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News of Members

Bruce Alan Brown’s Generalvorwort (general preface) to three volumes of ballet music by Gluck from sources in the former princely Schwarzenberg archive in Český Krumlov, Czech Republic, will be published later this year in volume II/3 of Gluck, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Irene Brandenburg (Kassel: Bärenreiter).

Caryl Clark would like to let members of the MSA know about the upcoming production of the Haydn’s Orfeo at the University of Toronto in late May 2023. Composed in the same year as Die Zauberflöte and La clemenza di Tito, Haydn’s last opera, L’anima del filosofo, is an unusual retelling of the Orpheus myth that never reached the stage of London’s King’s Theater, for which it was commissioned. The production is in a bit of a budget shortfall, so any contributions from MSA members would be greatly appreciated: uoft.me/Orfeo. All contributors will be acknowledged in the printed program.

Jared Gollub has written a new play on Mozart inspired by the travel diaries of Vincent and Mary Novello. All the Scattered Pages is the story of a music publisher from London who, intent on transforming his business and resolving his longstanding struggle with his young son’s death, travels to Austria in 1829 to wrest from Mozart’s widow Constanze and others close to Mozart during his lifetime the original Requiem manuscript and the true story behind its posthumous completion. He is currently exploring production opportunities for All the Scattered Pages in theaters in the US, UK and EU, and is open to discussing the play and providing the script for review to Mozart Society of America members with theater connections who are potentially interested in promoting its production. He can be reached at: jared.gollub@gmail.com.

Robert Levin completed a recording of Mozart’s complete piano sonatas on Mozart’s own Walter piano, the recording was released by ECM in September 2022. In spring 2023, the Academy of Ancient Music will release the first of the remaining five discs of his traversal of the complete Mozart keyboard concertos in C major, K. 467, and C minor, K. 491. This resumes the series that began in 1993 with Christopher Hogwood and AAM and was suspended by Decca in 2000. The remaining four CDs will be issued over the next months, with the final disc, containing the concertos in C minor, K. 503, the aria “Ch’io mi scordi di te” (with Louise Alder), K. 505, and the concerto in B-flat major, K. 595, coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the AAM. These discs will feature a variety of solo instruments: harpsichords and copies of Stein pianos, Tangentenflügel, Walter pianos, and organ (K. 175, K. 336). Included will be the world premiere recording of what is probably Mozart’s first work for

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keyboard and orchestra, the concerto movement in G major from the Nannerl Music Book, written ca. 1764, with Levin’s reconstruction of the missing orchestral parts.

Martin Nedbal’s article “Wenzel Mihule and the Reception of Don Giovanni in Central Europe” was published in The Journal of Musicology in 2022, and his article on Beethoven’s Fidelio was published in Music & Letters, also last year. In February 2023, Nedbal gave an invited lecture on the politicization of Mozart’s legacy in Prague at the Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia, and in the spring 2023 semester he is teaching a course on Mozart’s operas at the Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic.

Channan Willner recently published several articles on his website, at <http://www.channanwillner.com/online.htm>: “Mozart’s Delayed Dominants, I: Long-Range Voice Exchanges; II: The Subordinate Theme(s);” and “Parsing Mozart, 1782-84.” These complement earlier studies of Mozart’s borrowings in his fortepiano concertos K. 450 and K. 467, on Willner’s website.

Statue of Mozart by Bohemian sculptor Thomas Seidan from 1876. The statue is in the garden of Bertramka, an old house in Prague that was owned by Franz Xaver and Josepha Duschek at the times of Mozart’s visits to the Bohemian capital. A recent book about Bertramka is reviewed later in this Newsletter. Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/58/Statue_of_Mozart.JPG
The mature Wolfgang Amadé Mozart’s antipathy toward French music and French society is well documented in his own words. In a letter to his father Leopold from early in his 1778 stay in Paris, where he had gone in search of employment, he wrote, with reference to his first sojourn there in 1763–64:

Paris is greatly changed; the French are not nearly as polite as they were fifteen years ago; their manners now border on rudeness and they are detestably self-conceited.¹

Later in the same letter, describing an unpleasant musical encounter with Giuseppe Cambini, an Italian composer by then settled in the French capital, Mozart told his father:

If this were a place where people had ears to hear, hearts to feel and some measure of understanding of and taste for music, these things would only make me laugh heartily; but, as it is (as far as music is concerned), I am surrounded by mere brute beasts.²

Mozart heaped particular scorn on French singing. On 9 July he mentioned to his father the possibility of writing a French opera, but complained:

If only that confounded French tongue were not so detestable for music. It really is hopeless; even German is divine in comparison. And then the men and women singers! Indeed they hardly deserve the name, for they don’t sing—they yell—howl—and that too with all their might, through their noses and throats . . .³

This opinion on French singing was widespread among musicians and listeners outside France during the eighteenth century, which fact explains in large part the failure of tragédie en musique to establish itself in foreign courts and theaters.

Mozart thought that his distaste for French vocal music was founded on a solid understanding of the language. Prior to his arrival in Paris, while in Munich, Mozart had boasted to his father that the French-born wife of Privy Councillor Johann Karl von Branca had told him that his “French was not bad at all.”⁴ But the composer’s shaky command of the language is evident in occasional errors when using French in his correspondence (as with his phonetic misspelling “o contraire” rather than the more sensical “au contraire”),⁵ and in his sometimes faulty setting of French in the two ariettes that he composed in Mannheim during the winter of 1777–78.⁶

In view of all the foregoing, it is hardly surprising that Mozart failed to secure an operatic commission during his stay in the French capital. What successes he had there (limited, so he claimed, by jealousies and cabals) were in the realm of instrumental music. The one stage work he produced during his Parisian sojourn was a ballet, Les Petits Riens, with choreography by the great ballet reformer Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810). Yet this work, though purely instrumental in its scoring, was dependent to a significant degree on vocal music, in a way that clearly irritated Mozart—as is clear from the quotation in my title, from a letter he wrote to his father during the ballet’s gestation (see below). That circumstance has negatively affected both the work’s standing within the canon of the composer’s works and its subsequent performance history. In writing about Les Petits Riens here, I hope to show that Noverre’s recourse to vocal music was very much in accord with usual practices of French ballet, and very likely aided in the ballet’s reception during its initial performances.

