

L'ESPRIT FRANÇAIS

UND DIE MUSIK EUROPAS

Entstehung, Einfluss und Grenzen einer
ästhetischen Doktrin

ET LA MUSIQUE EN EUROPE

Émergence, influence et limites
d'une doctrine esthétique



Herausgegeben von
Michelle Biget und Rainer Schmusch

OLMS

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Festschrift für Herbert Schneider



Georg Olms Verlag
Hildesheim · Zürich · New York
2007

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Mark Everist

Mozart and *L'impresario*

Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor* has been a severely problematic work for over two hundred years.¹ Subject to a variety of modifications throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it found a form in mid-1850s Paris that placed it at the intersection of two key trajectories in nineteenth-century music history: the reception of Mozart's stage music and the birth of operetta.² Jacques Offenbach found in his production of *Der Schauspieldirektor* as *L'impresario* in May 1856 a work that would give his Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens the authority of eighteenth-century classicism that would be so essential both for the cultural location of his company and for his personal artistic positioning.

When the curtain went down of *Der Schauspieldirektor* on 7 February 1786 – as part of a double bill with Salieri's *Prima la musica e poi le parole* – Mozart might well have thought that the future of the work was doubtful.³ Although *Der Schauspieldirektor* was a work that dated from the same period as the two Mozart operas that made the greatest impact on the nineteenth century – *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* – its construction made it almost impossible to remove it from its original celebratory and occasional context, and to integrate it into the repertory of European music drama.⁴ *Der Schauspieldirektor* consisted of an overture, most of the spoken play, and four musical numbers compressed at the very end of the drama, sepa-

- 1 The work is edited as Gerhard Croll, ed., *Der Schauspieldirektor*, Neue Mozart-Ausgabe II/5/15 (Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1958; 2nd edn 1990); the critical report to this edition is Elisabeth Föhrenbach, ed., *Der Schauspieldirektor: kritische Berichte*, Neue Mozart-Ausgabe II/5/15 (Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 2001). Difficulties with the work reached their apogee when it was removed from the canon as defined by such a work as Gustav Kobbé's *Complete Opera Book* in its 10th edition in 1987 (Gustav Kobbé, *Complete Opera Book*, 10th edn (London: Bodley Head, 1987). All previous editions up to the 9th had included an account of *Der Schauspieldirektor* that was clearly based on *Mozart und Schikaneder* (see below), a not unreasonable premise for a work that was originally published in 1922 (*idem*, *Complete Opera Book*, 9th edn (London: Bodley Head, 1976), 90).
- 2 Fundamental to any study of Mozart reception is Gernot Gruber, *Mozart und die Nachwelt* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1985) trans. R. S. Furness as *Mozart and Posterity* (London: Quartet, 1991) and Alec Hyatt King, "Mozart in Retrospect", *Mozart in Retrospect: Studies in Criticism and Bibliography* (London, New York and Toronto: Geoffrey Cumberledge; Oxford University Press, 1955) 1–54. For the origins of the genre of operetta, see Jean-Claude Yon, "La création du Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens (1855–1862) ou La difficile naissance de l'opérette", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 39 (1992) 575–600.
- 3 The generic title *Gelegenheitsstück* on the title page of the libretto makes explicit the occasional nature of the work, and the unlikely nature of any further performance (*Der / Schauspieldirektor / Ein / Gelegenheitsstück / in / einem Aufzuge / WJEN, / bei Joseph Edlen von Kurzbeck k.k. Hofbuchdrucker / Groß- und Buchbändler. / 1786.*).
- 4 While *Der Schauspieldirektor* and *Don Giovanni* were composed in successive years, the proximity of the former to *Le nozze di Figaro* is even more striking; dates of completion in the *Verzeichniss* are 3 February and 29 April 1786, and those of first performance are 7 February and 1 May 1786 respectively.

rated by very little spoken dialogue. Put simply, an overture, spoken dialogue, and four numbers only did not make what the world of stage music after 1786 considered an opera.

