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The premiere of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Frankfurt am Main (2 Aug 1783)

Dexter Edge

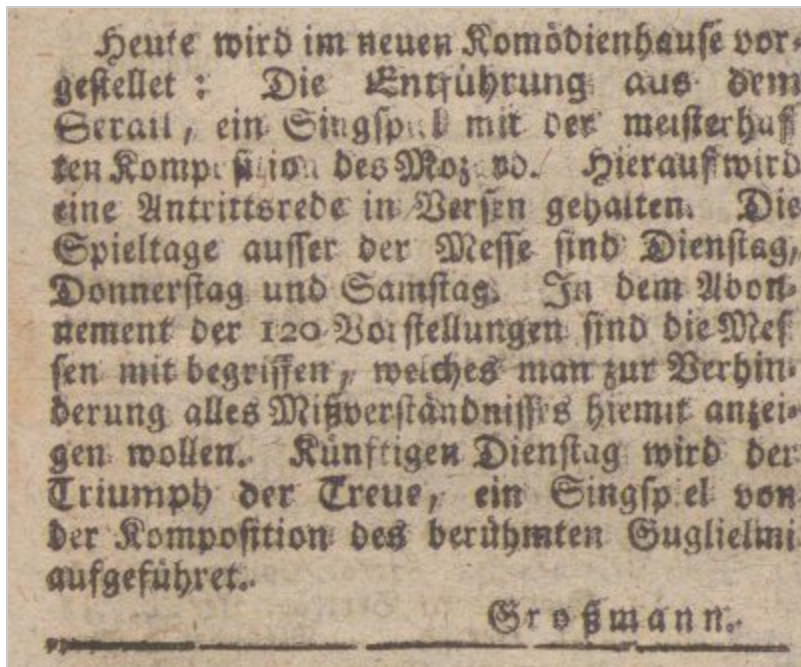
Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto, no. 120, Sat, 2 Aug 1783

[505]

Heute wird im neuen Komödienhause vor= gestellt: **Die Entführung aus dem Serail**, ein Singspiel mit der meisterhaf= ten Komposition des Mozard. Hierauf wird eine Antrittsrede in Versen gehalten. Die Spieltage ausser der Messe sind Dienstag, Donnerstag und Samstag. In dem Abon= nement der 120 Vorstellungen sind die Mes= sen mit begriffen, welches man zur Verhin= derung alles Mißverständnisses hiemit anzei= gen wollen. Künftigen Dienstag wird der **Triumph der Treue**, ein Singspiel von der Komposition des berühmten Guglielmi aufgeführt.

Großmann.





[translation:]

Today will be performed in the new Komödienhaus: **Die Entführung aus dem Serail**, a singspiel of Mozart's masterly composition. Afterward an inaugural address in verse will be read. Except during the trade fair, performances will be on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. There are 120 performances in the subscription, including the trade fairs, which we announce here in order to avoid all misunderstandings. This coming Tuesday will be performed **Triumph der Treue**, a singspiel composed by the famous Guglielmi.

Großmann.

Commentary

The notice transcribed above is the primary source for the date of the first performance of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Frankfurt am Main. It is the fourth precisely dated local premiere of the opera outside Vienna, following Strasbourg ([24 Jan 1783](#)), Warsaw ([8 May 1783](#)), and Bonn ([22 Jun 1783](#)). By the time of the Frankfurt premiere, *Entführung* may also have been performed in Prague, but the precise date of the opera's premiere in that city remains unknown; we know only that it probably took place after Easter 1783 (Easter fell on 20 Apr that year; see also the *Notes* to our entry for [24 Jan 1783](#)). The Frankfurt production of *Entführung*

was mounted by the company of [Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Großmann](#) (1743–1796), which had given the Bonn premiere of the opera just 41 days earlier, on [22 Jun 1783](#).

On 2 Aug 1783, the same day as the notice in the *Frankfurter Staat-Ristretto*. Großmann also advertised the performance in the *Franckfurter Frag- und Anzeigungs-Nachrichten*:

AVERTISSEMENTS.

Am Samstag den 2ten Aug. wird das neue Schauspielhaus wieder eröffnet mit einem / Singspiel: die Entführung aus dem Serail, von der meisterhaften Komposition des Mozart; / worauf eine Antrittsrede in Versen gehalten wird. Wegen Abonnement kann man sich ge= / fälligst bey mir im Komödienhause melden.

Großmann.



Franckfurter Frag- und Anzeigungs-Nachrichten, no. 63, [Fri, 2 Aug 1783](#), [1]

ADVERTISEMENTS.

On Saturday, 2 Aug, the new theater will be reopened with a singspiel: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, of Mozart’s masterly composition; after which an inaugural address in verse will be read. In regard to subscription, kindly see me in the theater.

Großmann.

Großmann’s announcement in the *Frankfurter Staat-Ristretto* on 2 Aug 1783 was transcribed (with some errors) by Mentzel ([1891, 297](#)), in her appendix listing Großmann’s complete program in Frankfurt from 22 Apr to 27 Nov 1783. Wolter, in his calendar of performances by the Großmann company, correctly gives 2 Aug 1783 as the date of the first Frankfurt performance of *Entführung*, but cites no source ([1901, Beilage 2, xix](#)). Deutsch (likely following Wolter) gives the same date, but no source; he also incorrectly states that Aloisia Lange appeared as Konstanze in that performance (*Dokumente*, 193). Lange made at least one guest appearance in Frankfurt as Konstanze in Sep 1784; but she was not in Frankfurt in 1783. Mohr (1968, 63) cites the *Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto* as the source for the date of the Frankfurt premiere of *Entführung*, but does not transcribe the notice given above. According to Mohr, no poster is known to survive for the performance.