Mozart had first encountered Noverre’s works, if not the choreographer himself, years before, during the family’s extended sojourn of 1767–68 in the Habsburg capital, the period also of Noverre’s initial successes with the Viennese public. There Noverre had presented a ballet called Les Petits Riens at the conclusion of Gluck and Calzabigi’s “tragedia” Alceste, first performed in the Burgtheater (court theater) on 26 December. The Mozarts evidently attended at least one performance of the opera, as it is suggested by Leopold’s mention of the work in a letter from early 1768,⁷ and his recommendation to his son, for the oracle scene of his opera Idomeneo (Munich, 1781) of an awe-inspiring brass and low windwood accompaniment as in the scene for the Grand Priest of Apollo in Alceste (though Leopold does not specifically name the opera).⁸ During one or more of their three Italian journeys, father and son Mozart became acquainted with Noverre personally, no later than August of 1773 in Milan.⁹ In contrast to the tragic ballets en action that Noverre presented in Vienna, Les Petits Riens was episodic, and was not accompanied by a printed program, though the Viennese theater critic Joseph von Sonnenfels described the action in detail in the pages of his Briefe über die Wienerische Schaubühne (Letters on the Viennese Stage). That account is reproduced, along with an edition of the surviving music by Franz Aspelmayr for part of the ballet (the section called L’Amour en cage) in the third volume of Gerhard Croll’s critical edition of Alceste for the complete edition of Gluck’s works.¹⁰

By 1776, after having conquered the stages of both Vienna and Milan, Noverre had realized his long-term ambition to become the ballet-master at the Académie Royale de Musique, or Opéra, in Paris. During the summer of 1778 his ballets

The “alten Miserablen französischen arien” in Mozart’s Ballet Les Petits Riens, K. Anh. 10 (299b) (1778)

Bruce Alan Brown
there accompanied performances by a visiting Italian comic opera troupe, led by composer Niccolò Piccinni, by which the Opéra's court-appointed director Jacques de Vismes sought to enliven the offerings and revenues of that august institution. The ballet for which Noverre approached Mozart was a reworked version of his Viennese Les Petits Riens, to follow performances of Piccinni's opera buffa Le finte gemelle (The False Twins), on a text by Giuseppe Petrosellini, from 11 June onward. Rather than using Aspelmayr's existing music, for this version Noverre assembled a new score, only part of which actually consisted of original music. As Mozart famously complained to his father, on 9 July:

As for Noverre's ballet, all that I ever told you was that he might perhaps design a new one. He only needed half a ballet and for this I composed the music. Six pieces in it are composed by others and are made up entirely of wretched old French airs, while the ouverture and contre-danses, about twelve pieces in all, have been contributed by me. This ballet has already been performed four times with the greatest applause.11

Mozart was clearly peeved by the inclusion of these “alten Miserablen französischen arien,” but the use of popular vocal airs, known collectively as vaudevilles, in French ballets of this period was in fact quite common, and would remain so well into the nineteenth century.12 As Victor Wilder, the nineteenth-century rediscoverer of Mozart's music for the ballet, put it:

In this type of work, the eyes’ pleasure primes that of the ears, and most of these ballets then were composed with scissors and paste. One gladly tailored them out of popular songs and fashionable [vocal] airs, the well known words of which, coming back to the spectators' memories, served to clarify what was happening on the stage. They’re what was called airs parlants [speaking airs].13

Dance masters relied on the communicative potential of these airs to supplement information in the printed program, or to substitute for a program when there was none. This multi-layered, “hypertextual” manner of elucidating the action of a ballet was known also in Vienna: in 1760, for instance, the choreographer Charles Bernardi created a ballet, Les Aventures champêtres, whose music, arranged by Gluck, consisted of airs from recently performed opéras-comiques, including his own. Their texts were included in the program, but not sung; the melodies were merely played by the orchestra.14

Comprehension by spectators was problematic for both sorts of works being performed at the Opéra during the summer of 1778. There were complaints in the press regarding the lack of a full French translation of the libretto of Piccinni's opera buffa; the anonymous correspondent for the Mémoires secrets, a daily chronicle that circulated in manuscript (only being published years after the fact), noted wryly that

the words, rendered literally, seemed so ill suited to succeed [with the public] that no translator has dared to take on the task, and only a very abridged summary in French of each scene has been put [in the libretto].15

An edition of “Airs détachés” from the opera, with a French translation, “in order better to apprise spectators of the action,” was on sale already at the time of the premiere, including at the Opéra itself, but this shed no light on the recitatives, in which most of the action took place.16 As for the ballet, no summary of the plot was distributed at performances, but a brief résumé appeared in the Journal de Paris the day after the premiere, and was soon paraphrased in other periodicals:

After this piece [Le finte gemelle] they gave the first performance of Les Petits Riens, pantomime ballet composed by M. Noverre. It is composed of three episodic scenes, almost completely detached one from another. The first is purely anacreontic; it's Cupid caught in a net and put in a cage; its composition is very pleasant. In it Mlle Guimard and M. Vestris the younger deploy all the graces of which this subject is susceptible. The second is the game of blindman's bluff; M. d'Auberval, whose talent is so agreeable to the public, plays the principal role. The third is a prank by Cupid, who presents to two shepherdesses another shepherd disguised as a shepherd. Mlle Asselin plays the role of the shepherd, and Mlles Guimard and Allard those of the shepherdesses. The two shepherdesses fall in love with the supposed shepherd, who in order to undeceive them ends up uncovering his breast. This scene is [rendered] very racy by the intelligence and graces of these three celebrated dancers. We have to mention that at the moment when Mlle Asselin disabuses the two shepherdesses, several voices cried out bis [encore]. The varied [contre-danse] figures by which this ballet is concluded were very much applauded.17

Only for the third scene is any concrete detail given on the plot (such as there is one). For the most part, spectators would have to rely on gesture, facial expressions, and the music in order to understand what actions were being represented on stage.