Two early attempts to turn Mozart's legacy into something that could take its place in the repertory followed conventional practices of the period c1800, and amalgamated Mozart's music with the music of others. Given the subject matter of the original – the trials and tribulations of a theatrical manager – it was hardly surprising that no less a figure than Goethe should attempt to elide Mozart with the other most illustrious work on the subject, Cimarosa's *L'impresario in angustie*.⁵ The result was *Das theatralischer Abenteurer* which was premiered in Weimar in 1791 as part of Goethe's campaign to mount Italian and French opera in German.⁶ A quarter of a century later, a further attempt was made for the 1816 carnival season in Vienna. The attempt by Mathäus Stegmayer retained Mozart's title but fleshed out his music with compositions by Dittersdorf and others. The evidence for this work is patchy, but it seems that it represented an attempt to retain the action of the original, since the *dramatis personae* are the same. The arrangement ran for six performances that season and seems not to have been revived.⁷

The nineteenth-century German-speaking world knew Mozart's *Der Schauspiel-direktor* through a third version, this time prepared for Berlin by Louis Schneider and Wilhelm Taubert in 1845. Entitled *Mozart und Schikaneder*, it took Mozart's music, added five orchestrations of his *Lieder*, and adapted this material to a libretto whose plot was set during the composition and rehearsals of *Die Zauberflöte* in 1791; the *dramatis personae* included the composer and his librettist themselves.⁸ This was the guise in which Mozart's opera was preserved in German-speaking states until well into the twentieth century.⁹

In 1856, Offenbach inherited Schneider's and Taubert's arrangement of *Der Schauspiel-direktor* and commissioned a new libretto from Léon Battu and Ludovic Halévy

5 Otto Jahn, *W. A. Mozart*, 4 vols (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1856–1859) 4:157.

6 An outline of the contents of *Das theatralischer Abenteurer* is in Johann August Diezmann, *Goethe-Schiller-Museum* (Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1858), 13.

7 Rudolf Hirsch, *Mozart's Schauspiel-direktor: musikalische Reminiscenzen* (Leipzig: Heinrich Matthes, 1859), 18–21.

8 The *Lieder* were all taken from the Breitkopf und Härtel complete edition, a borrowing that was acknowledged in the libretto (see below): *XXX Gesänge mit Begleitung des Pianoforte von W. A. Mozart*, (Œuvres complètes de Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 5 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1798–1806) [hereafter *XXX Gesänge*].

9 Despite the work's ubiquity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sources for *Mozart und Schikaneder* are rare. For this study, the following libretto was used: *Der / Schauspiel-direktor / – / Komische Operette von L. Schneider. / – / Musik von W. A. Mozart. / – / Officielle Bearbeitung für die Leipziger Bühne / Leipzig, / Druck und Verlag von Breitkopf und Härtel*. The copyist's score of this version is *Der Schauspiel-Direktor / Komische Operette in 1 Act / von / Schneider / Musik von W. A. Mozart / komponiert in February 1786* (Salzburg, Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum, Bibliotheca Mozartiana [hereafter *A-Sm*], Ra-ra 486/1). I am grateful to Henning Bey (Mozarteum, Salzburg) for assisting with obtaining a copy of this source.

entitled *L'impresario* for his new Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens.¹⁰ While the libretto retained the narrative context of the difficulties of theatrical management, it shifted its focus away from practical concerns and towards those of the heart, and in doing so created an important registral shift that had as much to do with the cultural and aesthetic positioning of Offenbach's theatre company as it approached its second year of existence as it had with the ongoing project of the sacralisation of Mozart's work.

The mid 1850s were a time of significant change in the culture of music drama in Paris. The three traditional opera houses continued to dominate the field: the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique were still reeling under the onslaught of two recent Meyerbeer successes – *Le prophète* and *L'étoile du nord* respectively, while the Théâtre Italien was introducing Parisian audiences to middle-period Verdi (1855 saw Verdi's first original work for the Théâtre Impérial de l'Opéra [the Opéra]: *Les vêpres siciliennes*).¹¹ But alongside these institutions, the Théâtre Lyrique had been opening up the Parisian repertory since 1851, with new works, older *opéra comique*, and – as the decade progressed – works by foreign composers.¹² More strikingly, perhaps, 1855 had seen the birth of two institutions that dedicated themselves to *opérette*: Hervé's Théâtre des Folies-Nouvelles and Offenbach's Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens.¹³

Offenbach saw little to concern himself with at the Théâtre Italien. But the two other main opera houses were important points of reference for him. The Opéra was the antithesis of the Bouffes-Parisiens: the one was large, the other small; the Opéra was the recipient of massive state subsidy, the Bouffes-Parisiens of none; Meyerbeer and his colleagues enjoyed international reputations while Offenbach and his contemporaries were either unknown or too young to have attracted attention. This antithesis was a critical feature of Offenbach's work at the Bouffes-Parisiens because it gave a logical and easy subject for parody, and right from its