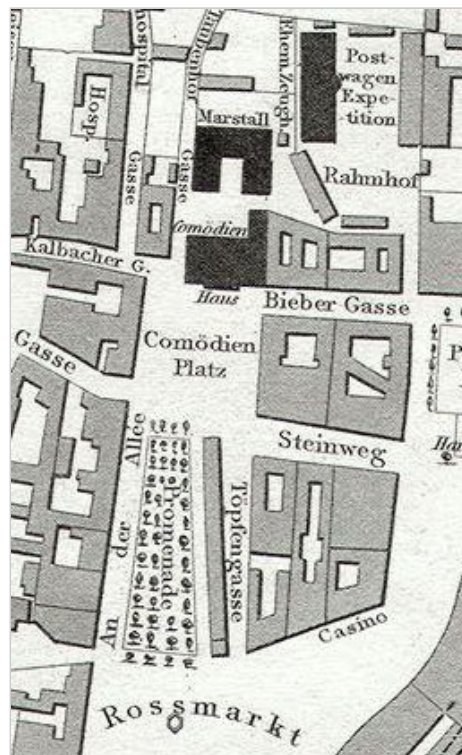
The Großmann company presented *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in the “new” Komödienhaus (often also “Comödienhaus”)—the theater had opened on 3 Sep 1782 after two years of construction, replacing the theater in the Junghof, which had previously been used for operas and plays ([Grimm & Noll 2023](#)). *Sandrina*, a German version of Mozart’s *La finta giardiniera*,

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had been performed in the old theater by the company of Johann Böhmer on **2 Apr 1782**. The new Komödienhaus, which remained in use until 1902, was located on Comoedienplatz (also Theaterplatz, now **Rathenauplatz**).



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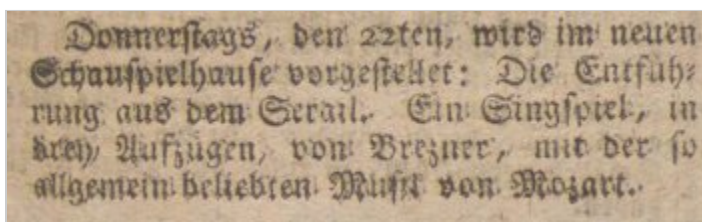
([Wikimedia Commons](#))

The singspiel *Triumph der Treue* mentioned in Großmann’s notice in the *Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto*, was a German adaptation of *La sposa fedele* by [Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi](#) (1728–1804). The “Messen” were Frankfurt’s famous trade fairs, held twice yearly at Easter and in the autumn.

The cast of Großmann’s performance of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Frankfurt on 2 Aug 1783 may well have been the same or essentially the same as for his performance in Bonn on 22 Jun 1783, but we have no known primary source for the cast of either. In [our entry for the Bonn premiere](#), we suggest that the singing cast may have been Anna Christiane Josephi as Konstanze, Tobias Friedrich Pfeiffer as Belmonte, Eleonora Bösenberg as Blonde, Carl David Stegmann as Pedrillo, and Heinrich Christian Pleissner—a tenor—as Osmin.

Großmann’s company gave seven performances in all of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Frankfurt between 2 Aug 1782 and the end of the company’s association with the city in 1786. On [23 Sep 1783](#) the opera was performed along with a “Turkish ballet” (“nebst einem türkischen Ballet”). The performance on 5 May 1784 is the only one of the seven for which a poster is known to survive—fortunately so, as that performance was announced in neither the *Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto* nor the *Franckfurter Frag- und Anzeigungs-Nachrichten*. The company performed *Entführung* again on 8 and 29 Sep 1784; Aloisia Lange certainly made a guest appearance as Konstanze in the second of these, and probably also in the first (see our entry for [29 Sep 1784](#)). Ludwig Fischer made a guest appearance as Osmin in Großmann’s reprise of the opera on [13 Sep 1785](#). Fischer had created the role in the original production in Vienna in 1782; his appearance in Frankfurt in 1785 may well have been the first opportunity for the Frankfurt public to hear the role sung as originally written. The Großmann company’s final performance of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Frankfurt took place on Thu, 22 Jun 1786, as announced in the *Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto*:

Donnerstags, den 22ten, wird im neuen
Schaupielhause vorgestellt: Die Entfüh=
rung aus dem Serail. Ein Singspiel, in
drey Aufzügen, von Brezner, mit der so
allgemein beliebten Musik von Mozart.
[[Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto](#), no. 96, Tue,
20 Jun 1786, 403]



Thursday, the 22nd, will be performed in the new theater: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. A singspiel in three acts by Bretzner, with the so generally popular music of Mozart.

Both of Großmann’s notices on 2 Aug 1783 refer to Mozart’s “meisterhafte Komposition,” probably one of the earliest uses of that phrase to refer to a work by Mozart.

Notes (↑)

In her transcription of Großmann’s notice in the *Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto* on 2 Aug 1783, Mentzel lightly updates spelling and slightly rewrites the sentence on Guglielmi’s opera (Mentzel 1891, 297). Perhaps through an editing error, Mentzel’s transcription ends with a phrase from the following unrelated notice in the same issue of the *Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto*: “Der Tempel der Diana mit allem darzu erforderlichen Verzierungen.”

Wolter (1901, Beilage 2, xxiii) lists a performance of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Frankfurt on Thu, 16 Sep 1784, but this is almost certainly an error. The *Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto* announces a performance of Schink’s *Gianetta Montaldi* for that day, a performance that was to include a “violin concerto by Mozart” as an entr’acte (see our entry for 16 Sep 1784).

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