After the summer of 1778, Noverre and Mozart's ballet disappeared from the repertory, and its music was lost sight of for nearly a century, until 1872, when the Belgian-born music critic and translator Victor Wilder (1835–1892) discovered a copyist's score of the ballet in the Parisian Bibliothèque de
The next year, he published both a fuller account of the work and a piano reduction (see fig. 1). In his “Notice historique” to the edition, Wilder was at pains to distinguish the six “apocryphal” numbers from those by Mozart, the latter being the sole focus of his interest:

Of this number [the 20 dance movements after the overture], there are six that one can set aside on the testimony of the master [i.e., Mozart’s dismissal of them, in his letter of 9 July]. An attentive reading immediately identifies those that are apocryphal.

For one of them, we have an absolute certainty. It is no. 2, which is none other than the air “Charmante Gabrielle.” But even if for the five others we can only invoke reasons of style, these are so evident to our eyes, at least, that doubt is not possible.

Though he does not say so explicitly, the half-dozen numbers Wilder deemed to be non-Mozartian were all in the first scene of the ballet, which he excluded from his edition; after the overture, his score jumps to no. 7 of the manuscript score, which he calls “No 1 = ENTRÉE DU COLIN-MAILLARD” (i.e., the start of the second scene). When Wilder published a full orchestral score of the ballet in the so-called Alte Mozart-Ausgabe (AMA), in 1886, he again omitted the non-Mozartian numbers. In the 1963 edition by Harald Heckmann for the Neue Mozart-Ausgabe (NMA), all the music in the Paris manuscript was included, but again, with attributions of individual movements largely on the basis of educated guesswork. The AMA’s misleadingly labeled “№ 1” is thus the NMA’s “№ 7 <nicht von Mozart?>,” for example. In part, no doubt, because of the AMA’s omissions and the NMA’s foregrounding of authenticity or inauthenticity in the movement titles, performances and recordings of the ballet have routinely omitted the (perceived) non-Mozartian numbers, often without comment.

Mozart’s dim view of French popular song was shared by the philosophe and composer Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in his 1768 Dictionnaire de musique had characterized vaudevilles as “not very musical,” with “neither taste, nor melody, nor measure.” But few Parisians would have expected such tunes to compete, in purely musical allure, with original numbers by a composer as accomplished as Mozart. My aim in reconsidering these malign numbers from Les Petits Riens is to ascertain what they could contribute to the work, in terms of allusive potential and dramaturgical efficacy, with the original audience brought back into the equation. But first, one needs to know what these numbers were.

RISM’s incipit search tool allows present-day researchers to identify at least some of the “wretched old French airs,” and others are among the most widely circulated vaudevilles, both in their original versions and in ret textbooks. Certainly by intention, five of the first six numbers in the ballet’s opening scene are songs of courtship, flirtation, or amorous jealousy. (For musical incipits from the ballet, see the score of Heckmann’s NMA edition, online at https://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/nma/nmapub_srch.php?l=1.)

The original of No. 5 (see the NMA score, pp. 20–21) has thus far eluded identification, but it seems to be an outlier in any case—Italianate rather than French in style, and probably instrumental rather than vocal, with leaps as large as an octave and a half in the first-violin part. It is tempting to think that these accompanied similarly acrobatic motions by the dancers on the stage.

The other numbers in this group, all vocal in origin, likely served a variety of purposes. Fittingly, the first air quoted, “Poulido pastourélo” (Pretty shepherdess), is from a work in langue d’oc (i.e., Provençal), Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondevonville’s 1754 pastoral opera Daphnis et Alcimadure (to his own text), thus providing for a smooth transition from the just concluded performance of Piccinni’s opera, the male protagonists of which were “Deux Séigneurs Languedociens.”
“Poulido pastourélo” is a shepherd’s description of his love for his shepherdess—appropriately for this ballet, the third entrée of which involves two shepherdesses (for a costume sketch of one of them, see fig. 2) plus a third disguised as a shepherd. (In both the original libretto and score of Mondonville’s opera, words the audience might not have known were translated into standard French above the lyrics; see fig. 3). In the anonymous arrangement in Les Petits Riens (see the NMA score, p. 15), Mondonville’s languid and slightly antique-sounding melody is played by the first violins in octaves, accentuating its rusticity even further.

The second tune used, “Charmante Gabrielle” (see fig. 4) is likewise old-fashioned, not just in its melodic facture but also in its diction. Ostensibly a song of farewell sent by Henri IV of France to his mistress, Gabrielle d’Estrées, at the close of the sixteenth century, it is more likely an invention of the early eighteenth. At its first appearance in print in 1706, in the monthly Mercure galant (a publication in which fact and fiction tended to blur), the correspondent sending in the song called attention to the archaic word “départie” in the refrain, assuring readers that “when one is accustomed to [such words], one finds nothing strange about them.” In using “Charmante Gabrielle,” Noverre might have meant to impart an air of nostalgia, melancholy, and/or licentiousness to the first scene of his ballet; its musical arrangement in phrases alternating between strings and winds (see the NMA score, p. 16) suggests some sort of dialogue, perhaps reflecting Noverre’s choreography at that point.

It is easier to guess Noverre’s intentions in using the third borrowed tune, “Dans un détour” (see fig. 5), by the chansonnier, playwright, and opéra-comique librettist Charles-Simon Favart, since its text is a close analogue of the plot of the first scene in Les Petits Riens, in which the sleeping Cupid is trapped in a net and put in a cage. For many spectators, hearing the tune played by the orchestra (see the NMA score, p. 17) would have called to mind Favart’s verses, with their distinctive echo rhymes (impossible to render in translation):

In a secluded spot, 
strolling in the woods one day, 
I spied Cupid, 
sitting at the foot of a linden tree, 
alone.