10 The work was published as RÉPERTOIRE DES BOUFFES-PARISIENS / L'IMPRESARIO / Opérette bouffe / PAR / MM. LÉON BATTU ET LUDOVIC HALÉVY / MUSIQUE DE / MOZART / – / REPRÉSENTÉE POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS SUR LE THÉÂTRE DES BOUFFES-PARISIENS, LE 20 MAI 1856 / ... / PARIS / G. BRANDUS, DUFOUR ET C^e, ÉDITEURS ... / MICHEL LÉVY FRÈRES ÉDITEURS ... / 1856. This edition prefaces the piano-vocal score with the libretto (3–15).

11 Still the best study of the Académie Impériale de Musique during the Second Empire is Genevieve Chinn, *The Académie Impériale de Musique: a Study of its Administration and Repertory from 1862–1870* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1969), but this does not cover the period that overlaps with the beginnings of the Bouffes-Parisiens.

12 Thomas Joseph Walsh, *Second Empire Opera: The Théâtre Lyrique, Paris, 1851–1870*, The History of Opera (London, Calder/ New York, Riverrun, 1981).

13 For the Folies-Nouvelles, see Eugène Woestyn and Eugène Moreau, *Les Folies-Nouvelles, Les théâtres de Paris* (Paris: Martinon, [1855]) and Louis-Henry Lecomte, *Les Folies-Nouvelles, Histoire des théâtres de Paris 4* (Paris: Daragon, 1909).

opening night, the repertory of the Opéra was the target of Offenbach's and his librettists' mordant wit.¹⁴

The Opéra-Comique was a particular source of interest to the emerging opera house and its manager. When he launched his competition for new composers of *opéra comique* shortly after the premiere of *L'impresario*, he couched the invitation to contribute in terms of a manifesto for comic opera that severely took the Opéra-Comique to task for drifting closer and closer to the style of *grand opéra*, with Meyerbeer's *L'étoile du nord* directly in the firing line.¹⁵

But it was Hervé's Théâtre des Folies-Nouvelles that was Offenbach's greatest problem. Here were two theatres trying essentially to do the same thing. Whether they were consciously attempting to revert to the lighter style of eighteenth-century *opéra comique* or simply responding to the taste of, and the opportunities generated by, the Boulevard audiences, the two institutions had licences that looked remarkably similar. They were both granted permission to play operetta in one act with severe restrictions on the number and function of the characters on stage, and – perhaps more importantly – their licences were modified in step with each other.¹⁶

One of Offenbach's clearest aims in his first two or three years as a composer-manager was to give the Bouffes-Parisiens a distinctive quality that marked it out from the Folies-Nouvelles. His background as a virtuoso much admired by Parisian society was at least one of the reasons for his attempt to provide an environment for the enjoyment of operetta that was significantly more bourgeois than Hervé's. His choice of locations – the Salle Lacaze on the Champs-Élysées and the Salle Choiseul in the *passage* of that name – was in marked contrast to the home chosen for the Folies-Nouvelles on the Boulevard du Temple; indeed having a winter home in the centre of the city and a summer one on its outskirts was in itself a very aristocratic way of organising one's affairs. Offenbach was able to entrench this bourgeois quality of his theatre by significantly higher ticket prices to those demanded by Hervé on the Boulevard.

But this was not going to be sufficient if the repertory at the Bouffes-Parisiens, and its aesthetic agenda, were insufficiently distinguished from those at the Folies-Nouvelles. For Offenbach, recourse to the eighteenth-century classics was an ob-

14 The final number of Offenbach's *Les deux aveugles* for Patachon and Giraffier (1855) is a parody of the scilienne in the act 1 finale 'O fortune, à ton caprice' from Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (1831), where the aristocratic and military games of dice in the *grand opéra* are translated into a game of dice to decide who keeps the mendicant's pitch on a Parisian bridge.

15 The announcement of the 'Concours pour une opérette en un acte' was published in the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 20 July 1856, 230–231. It was also printed in *Le ménestrel*, 27 July 1856 with minimal introduction and the *articles* only in *La France musicale*, 20 July 1856. The text is discussed in Mark Everist, 'Jacques Offenbach: The Music of the Past and the Image of the Present', in: *Stage Music and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1815 – 1914*, ed. Mark Everist and Annegret Fauser (Chicago: Chicago University Press, forthcoming), to which the current article is a complement.

