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BEETHOVEN AND THE LAST GENERATION OF COURT MUSICIANS IN GERMANY / BEETHOVEN UND ANDERE HOFMUSIKER SEINER ZEIT IM DEUTSCHSPRACHIGEN RAUM
BEETHOVEN-HAUS, BONN, 3–6 DECEMBER 2015

When the French army arrived in Bonn in 1794, music scores and performance materials were evacuated from the electoral library, never to return. The documents survived several more relocations and were eventually preserved in Modena's Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, where they are held today. The holdings of Elector Maximilian Franz (1745–1801) showcase a vibrant period of opera production in a late eighteenth-century courtly context, with repertoires ranging from French and Italian operas sung in their original languages to Georg Benda's melodramas and a 1794 production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. This rich documentary evidence provides us with fresh insight into Beethoven's early years, especially his experience with opera during his time in Bonn. It also brings Bonn into the spotlight as an important cultural, political and urban centre for music.

Based on the outcomes of a research project entitled 'The Operatic Library of Elector Maximilian Franz, 1780–1794', funded by the FWF (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung; Austrian Science Fund), with Birgit Lodes as principal investigator, this bilingual conference focused on the last generation of court musicians (1780–1820) in the German-speaking realm. This expertly orchestrated event was a model of collaboration and scholarly outreach: partners included the Universität Wien, the Beethoven-Haus and Beethoven-Haus museum in Bonn, the Biblioteca Estense Universitaria in Modena and Theater Bonn. Combining academic presentations by some nineteen scholars from Europe and North America, performances of musical excerpts, including substitute arias, from Carl von Dittersdorf's *Das rote Käppchen* (1788) and a superb exhibition and illustrated catalogue entitled 'Operatic Life in Bonn During Beethoven's Youth' at the Beethoven-Haus museum (put together by John D. Wilson), this event brought into dialogue textual, material and sonic evidence from pre-revolutionary Bonn. The organizers, Lodes, Wilson and Elisabeth Reisinger, all from the Universität Wien, in collaboration with Christine Siegert from the Beethoven-Haus, deserve highest praise for opening up new avenues of scholarly investigation pertaining to theatrical music at courts across the German linguistic area.

Following a warm welcome from Malte Boecker, Director of the Beethoven-Haus, Lodes and Wilson showcased the findings of the FWF project with particular attention to the database of musical sources, available online at <www.univie.ac.at/opernbibliothek/>. The keynote lecture by Mark Evan Bonds (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), 'The Court of Public Opinion: The Crafting of Compositional Identity, 1780–1820', investigated the question of compositional identity for Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven. Introducing the helpful distinction between personal and artistic emancipation, Bonds questioned the extent to which Beethoven was truly free as an artist, and suggested that the composer would have liked a court position at the end of his life. Various primary-source documents (including the well-known letter regarding Haydn's appointment at the Eszterháza court) were further contextualized, offering new insights into Haydn's views of the court system. The keynote address was followed by a musical performance by Nina Simone Uden (soprano) and Thomas Wise (piano) from Theater Bonn in the acoustically superior space of the Beethoven-Haus.

The second day featured a full programme of academic papers on the topic 'Court Opera: Macro and Micro Perspectives'. Thomas Betzwieser (Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt) investigated the travelling troupes of Gustav F. W. Großmann (1746–1796), unveiling the intricate workings of the 'Nationaltheater' and performances of a wide range of musico-theatrical genres, including Benda's melodramas. Arnold Jacobshagen (Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln) offered a meticulously researched study of the unique position of the Kapellmeister as opera composer in German courts c1800. Panja Mücke (Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst Mannheim) reconstructed the career of Francesco Morlacchi (1784–1841) as Dresden Hofkapellmeister, revealing the workings and repertoire of the court's theatre. John A. Rice



(Rochester, Minnesota) focused on the final opera performed at Eszterháza, Joseph Weigl's *Venere e Adone* (1791), especially on the question of genre in conjunction with contemporary repertoire. Elisabeth Reisinger delved into a plethora of primary source documents from Vienna, lending a textured image of the early musical life of Maximilian Franz. While Reisinger spent some time on the Viennese court, Silke Betterman (Beethoven-Haus, Bonn) turned to Bonn, offering an investigation of ceremonial practice at court and fleshing out connections between music and architecture. The second day concluded with a lively discussion, led by Christine Siegert, on the advantages of taking a comparative approach to court opera in German courts during the late eighteenth century.

On Saturday the focus turned from court culture to the emerging public sphere. My paper (Estelle Joubert, Dalhousie University) examined opera holdings in the recently recovered Sing-Akademie archive in Berlin, highlighting the convergence between court culture under the rule of Friedrich Wilhelm III and music critics such as Johann Friedrich Reichardt. Erica Buurman (Canterbury Christ Church University) charted new territory in her examination of music for the annual balls of Vienna's Pensionsgesellschaft bildender Künstler from 1792 to 1832. Drawing on archival sources in Vienna, her overview provided a rare glimpse into minuets and German dances in both Grosser and Kleiner Redoutensaal. Delving into a dizzying array of primary-source evidence, Axel Beer (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz) reconstructed networks and processes associated with the music trade in Bonn, but ultimately reaching across the German-speaking realm. The discussion following Beer's paper was particularly lively and included extensive commentary on the current state of digitization of German-language periodical sources. The morning concluded with a guided tour by Michael Ladenburger (Beethoven-Haus, Bonn) and John D. Wilson of the special exhibition of musical and theatrical materials of the Bonn court, now held in Modena. Among the items was Elector Maximilian Franz's musical inventory, arias and operas printed by Simrock, the full score and parts used for the 1794 Bonn performance of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and Beethoven's copies of selected ensemble passages from *Don Giovanni*.

Scholarly presentations in the afternoon began with one by Melanie Unseld (Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg), who traced continuities and changes in musical families as the court system dissolved during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Rita Steblin (Vienna) then launched into a detailed investigation of the court careers of Paul and Anton Wranitzky in Vienna, providing a series of corrections to autobiographical details based on new archival research. Professional networks and social connections between Italian musicians at the Dresden court occupied Sebastian Biesold (Universität Bonn), while Mark Kroll (Boston University) laid bare the differences between Beethoven's and Hummel's musical careers. The evening concluded with a brief stop at the bustling Christmas market, where everyone enjoyed a glass of *Glühwein*, followed by delicious Central European cuisine at a local restaurant.

Having discovered gifts of a book and chocolates from Saint Nicholas outside our doors early Sunday morning, the delegates' energy was high around the breakfast table and during the final presentations. Christine Siegert investigated the training (*Ausbildung*) of a court composer in the age of Beethoven, focusing on Cherubini and Haydn as case studies. Markus Neuwirth (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) turned to the question of 'style transfer' between Joseph Reicha's *Harmoniemusik* and some of Beethoven's works, focusing primarily on timbre and orchestration. Returning to the question of what operas Beethoven might have heard at the Bonn court, Stephen Whiting (University of Michigan) embarked on a detailed examination of stage works with music by Grétry, and explored the potential influence of specific musical devices associated with the composer on Beethoven's works. Finally, John D. Wilson offered a comparative study of Beethoven, Bernhard Romberg and Anton Reicha, illuminating their various career directions after all three failed to find court positions. The event was elegantly concluded with drinks and hors d'oeuvres at a fashionable local establishment, and scholarly collaborations forged here will surely continue to blossom.

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