At the sight of the trickster, 
I recoiled, trembling with fright; 
but he has such a sweet appearance, 
what do I need to fear?

let’s approach . . .

Hush . . .

In order to steal his arrows, 
let’s keep on the lookout here.

Let’s see if over there
I could . . . quietly . . . there they are.

Let’s not delay, 
to catch him, let’s make snares:
But what am I doing, alas?

What if he should awaken? . . . No, he’s sleeping, soundly.

Mozart may well have encountered “Dans un détour” already before 1778: Favart’s actress-playwright wife Marie-Justine had used the tune, with a new text, in her 1753 opéra-comique.
Fig. 2. Costume design for "Bergère galante" in Noverre, *Les Petits Riens*, Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra, Paris, D216O-4 (4,1).

Fig. 3. "Pouliodo pastourélo," air from Mondonville, *Daphnis et Alcimadure* (Paris, 1754).
Fig. 4. “Charmante Gabrielle,” anonymous *chanson historique*, in *Anthologie française*, ed. Jean Monnet, vol. 1 (Paris, 1765).

Fig. 5. “Dans un détour,” *chanson* by Charles-Simon Favart, in *Anthologie française*, ed. Jean Monnet, vol. 2 (Paris, 1765).
Les Amours de Bastien et Bastienne—a parody of Rousseau’s intermède Le Devin du village. The work was performed regularly by Vienna’s French theatrical troupe, from 1755 onward (see fig. 6), including on 8 November and 13 December 1762, during a three-month visit of the Mozart family to the imperial capital (though we don’t know if they attended either performance). Bastien et Bastienne was of course the model for Mozart’s early German Singspiel Bastien und Bastienne, which he wrote in 1768, during another extended visit to Vienna.

The last two borrowed vocal airs in the ballet, nos. 4 and 6 (flanking the G-minor Italianate number; see the NMA score, pp. 18-19 and 21) are of more recent origin than nos. 1–3. Noverre may have included the first, “Pour jamais à ma Thémire j’ai donné mon cœur” (I have given my heart to my Thémire for ever), simply in order to take advantage of a newly popular and thematically apt love song. “C’est un propos, c’est un regard,” sung by the peasant girl Fanchette in the 1765 opéra-comique Le Tonnelier by François-Joseph Gossec et al. (to a libretto by Antoine-François Quétant and Nicolas-Médard Audinot), would have been remembered by many spectators present at performances of Noverre and Mozart’s ballet. The number in question was not an up-to-date aria but, rather, an intentionally old-fashioned air, meant to caricature the aged cooper Martin. Its melody exhibits the same short-long precadential rhythm as in many older triple-meter vaudevilles, including “Charmante Gabrielle.” Its text was perhaps thought especially appropriate for a pantomime ballet, emphasizing as it does the non-verbal signs of Martin’s (unwelcome) love for Fanchette:

C’est un propos, c’est un regard
Que je remarque par hasard;
Mais malgré ses tendres discours,
   Quand il soupire,
   Il me fait rire
De ses amours.

It’s a word, a glance
that I notice by chance;
but despite his tender talk,
when he sighs
he makes me laugh
at his affections.

To recapitulate: the instrumental versions of well-known vocal airs in the first scene of Noverre’s ballet served a variety of purposes: smooth transition (from the opera, via a Languedoc air), scene-setting (amorous content, musical hints of antiquity), and specific plot details (paralleled in the text of “Dans un détour”). The change from borrowed and partly “old” music in scene 1 to newly composed music (by Mozart) for the rest of the ballet was likely intended as a reflection of the differing subject matter in the three tableaux, which turns from mythology in the first to more modern pastoral of blind man’s bluff in the second and an erotic masquerade in the third.

Noverre’s use of vocal numbers in Les Petits Riens makes even more sense when considered in light of another new ballet that he presented not quite a month later, on 9 July: Annette et Lubin, after the 1762 opéra-comique by Mme Favart and Jean-Baptiste Lourdet de Santerre, the music of which was partly original and partly arranged, by Adolphe Blaise. (The latter included both vaudevilles and retexted Italian ariettes.) From the review that appeared in the Journal de Paris the day after the premiere, it is clear that Noverre used instrumental versions of vocal numbers from the opera, and relied on the audience’s memory of the words—though not without problems:

After this opera [Le due contesse, by Paisiello] the first performance of Annette et Lubin was given. The author [i.e., Noverre] followed literally the plan of the piece by
M. [recte: Mme] Favart. M. Dauberval and Mlle Guimard played the parts of Lubin and Annette. It would be difficult to render the pantomime any better. The gaiety of M. Dauberval and the naïve and delicate graces of Mlle Guimard left nothing to be desired. One was astonished especially by the pathos of the piece Ah pauvre Annette!; these two actors caused abundant tears to flow. . . . one would rather not have seen the scene of the servant who comes on and complains of having been beaten by Lubin. This scene is not good in the [opera] and is even more misplaced in a pantomime, where the actor can only express himself through gestures: it isn’t even clear if it was understood by those spectators who either hadn’t seen the opera, or didn’t know the words of the air played at that moment by the orchestra.

All told, this ballet was seen with much pleasure; the choice of airs is well done and nothing is lacking in the manner in which it [the ballet] is performed.28

In the preparation of ballet scores for Parisian theaters of the ancien régime, a “choice of airs”—whether from a single pre-existing work or several—was at least as common a method as original composition, perhaps even more so. If in discussing Les Petits Riens I’ve emphasized the “wretched old French airs” over Mozart’s newly composed music, it’s because I’m trying to redress scholarly neglect of the work’s larger context, which has deprived us of crucial information on the ballet’s plot, on its generic conventions, and on its reception. (The Parisian Les Petits Riens is also a reminder that with eighteenth-century instrumental music, vocal music is never very far away.) By decentering the composer and giving greater emphasis to the performative event itself, we can arrive at a more accurate account of the totality of this genial work. We can perhaps even look forward to the entire work finally being heard in performance and seen on stage, in a historically informed production.