16 See Nicole Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens au XIX^e siècle: les théâtres et la musique* (Paris: Amateurs des Livres, 1989), 63 [for the Bouffes-Parisiens] and 153–5 [for the Folies-Nouvelles].

vious way forward. His licence prevented him from using the works of such eighteenth-century composers as Grétry, Philidor, Monsigny, Gossec and Dalayrac. It did not, however, stop him using German and Italian eighteenth-century comic opera, and his discovery – if that is the correct word – of a work that fitted the terms of his licence perfectly and that carried the talismanic authority of Mozart – and in the year of the centenary of his birth – was too much to of an opportunity to pass up.

While the fiftieth anniversary of Mozart's death in 1841 and the centenary of his birth in 1856 were celebrated at immense length all over the German-speaking world, they elicited little reaction in Paris. That is not to say that they were not observed. The Parisian music press paid plenty of attention to events beyond the Rhine, but there was almost no institutional response to them.¹⁷ True, there was a revival of *Don Giovanni* at the Théâtre Italien, but it failed to live up to what many Parisians were expecting. Pier-Angelo Fiorentino, writing under his pseudonym De Rovray, in the *Moniteur universel*, complained that the revival had missed Mozart's exact birthday and spoke for many when he complained that 'C'est ce jour-là [27 January 1856] qu'on aurait dû donner une représentation extraordinaire et solennelle du plus grand des chefs d'œuvre lyriques comme on l'a fait à Stuttgart et sur tous les théâtres d'Allemagne'.¹⁸

In a city that felt that the centenary of Mozart's birth still had a certain status, but that mostly only knew the composer from *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, the emergence of a further work from exactly the same period in Mozart's compositional maturity was an event of some significance, especially and remarkably when it came from the newcomer, Offenbach's Bouffes-Parisiens. *Der Schauspieldirektor* was barely known in Paris. Never performed before 1856, it had a liminal place in Schlesinger's complete edition of Mozart's stage works, only in the appendix, and a few extracts – most obviously the overture – had been published separately.¹⁹

17 "Le centième anniversaire de la naissance de Mozart a été fêté avec enthousiasme dans toute l'Allemagne. A Vienne, la célébration a eu lieu dans la grande salle de la Redoute, en présence de toute la famille impériale, et sous la direction de Franz Liszt. À Berlin, la fête a été célébrée au Grand Théâtre. Le soir, dans la salle Médor, a eu lieu un grand souper de trois cents couverts, où ont paru les ministres et toutes les notabilités de la musique. Francfort n'est pas restée en arrière des grandes capitales. Au théâtre, on a donné les *Nozze di Figaro*; au Musée, on a donné un concert monstre; à l'église Saint-Paul, cinq cents artistes ou amateurs ont exécuté *David Pénitent* et le *Requiem*. Partout, à Dresde, à Munich, à Darmstadt, à Hanovre, à Brunswick, à Cologne, à Mayence, à Magdebourg, à Bonn, à Koenigsberg, etc., ont éclaté les mêmes manifestations enthousiastes. On peut assurer que jamais l'Allemagne n'avait été témoin d'un spectacle plus grandiose et plus sincèrement national" (*Le ménestrel*, 17 February 1856).

18 *Le moniteur universel*, 10 February 1856.

19 *Collection complète des opéras de W. A. Mozart*, 9 vols (Paris: Schlesinger, 1822). Volume 8 includes the *Requiem* and *Der Schauspieldirektor*.

Mozart und Schikaneder had been a logical response to earlier attempts to rehabilitate *Der Schauspieldirektor*, and it was an obvious springboard for Offenbach's op-eretta. The relationships between Mozart's original, the Schneider-Taubert re-working of 1845 and Battu/Halévy-Offenbach's *L'impresario* is given in table 1. On the left of the table are the numbers as they appear in *L'impresario*, in the middle the outline of the 1845 *Mozart und Schikaneder*, and on the right, the sources both from *Der Schauspieldirektor* and the *Lieder* and other works used by Schneider and Taubert. Apart from giving the detail of the sources for *Mozart und Schikaneder* and *L'impresario*, the table also shows the very close relationship between Offenbach's version and Schneider and Taubert's. The use and sequence of material in the two versions are almost identical, the only exception being the *Lied* 'Männer suchen stets zu naschen' which comes before the trio in *Mozart und Schikaneder* and after it in *L'impresario*. The alternation of spoken dialogue and music is commensurately similar. In musical and dramatic terms, *L'impresario* fitted in perfectly with the physiognomy of works permitted by the theatre's licence and the musical patterns that were emerging during its first year of work. The overture and eight numbers were exactly in line with such works as Adolphe Adam's *Les pantins de Violette* and Offenbach's own *Ba-ta-clan* and *Tromb-Alcazar*; its use, furthermore, of four characters only exactly matched those works and the legal limitations put on the theatre's activity.²⁰

