neun Variazionen in Mozarts Geschmak von Abeille, von Amon in Heilbronn gesto= chen. Die Sonate geht aus dem harten *Es*, hat ein sehr lichtes Motif, und fliegt leicht in den lieblichsten Akkorden weg, wie die weisse Taube über einen Spiegelteich. Die Variazionen sind herrlich zur Uebung der Faust, sonder= lich zeugt die sechste von dem regelmäßigen Fingerfluge die= ses Klaviermeisters. Preis 48 Kreuzer.

The passage in blue is omitted by Deutsch, who also writes "Variationen" rather than "Variazionen," as it appears in the source. Deutsch gives the composer's name as Johann Christian Abeille. His full name was apparently Johann Christian Ludwig Abeille, but his name is more commonly given in reference works simply as "Ludwig" or "Louis." RISM lists a copy of Amon's edition of Abeille's sonata in the Zentralbibliothek in Zürich (CH-Zz), with the title "*Sonate [Es] et neuf variations dans le goût de Mozart pour le clavecin ou forte piano*".

In addition to the notices of Mozart's death transcribed here, our site also includes a reference to Mozart in the *Chronik* on 28 Dec 1790, in a brief article on a newly invented keyboard instrument that (allegedly) will not go out of tune; and a short item on 13 Mar 1792 regarding the recent Hamburg memorial concert for Mozart, with mention of the grand Symphony in E-flat (almost certainly K. 543) performed at that concert (the item in the *Chronik* is transcribed in the Notes for our main entry on the concert, which took place on 19 Feb 1792).

Other references to Schubart on this site include:

1780, from Schubart's *Originalien*, Mozart listed among prominent keyboard players

1786, from Schubart's *Musikalische Rhapsodien*, a reference to "Mozart the shimmering"

There seems to be no existing reference that aggregates links to digitized copies of all volumes of the *Chronik* in all of its various incarnations; in fact, it seems that no one digital repository includes all of them. The following is a list of all that we have been able to find:

Deutsche Chronik auf das Jahr 1774

Quarters 1 & 2 (BSB); 3 (BSB)

Publication began on 31 Mar 1774, and the *Deutsche Chronik* appeared for only the final three quarters of that year.

Deutsche Chronik auf das Jahr 1775

Quarters 1 & 2 (BSB); 3 & 4 (BSB)

Teutsche Chronik aufs Jahr 1776 [quarters 1 & 2; "*auf das*", quarters 3 & 4]

Quarters 1 (BSB); 2 (BSB); 3 (BSB); 4 (BSB)

Teutsche Chronik aufs Jahr 1778

Quarters 1 & 2 (BSB)

Schubarts Vaterländische Chronik, 1787

Jul–Dec (Google Books; BSB)

Vaterlandschronik, 1788

Jan–Jun (Google Books); Jul–Dec (Google Books; BSB)

Vaterlandschronik, 1789

Jan–Jun: BSB (color); Google Books
Jul–Dec: BSB (color); Google Books

Chronik, 1790

Erstes Halbjahr: BSB (color); Google Books
Zweites Halbjahr: BSB (color); Google Books

Chronik, 1791

Erstes Halbjahr: BSB (color); Google Books
Zweites Halbjahr: BSB (color); Google Books

Fortgesezte Schubart'sche Chronik, 1792

Erstes Halbjahr: BSB (color); Google Books
Zweites Halbjahr: BSB (color); Google Books

Credit: DE & DB

Authors: Dexter Edge, David Black

Link(s): Google Books

Search Term: mozard

Source Library: BSB

Categories: Biography, Reception, Addenda

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