NOTES
2. Anderson, 2:787; “wenn hier ein ort wäre, wo die leute ohren hätten, herz zum empfinden, und nur ein wenig etwas von der Musique verstünden, und gusto hätten, so würde ich von herzen zu allen diesenachen lachen, aber so bin ich unter lauter vieher und bestien | was die Musique anbelangt [...],” MBA no. 447, 2:346.
3. Anderson, 2:836; “nur die verflucht französische sprache nicht so hundsfüttisch zur Musique wäre!—das ist was Elendes—die Tätsiche ist noch gottlich dagegen.—und dann erst die sänger und sängerinen—man solle sie gar nicht so nennen—denn sie singen nicht, sondern sie schreÿen—heülen—and zwar aus vollem halse, aus der Nase und gurgel...” See https://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/briefe/letter.php?mid=1026&cat=2 (accessed 26 January 2023); MBA no. 462, 2:397. On Mozart’s opinion of French singing, see also his addendum to his mother’s letter of 5 April 1778 (MBA no. 440, 2:332).
4. Letter of 2 October 1777, MBA no. 342, 2:32.
6. In “Oiseaux, si tous les ans,” K. 307, he sets the words “destinée,” “passe,” and “année” with a single terminal syllable (“-née,” “-sée”) rather than the required two (“-né-e,” “-sé-e”), while in “Dans un bois solitaire,” K. 308, he seems not to understand that a liaison is required in “re-dou-ta-ble_A-mour,” and he sets the rhyming words “défier” and “oublier” with different syllable counts. See NMA III/8, Lieder, mehrstimmige Gesänge, Kanons, ed. Ernst August Ballin (Kassel, etc.: Bärenreiter, 1963), 6–11.
7. See Leopold’s letter of 30 January 1768 to Lorenz Hagenauer, MBA no. 125, 1:258; see Stefan Morent, “Zur Tradition der Pavanen in Mozarts Idomeneo,” Mozart Studien 17, ed. Manfred Hermann Schmid (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2008), 251–66 (252), where the letter is misidentified as that of 13 February 1768 to the same recipient.
8. See Leopold’s letter of 29 December 1778 to his son, MBA no. 572, 3:74–75.
9. See Harald Heckmann’s foreword to Mozart, Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke, II/6/1, Musik zu Pantomimen und Balletten (Kassel, etc.: Bärenreiter, 1963), VIII.
10. See Christoph Willibald Gluck, Alceste, ed. Gerhard Croll with Renate Croll, in Gluck, Sämtliche Werke, I/3/b (Kassel, etc.: Bärenreiter, 2005); see XXV–VI (discussion in the preface), 512–55 (edition of Aspelmayr’s music), and 655–66 (Sonnenfels’s review).

13. Cravages, le plaisir des yeux prime celui des oreilles, et la plupart 

14. des ballets étaient alors composés à coups de ciseaux. On les 

15. taillait volontiers dans des chansons populaires et dans des 

16. airs la mode, dont les paroles bien connues, en revenant à 

17. la mémoire du spectateur, servaient à préciser ce qui passait en 

18. C'est ce qu'on appelait des airs parlants.” 

19. See the edition of this work in Gluck, *Sämtliche Werke*, II/5, Bal- 

20. letempsken, ed. Irene Brandenburg (Kassel, etc.: Bärenreiter, 


22. inédté; opéra, sur l'opéra-bouffon des Petits-Riens, 1778, 


25. n'auroient pas vu la Piece, ou ne sauroient pas les paroles de l'air 

26. d'avoir été roué de coups par Lubin. Cette scene n' est pas bonne 

27. mais si pour les cinq autres nous n'avons à invoquer que 

28. des airs est bien fait & rien ne manque à la maniere dont il 

29. Peints & sur le suivant plan, les trois sceaux qui se trouvent sur 

30. peintures, & par des mots, ce qui est bon. Le public la 

31. ne laissent rien à désirer. On fut étonné surtout du 

32. l'un de l'autre. La premiere est purement anacréontique; c' est 

33. l' Amour pris au filet & mis en cage; la composition en est très- 

34. “Madamima / Noi siamo tutti due / D'un 'stessa città: siam 

35. scenograffie, 1768), 532: “L'Air des 

36. que, pour les détrômer, finit par leur découvrir son sein. Cette 

37. déguisée en Berger. La Dlle Asselin fait le Rôle de 

38. Bergeres deviennent amoureuses du Berger supposé, qui, pour 

39. leplaisir des yeux prime celui des oreilles, et la plupart des 

40. Pour l'un d'eux, nous avons une certitude absolue. C'est le 

41. de 19 June 1778 in Bachaumont et al., *Mémoires secrets* 


43. les paroles bien connues, en revenant à la 

44. à l'air 'Charmant Gabrielle.' 

45. Mais si pour les cinq autres nous n'avons à invoquer que des 

46. des airs de style, elles sont tellement évidentes qu'à nos 

47. n' y est pour l' ordinaire ni goût, ni Chant, ni Mesure.” 

48. See the entry for 19 June 1778 in Bachaumont et al., *Mémoires 

49. The Case of 

50. Sämtliche Werke, Nr. 10a, *Balletmusik zur Pantomime: Les 

51. putschiens, le plaisir principal. La troisieme est 

52. espiegleerie de l'Amour, qui presente a deux Bergeres une 

53. Piece [Le finte gemelle], la premiere Representation des Petits 

54. L' esprit de la musique & surtout celui de la scene, pour mettre 

55. comes, 1768), 532: “L'Air des 

56. on y n'y sent pour l' ordinaire ni goût, ni Chant, ni 

57. Le Ménestrel, 12 June 1778, 651: “On donna, après cette 

58. airs la mode, dont les paroles bien connues, en revenant en 


60. Les Petits Riens: ballet inédit de Mozart, ed. Victor Wilder, piano 

61. Le Ménestrel, 10 July 1778, 764: ‘Après cet Opéra on donna la 

62. d' après les documents authentiques et les travaux les plus récents, 

63. Victor Wilder (Libourne: Outhere Music, 2021) can be heard at 

64. lettre de M. Favart. Le sieur 

65. *Mercure galant*, August 1706 (vol. 8), 163–73 (173): “quand on les sçait, 

66. Peints & sur le suivant plan, les trois sceaux qui se trouvent sur 

67. mais sans l'histoire de la république des lettres en France 

68. affaires, de la situation.” 