As Offenbach sought to bring Mozart's new opera within the ambit of the Bouffes-Parisiens, the construction of the libretto was as taxing as the musical revisions were straightforward. The technical details of opera production that form so much a part of the wit of both the later parts of *Der Schauspieldirektor* and all of *Mozart und Schikaneder* were unlikely to work at the Bouffes-Parisiens; on the other hand, to write a libretto for this music that distanced itself too much from the original subject-matter would run the risk of undercutting the value of the Mozartian *imprimatur*. *Mozart und Schikaneder* is set during the preparations for *Die Zauberflöte*, and involves, for example comic scenes around the working out of rhymes for 'In diesen heil'gen Hallen' while the theatre director's nephew attempts to get his girlfriend hired as the second *prima donna* by having her impersonate Caterina Cavalieri.²¹ Real personalities are confused with stage ones, and the music drama contributes to the development of Mozart's reputation – it can with profit be analysed as a site of Mozart reception. Real personalities are confused with stage ones, and the whole work contributes to the development of Mozart's reputation – it can with profit be analysed as a site of Mozart reception.

20 Adam's *Les pantins de Violette* was premiered at the Bouffes-Parisiens on 29 April 1856; Offenbach's *Ba-ta-clan* on 29 December 1855 and *Tromb-Alcazar* on 3 April 1856.

21 *Der / Schauspieldirektor / – / Komische Operette* von L. Schneider, 8.

Table 1: Comparison of *L'impresario*, Mozart und Schikaneder and their sources

<i>L'impresario</i> (1856)	<i>Der Schauspieldirektor</i> / Mozart und Schikaneder (1845)	Source
Ouverture	[Overture]	<i>Der Schauspieldirektor</i> K. 486: Overture
1. <i>Couplets</i> (E ^b major; bass [Rosignuolo]) 'Mon front grisonne'	1. <i>Lied</i> (G major, tenor [Schikaneder]) 'Wenn nur die Verse, prächtig klingen'	<i>Die betrogene Welt</i> K. 474 [Christian Felix Weiße] (G major, soprano) 'Der reiche Tor, mit Gold geschmückt'
2. <i>Air</i> (D major; soprano [Silvia]) 'Sa figure'	2. <i>Arie</i> 'Bester Jüngling' (E ^b major; soprano [Uhlich])	<i>Der Schauspieldirektor</i> K. 486: no. 2 Rondo (E ^b major; soprano [Silberklang]) 'Bester Jüngling'
3. <i>Romance</i> (F major; tenor [Lélio]) 'Mon cœur bat'	3. <i>Lied</i> (E ^b major; tenor [Mozart]) 'Wenn mein Bild aus deinen blauen'	<i>An Chloë</i> K. 524 [Georg Jacobi] (E ^b major; soprano) 'Wenn die Lieb' aus deinen blauen'
	4. <i>Lied</i> 'Männer suchen stets zu naschen' (F major, soprano [Uhlich])	'Männer suchen stets zu naschen' K. 433 (416c) [anonymous] (F major; bass)
4. <i>Trio</i> (G major; soprano, tenor and bass) 'Lélio celui que j'aime'	5. <i>Terzett</i> (G major; soprano, tenor and bass) 'Liebes Mandel'	<i>Das Bandel</i> K. 441 [Mozart] (G major; soprano, tenor and bass) 'Liebes Mandel, wo ist's Bandel'
5. <i>Couplets</i> (A major; soprano [Silvia]) 'Ce matin j'ai vu mon père'		'Männer suchen stets zu naschen' K. 433 (416c)
6. <i>Air</i> (f minor; soprano [Zerline]) 'Hélas toi qui peux faire'	6. <i>Arie</i> (g minor; soprano [Lange]) 'Da schlägt die Abschiedsstunde'	<i>Der Schauspieldirektor</i> K. 486: no. 1 Arietta (g minor; soprano [Herz]; two tempo) 'Da schlägt die Abschiedsstunde'
	6 ½. <i>Lied</i> (f minor; soprano [Lange])	<i>Das Lied der Trennung</i> K. 519 [Klamer Eberhard Karl Schmidt] (f minor; soprano)
7. <i>Grand Trio</i> (B ^b major; 2 sopranos and tenor) 'Mon Lélio c'est moi'	7. <i>Terzett</i> (B ^b major; 2 sopranos and tenor [Uhlich, Lange, Mozart]) 'Ich bin die erste Sängerin'	<i>Der Schauspieldirektor</i> K. 486: no. 3 Terzett (B ^b major; 2 sopranos and tenor [Silberklang, Herz, Vogelsang]) 'Ich bin die erste Sängerin'
8. <i>Final</i> (C major; 2 sopranos and tenor; through-composed) 'Notre craintive faiblesse'	8. <i>Finale</i> (C major; 2 sopranos and tenor [Uhlich, Lange, Mozart + Schikaneder]) 'Jeder Künstler'	<i>Der Schauspieldirektor</i> K. 486: no. 4 Schlußgesang (C major; 2 sopranos and tenor [Silberklang, Herz, Vogelsang, Buff]) 'Jeder Künstler strebt nach Ehre'

L'impresario also involves impersonation, but this time the tenor and prima donna of Naples' San Carlo theatre impersonate the King and his sister in order to dupe the gullible new director. It is clear from the contemporary press that the libretto succeeded in producing something that maintained the authority of a new work by Mozart while adhering to the still-emerging conventions of operetta.²²

22 This was made all the more simple when the original artists (Cavalieri and Aloysia Lange) could be made to mediate between Mozart and Offenbach. See Paul Scudo's review in the *Revue des deux mondes*, 1 June 1856, 673–4.

The aesthetic consequences of the reworkings of *Der Schauspieldirektor* were far-reaching, both for the resulting stage works and for the meanings of the original numbers and the *Lieder* that supplemented them. As *Der Schauspieldirektor* metamorphosed into *Mozart und Schikaneder*, five of the eight texts remained almost identical, one was completely rewritten, and two were lightly modified.²³ The dramatic contexts for all the numbers from *Der Schauspieldirektor* were inevitably changed, and works from the *XXX Gesänge* acquired them where that had not previously existed. While the massive dramatic and poetic shifts required in *L'impresario* changed Mozart's original music and poetry out of all recognition, there remained some reflections of the original work. These general principles may be exemplified by reference to one number from *Der Schauspieldirektor* and from one work from the *XXX Gesänge*.

The *ariette* 'Da schlägt die Abschiedsstunde' is the first item in the opera scene in *Der Schauspieldirektor*, and its poetry has almost no relation to the surrounding drama.²⁴ It is introduced by M. Herz as an audition piece for his wife. In *Mozart und Schikaneder*, the text of the aria is claimed by Schikaneder to be of his own composition, but Mozart demonstrates it in fact to be by Christian Hoffmann von Hoffmannswaldau (1616–1679) by reference to a book on Schikaneder's table; Mozart mentions that he has changed the character Damon to Tamion (a logical move given that the aria is to be sung by Pamina and addressed to Tamino).²⁵ Paradoxically, the *ariette* – or *air* as it becomes in *L'impresario* takes on an appropriately tragic dramatic context when it is sung by Zerline as she accuses Lelio of treachery; the tragedy is undermined, however, by the fact that the latter sleeps throughout the opening *Larghetto* and only wakes up at the beginning of the second section of the two-tempo aria.²⁶ Battu and Halévy's poetry follows the structure of Stephanie's original, to the extent of even mimicking the word-repetitions, 'um grausam uns zu trennen' / 'pitié pour ma souffrance', and in some cases simply translating emphatic words and phrases: 'Und du' becomes 'Et toi' (bars 26–28), 'Doch nein' becomes 'Mais non' (bar 32); musical phrases prompt near-identical poetry: the phrase setting 'Ach nein' is rendered as 'Hélas' in the French version. But for many of the larger text repetitions, Battu and Halévy write new text so that, at the beginning of the allegro moderato (bars 44–50), Mozart has 'Ein Herz, das so der Abschied kränket, / Dem ist kein Wankelmüt bekannt! / Kein Wankelmüt bekannt' whereas in Battu and Halévy the repetition is omitted (but another smaller one introduced) to give 'Cruel amant qui me délaisse / Lorsque ma voix, ma voix, te presse / Vois ma tristesse'.