69. Les Figures variées par lesquelles ce Ballet est terminé furent 

70. Castro longtemps que les bergères s' aiment, mais que 

71. du morceau Ah pauvre Annette! ces deux Acteurs 


73. Peints & sur le suivant plan, les trois sceaux qui se trouvent sur 

74. n' est pas agréable au Public, y joue le Rôle principal. La troisieme 

75. Le Ménestrel, 12 June 1778, 651: “On donna, après cette 

76. L’homme et artiste; histoire de sa vie d'après les documents authentiques et les travaux les plus récents, 2nd edn. (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1881), 128: “Dans ce genre dou- 

77. anacréontique; c'est l' Amour pris au filet & mis en cage; la composition en est très- 

78. L’Air des 

79. d' après les documents authentiques et les travaux les plus récents, 

80. anacréontique; c'est l' Amour pris au filet & mis en cage; la composition en est très- 

81. n' est pas agréable au Public, y joue le Rôle principal. La troisieme est 

82. La Dlle Guimard ne laissent rien à desirer. On fut étonné surtout du 

83. unvollendete Werke, Nr. 10a, *Balletmusik zur Pantomime: Les 

84. L’homme et artiste; histoire de sa vie d'après les documents authentiques et les travaux les plus récents, 2nd edn. (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1881), 128: “Dans ce genre dou- 

85. Les Figures variées par les quelles ce Ballet est terminé furent 

86. n' est pas agréable au Public, y joue le Rôle principal. La troisieme est 

87. n’ y est pour l’ ordinaire ni goût, ni Chant, ni 

88. Peints & sur le suivant plan, les trois sceaux qui se trouvent sur 

89. unvollendete Werke, Nr. 10a, *Balletmusik zur Pantomime: Les 

90. des airs est bien fait & rien ne manque à la maniere dont il 

91. unvollendete Werke, Nr. 10a, *Balletmusik zur Pantomime: Les 

92. et surtout celui de la scene, pour mettre les 

93. La troisieme est 

94. La troisieme est 

95. La troisieme est 

96. La troisieme est 

97. La troisieme est 

98. La troisieme est 

99. La troisieme est 

100. La troisieme est 

101. La troisieme est 

102. La troisieme est 

103. La troisieme est

Bertramka is a substantial old house situated within a shady green park, which in the eighteenth century belonged to farmland and vineyards on the outskirts of Prague. Originally a wooden structure that served a vineyard, replaced by a stone house near the end of the seventeenth century, it was purchased in 1743 by Franz Bertram von Zornfels, a tax inspector and burgher in the Old Town of Prague. He transformed it into a suburban summer villa during the Second World War, when the National Socialist regime undertook major renovations to prepare it for celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Mozart’s death.

The sixty-four images of Bertramka by Buchner and his students form the heart of this book, and offer a superb survey of impressions and perspectives. The first seven images in the collection actually date from an earlier visit, made by Buchner on 7 October 1925. These include sketches of the building and its grounds in both pencil and ink, all dated by Buchner, with one showing the Mozart statue and noting, “Garten der Bertramka, wo Mozart 1787 den Don Giovanni vollendete” (Bertramka garden, where Mozart completed Don Giovanni in 1787). Two rough sketches also outline ground plans of the villa, outbuildings, and grounds with Buchner’s notes on various elements such as a grove of chestnut trees and an orchard. The 1942 visit resulted in a more extensive range of images, including rather atmospheric sketches of the villa and its garden features in pencil, pen, and watercolor. But there is also evidence of careful study, such as old site plans from the land registry that Buchner copied out in pencil, and precisely detailed elevations of the house from different viewpoints, many including Buchner’s measurements and dimensions. With these drawings he also moves indoors, with sketched ground plans of the villa’s individual floors and rooms, and its stables.

One object in the villa that caught the eye of both Buchner and one of his students, Gisela Hahndorff, was a harpsichord attributed to Johann Heinrich Gärtner (Dresden, 1722),1 which had once been owned by the Nostitz family. According to Jaroslav Patera, then Bertramka’s administrator, in his essay “Der Bertramhof. Prager Wohnsitz W. A. Mozarts” (The Bertramhof, W. A. Mozart’s Prague Residence; see below), the harpsichord belonged to the collection of the Prague Conservatory, though he does not say when it was lent for display in the house, nor does he provide other details about its provenance. Local oral tradition maintained that this was the harpsichord used by Mozart to accompany recitatives in the premiers of Don Giovanni and La clemenza di Tito. Whatever the truth of that tale, both Buchner and Hahndorff captured the elegant Baroque carving on the legs and stand as seen beneath the
A view of the Bertramka from the north. In the late eighteenth century, the estate was owned by Josepha Duschk and, according to nineteenth-century lore, Mozart stayed there and worked on *Don Giovanni*, *La clemenza di Tito*, and *Die Zauberflöte*. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bertramka_(01).jpg

bentside, as well as a precisely rendered plan view of the instrument with its uppermost octave exposed. Along with the harpsichord, Buchner also made some fine drawings of characteristic hardware from the villa, including door and window handles, plates, hinges, and a weathervane. Buchner’s students produced some beautiful work showing details of furnishings, windows and moldings, and wonderfully wrought grillwork, as well as the bell above the “Gartensaal.”