23 The similarities and differences are noted in table 1.

24 Croll, ed., *Der Schauspieldirektor*, 27–33.

25 *Der / Schauspieldirektor / – / Komische Operette* von L. Schneider, 25–6.

26 RÉPERTOIRE DES BOUFFES-PARISIENS / L'IMPRESARIO / Opérette bouffe, 11–12 and 31–5.

The appropriation of *An Chloë* from the *XXX Gesänge* is a more complex undertaking.²⁷ In *Mozart und Schikaneder*, the number is sung by Mozart to Mlle Uhlich in a flirtatious response to her performance of 'Bester Jüngling'.²⁸ The central conceit of the admiration of the beloved's eyes is set up in the preceding dialogue, when Mozart says 'Hören's, Sie sind ein herziger Schatz! Und wissen's' – Ihre Augen – an denen kann ich mich gar nicht satt sehen'.²⁹ But Schneider's reworking of Johann Georg Jacobi's original poem, while retaining the beloved's eyes as a subject, tones down the sexually high-octane character of the poem to something more suitable to the dramatic context of inconsequential flirtation. This is strikingly clear in the third stanza where Jacobi has his narrator grasp his beloved to his breast 'der im letzten Augenblicke / *sterbend* nur dich von sich läßt [emphasis added]';³⁰ Schneider's more publicly acceptable lover offers as the explanation of the burning fire in his lover's eyes 'die Klänge meiner Leier'. Taubert's setting of Schneider's revised text follows Mozart's word repetitions carefully in so far as that is possible (see bars 23–28 for example), and manages to substitute for the very careful original underscoring of the word 'Sterbend' (bars 36–37) a similar emphasis on the word 'Sehnsucht', an example of text-setting about which Mozart would have been unlikely to complain.³¹ However, Mozart's original setting of the line 'eine düstre Wolke mir' (bars 42–47), brilliantly characterised with a turn to the supertonic and back to the dominant via an *ombra* harmony, sets – in Taubert's arrangement the line 'Und das Herz schlägt höher mir'; Mozart's careful characterisation is not only now ignored, but his *ombra* harmonies now appear redundant and out of place.³²

The version of this number worked out by Battu and Halévy for the Bouffes-Parisiens follows similar general practices to those employed in 'Da schlägt die Abschiedsstunde'.³³ At this point in the drama, Léo has arrived in Rosignuolo's house with a double objective: he has been commissioned to convey the contract for the licence of the San Carlo theatre to Rosignuolo (the impresario of the title), and with the resultant good will hopes to claim the hand of Rosignuolo's daughter Sylvia.³⁴ Battu's and Halévy's text is built around this dramatic point, and Jacobi's and Schneider's second-person appeals to the beloved are swept away. Mozart's word repetitions are frequently replaced with newly-composed poetry, but the ABAC structure of the music for the first stanza elicits from Halévy and Battu a

27 Ernst August Ballin, ed., *Lieder*, Neue Mozart-Ausgabe III/8 (Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1963; 2nd edn 1987; 3rd edn 2003); the critical report to this edition is Ernst August Ballin, ed., *Lieder*, Neue Mozart-Ausgabe III/8 (Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1964), 46–9.

28 Der / Schauspieldirektor / – / Komische Operette von L. Schneider, 19–20.

29 Ibidem, 19.

30 Ballin, ed., *Lieder*, 47–8.

31 *A-Sm* Rara 486/1, 25.

32 Ibidem, 26.

33 RÉPERTOIRE DES BOUFFES-PARISIENS / L'IMPRESARIO / Opérette bouffe, 14–17.

34 Ibidem, 6.

response that matches a repeat of the first line of poetry to the repeat of the musical phrase. Schneider's casual approach to Mozart's setting of 'eine düstre Wolke mir' is reflected catastrophically by Battu and Halévy where they respond to Jacobi's clouds with the line 'Sous le soleil de beaux jours', a moment in the aria which leaves the listener gasping for mimetic breath.³⁵