Buchner and his work are introduced in essays by Manfred Hermann Schmid, Irene Meissner, and Buchner’s grandson Rupert Buchner. Also reproduced here, as edited by Schmid, is Buchner’s lecture “Prag als Stadtbild” (Prague as the Image of a City), the final version of which dates from 1944. Included with it is a second sheaf of twenty drawings and paintings by Buchner that date from as early as 1912 and extend to 1942. Some of these show architectural features, such as doors and arched gateways, that are irresistible to devotees of Prague; others are excellent sketches in pencil, ink, and watercolor of important local landmarks or characteristic streets and houses. In another section of the book is a selection of nearly fifty historical photographs of Bertramka, its outbuildings, and its grounds. Many of them, taken in May 1929 by the important documentary photographer Antonin Alexander, survive in the Prague city archives; others derive from various sources including the archives of the Czech Mozart Society, the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and private collections.

A valuable addition to the volume is an extensive essay in German on the history of Bertramka, written during the same period as Buchner’s visual documentation of it. The 1941/42 typescript by Jaroslav Patera (1880–1946), a Prague lawyer, historian, and amateur musician, turned up in the library of the Mozarteum in Salzburg during M. H. Schmid’s investigation, and was edited by him and Milada Jonášová for inclusion here. This essay formed the basis for Patera’s important work, *Bertramka v Praze. Mozartovo památné sídlo* (Bertramka in Prague, a Mozart Memorial Residence), whose publication in Czech made it inaccessible to many scholars. Patera discussed the historical back-ground of the villa and its location, its buildings and surrounding lands, and its many owners (especially the Dusches and the Popelka family), as well as details of Mozart’s visits and the rooms he was supposed to have inhabited there. An extra chapter in Patera’s 1948 book by Jan Branberger, outlining the founding and early history of the Mozart Society in the Czechoslovak Republic, also appears here in German translation.

The discovery of the Buchner images and all the research that ensued led to a modest private exhibition and an interdisciplinary symposium that took place in Bertramka on 22 June 2019. An additional section of the book offers well-illustrated essays in English and German on the twentieth-century history of Bertramka from participants in the symposium, with information on its various reconstructions (Klára Mezihoráková), its interior paintings (Martin Mádl), renovations for the 1941 Mozart year (Milada Jonášová), the relationship between Bertramka and the Mozarteum during the National Socialist period (Armin Brinzing), Buchner’s friend Oskar Schürer and Bertramka (Tomislav Volek), German art history in Czechoslovakia at that time (Jiří Koukal), and Bertramka’s vineyard context (Kateřina Samojská). This is a large book, and a complex and laudable project that received support from multiple sources in the Czech Republic, Germany, and Austria. Bertramka, despite its formal designation in 2019 as a National Cultural Monument by the Czech Republic’s Ministry of Culture, has struggled to reopen to the public. Let us hope that the kind of creative collaboration demonstrated in this book project might inspire a renewal of Bertramka’s public role as a Mozart memorial in the heart of Prague.

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1. The name “Gärtner,” which appears on pp. 102 and 121, is an error; it should be Johann Heinrich Gräbner, as noted in the entry BMO-80, Boalch-Mould Online, which provides a description of the instrument and references to other sources: https://boalch.org/instruments/advancedsearch, accessed 4 March 2023. Since 1961 the harpsichord has been in the National Museum collection (inv. no. E 2092); my thanks to Mgr. Tereza Žůrkova at the České Muzeum Hudby for that information.

2. In addition, a 1944 photograph of the Nostitz harpsichord in one of the so-called “Mozart rooms” of the villa appears on p. 192.


The title of Marc Niubo’s book is somewhat of a misnomer: it deals with Mozart only tangentially and focuses on the early 1780s, a period preceding Mozart’s famous visits to the Bohemian capital and the premieres of his Italian operas there. Still, the book is an insightful and stimulating study of the first four Prague seasons of Pasquale Bondini’s Italian company, a generally overlooked chapter in Prague’s operatic history. Niubo provides new insights not only into the practice and reception of Italian opera in central Europe but also the broader context of Mozart’s connections to Bohemia.

The book is divided into four chapters with several appendices. One of the highlights of the book comes in the introduction, where Niubo points out that previous studies’ focus on Prague’s Italian opera culture in the later 1780s resulted in a series of misconceptions—for example, the idea that the company of Pasquale Bondini (later led by Domenico Guardasoni) was quite small. The introduction also presents a helpful synthesis of both the Anglo-American scholarship on Italian opera culture in Prague and past approaches of Czech scholars, many of which have been overlooked by anglophone researchers. The introduction concludes with a section on sources, which is extremely helpful, considering that many of the groundbreaking German and Czech studies of opera in Prague from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Oscar Teuber’s Geschichte des Prager Theaters, do not cite primary materials. Niubo provides a basic overview of the whereabouts of the remnants of Bondini’s music archive and other music materials associated with Prague’s opera culture of the early 1780s, the librettos published for the performances of his company, the journals that reported, albeit infrequently, on opera in Prague, and censorial and other bureaucratic documents associated with music life in the Bohemian capital.

Chapter 1, “Kontexty a hlavní aktéři” (Contexts and Main Protagonists), is a rich study of the social and political context of Bondini’s activities as an opera director in Prague. Niubo traces the reasons for the reintroduction of Italian opera to Prague’s stages in 1781, four years after regular performances of Italian works by the company of Giuseppe Bustelli came to a halt. Particularly fascinating is Niubo’s exploration of the complex political background of the start of Bondini’s enterprise. Niubo suggests that Bondini was initially supported by a faction that included Karl Egon Fürstenberg and the Thun family (also known as important patrons of Mozart). Niubo’s discussion of the Thuns and their theater, which was located in their palace in the Little Town and which they rented out to Bondini in the 1780s, is partially based on previously overlooked archival documents. Niubo also traces how the plans for the reintroduction of Italian opera clashed with the plans of Franz Anton Nostitz to build a “national” theater that would focus on German repertoire. Thus, although Nostitz’s theater eventually became the site where Bondini’s (later Guardasoni’s) company produced Prague and world premieres of Mozart’s operas in the later 1780s, Nostitz himself was initially a prominent opponent of the Italian endeavor.

Chapter 2, “Čtyři sezony italské opery” (Four Seasons of Italian Opera) analyzes the repertoire of Bondini’s company from Fall 1781 until Spring 1785. Niubo presents some general trends—these are further explicated in Chapter 4—together with insights into specific details. Particularly fascinating is his discussion of Bondini’s relationship with Nostitz, which led to the lease of the Nostitz Theater to Bondini in the fall of 1783 despite initial competition. Niubo works with archival documents from the Nostitz family archive. The chapter also contextualizes the 1783 Prague production of Mozart’s The Abduction from the Seraglio, presented by Karl Wahr’s German company; Niubo suggests the work may have inspired Bondini to include two “Turkish” Italian operas in his repertoire: Giuseppe Amendola’s La schiava fedele and Pasquale Anfossi’s Isabella e Rodrigo.
In Chapter 3, “Repertoár” (Reper- toire), Niubo presents case studies of seven Italian operas and their Prague productions by Bondini’s company. The operas under discussion have been chosen according to inventive categories (such as “political buffa” [“buffa poli- tická”], “typical buffa” [“buffa typická”], and “rococo buffa” [“buffa rokoková”]) that nevertheless do not coincide with any generally accepted subtypes known in the late eighteenth century. Because of the somewhat arbitrary selection of case studies, the chapter therefore does not have a clear set of overarch- ing points or observations. At the same time, the individual studies offer interesting details about the specific changes that were executed in the works before or during their productions in Prague.

Chapter 4, “Pražský repertoár v mezi- národním kontextu” (The Prague Rep- ertoire in an International Context), summarizes some of the major findings of the previous three chapters. Niubo emphasizes the unusually high variety of works and generic types of predomin- nutly comic operas produced by the Bondini company in the four seasons under consideration. Another signif- icant observation has to do with the provenance of the works produced by the company: whereas in the early part of the decade, most works originated in Venice and Rome, by the middle of the decade, the company started to rely on repertoire first produced in Vienna. Niubo also notes the links between oper- eatic productions in Prague and Dres- den.

The final third of the book contains appendices with helpful details. First come twenty-four biographical essays about all the singers associated with Bondini’s company; these essays also focus on those who later appeared in productions of Mozart’s operas, including Luigi Bassi, Felice Ponziani, and Te- resa Saporiti. Second comes a partially chronological list of Bondini’s Italian repertoire between 1781 and 1785 (exact dates of Prague’s premieres are known only for fall 1781), followed by the rep- ertoire presented in Leipzig in 1782, 1783, and 1784. Also helpful for under- standing personnel changes in Bondi- ni’s troupe is the chart that marks the presence or absence of individual per- formers in the Prague company during specific seasons. The following sections present transcriptions of passages from the contemporaneous press referring to Bondini’s company, the 1783 contract about the lease of Nostitz’s theater to Bondini, and the dedication pages in Prague librettos of operas produced by Bondini in 1781. These appendices conclude with a section of figures, including portraits of the main aristocratic patrons of opera in Prague in the early 1780s (two members of the Thun family, together with Nostitz and Fürstenberg).

There are several frustrating aspects of Niubo’s book. Most importantly, after reading the insights into Bondini’s first four seasons in Prague, the reader is left craving for more. The reason the book considers only four seasons is explained briefly in the introduction: it was during the first four seasons that Bondi- ni’s company mainly performed in the Thun Theater before focusing more on productions in the Nostitz Theater and having to compete with newly emerg- ing German and Czech theater com- panies. A more detailed explanation of how these first seasons differ, resonate, or prefigure the later seasons would be helpful, however.

Although Niubo purposefully avoids the vast literature on Mozart’s visits to Prague and his contacts with Bon- dini and Guardasoni, a closer engage- ment with this literature would put his findings and fresh interpretations into sharper relief. Fascinating observations about how his findings enhance and refute existing studies, for example Ian Woodfield’s 2012 book on Guardasoni’s company, are often buried in footnotes. The same is the case with Niubo’s treat- ment of Tomislav Volek’s studies. Volek
and his student Milada Jonášová have uncovered many important archival documents related to Mozart in Prague, but their interpretations of these documents are often driven by a patriotic (or perhaps nationalist) agenda to construct the notion of Prague’s cultural uniqueness. Niubo’s reflections are more nuanced and avoid Pragocentric exceptionalism. Particularly helpful is Niubo’s discussion of the Prague adaptation of Giovanni Paisiello’s Il re Teodoro in Venezia, which suggests that Prague was quite conservative in exposing social and political criticism in the theater. Niubo’s point goes against one of the main tenets of Volek’s studies—that Prague was a bastion of a free-thinking liberalism, which conditioned the presumed social progressiveness of Mozart’s Don Giovanni. Such viewpoints sharpen the significance of Niubo’s book and show that it is timely and broadly useful. Besides providing a much-needed contextualization of existing Mozart research, Niubo’s book is also a fresh introduction to the musical and cultural history of late eighteenth-century Prague.

Italian and German title page for the opera buffa Il marito indolente by Caterino Mazzolà (libretto) and Joseph Schuster (music). The opera was premiered in the spring of 1782 in Dresden and was produced by the Bondini company at the Thun theater in Prague a few months later. As Marc Niubo points out in his book, the first-act finale contains quotes from other operas that were likely known in Dresden at the time. Niubo also notes the similarities between using quotes from pre-existing operas, which are moreover performed by an on-stage orchestra, in Il marito indolente and in Mozart’s Don Giovanni. Schuster’s finale, furthermore, depicts the appearance of two fake ghosts with dramatic music—which, according to Niubo, is another link to Don Giovanni. Source: https://books.google.cz/books?vid=NP:1003277595&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false