In his selection of artists for *L'impresario*, Offenbach consciously distanced himself from the teams he had used so far in work at the Bouffes-Parisiens. He abandoned the artists who had invested such works as *Les deux aveugles* and *Le violoneux* with some of the most comic moments seen on the lyric stage, and replaced them with recent graduates of the Conservatoire. Jean Berthellier had already been head-hunted by the Opéra-Comique, and the other half of the comic team, Étienne Pradher, had no role in *L'impresario*, and even Hortense Schneider, as early as 1856 a veteran of operetta, was forsaken.³⁶ Central to Mozart's original version of *Der Schauspieldirektor* and to all arrangements of it were the two competing sopranos, sung originally by Aloysia Lange and Cavalieri. For these roles, Offenbach already had Marie-Denise-Victoire Dalmont, who had created the role of Fe-an-nich-ton in *Ba-ta-clan*, and he recruited Adèle-Claire Courtois as the second soprano. Both artists were in their mid 20s, and had won first and second prizes respectively at the Conservatoire the previous year.³⁷

Dalmont had already demonstrated her suitability for such a role as that of Silvia in *L'impresario*; this corresponded to the role of Mlle Silberklang in Mozart's original which had been sung by Cavalieri. In his last opera, Adam had written the title role of *Les pantins de Violette* especially for Dalmont, and had availed himself of her virtuosity in two numbers in that work.³⁸ Courtois, the new recruit, was able to benefit from her Conservatoire background in the role of Zerline (Mozart's original Mme Herz).

But Offenbach's choice of artists was not solely based on the fit between vocal expertise and repertory. In pursuit of his goal of enhancing the status of his theatre with such a classic as a version of *Der Schauspieldirektor*, he was able to develop this status with the presentation of the two most successful young sopranos in the capital – a success that had been proven in the most traditional environment – the Conservatoire, and by the simplest means: winning the first and second prizes for singing. The coupling of a work by a composer more familiar from the Théâtre Italien and Académie Impériale de Musique with artists who might be expected to develop their careers there enabled Offenbach to distance his production of *L'impresario* from the rest of his repertory, and from his artistic competitors.

35 Ibidem, 16

36 Karl-Josef Kutsch and Leo Riemens, *Großes Sängerlexikon*, 4 vols (Bern and Stuttgart: Francke, 1987–1994; 3rd edn, 7 vols, Bern: Saur, 1997–2002), 4:3127–8.

37 Pierre Constant, *Le Conservatoire National de Musique et de Déclamation: Documents historiques et administratifs* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900), 255.

38 Dalmont took the role of Violette in the work, and sang in six of the eight numbers (nos 5 and 7 were a dance number and *musique de scène* respectively). The most striking *air*, from the point of view of its virtuosity, was number 1, 'Canari, mon chéri'.

Local contexts meant that *L'impresario* was not merely desirable for the adjustment of the status of Offenbach's theatre, it was almost essential. In May 1856, Offenbach was coming to the end of his first full season and contemplating a return to the Salle Lacaze for the summer. This was a dangerous moment, for when he had left his summer location for the Passage Choiseul at the end of 1855, he had been profiting from the large crowds attending the *Grande Exposition* at the adjacent *Palais de l'Industrie*. In the early summer of the following year, this advantage had disappeared and the theatre now had to succeed in its own terms.

A further pressure on Offenbach in the early summer was the fact that he was about to launch his competition for new operettas, and it would be severely disadvantageous, if not a deterrent, if recent *Prix de Rome* laureates were to view the Bouffes-Parisiens as equally frivolous as, for example, the Folies-Nouvelles. Furthermore, Offenbach's announcement of the competition was coupled to his self-justificatory manifesto based on the history and contemporary state of *opéra comique*, and a credible eighteenth-century context for that manifesto was critical. *L'impresario* could provide a physical embodiment of that context at just the right moment.

If the beginning of the new season and the imminent presentation of his manifesto were prospective reasons for the importance of *L'impresario*, there were retrospective ones as well. The theatre's credibility had been badly damaged by the press reaction to *Le thé de Polichinelle*, premiered two months previously. The work was clearly seen as one that brought the Bouffes-Parisiens too closely into alignment with the Folies-Nouvelles for the taste of Offenbach's bourgeois audiences, and by May 1856 there was a need to redress the registral balance of the theatre's repertory that could be fulfilled by such a work as *L'impresario*.³⁹

The impact of *L'impresario* was everything that Offenbach could have wanted. It filled the theatre and its bank account, and reviews of the production came close to eulogy. But this was only part of the success of the work from Offenbach's point of view. The Bouffes-Parisiens became the locus of a public discussion of a new work by Mozart, one that became one of the central intellectual debates in the middle of 1856. For such a theatre to achieve this status, usually reserved for the Opéra or Théâtre Italien, this was an achievement indeed.

39 For an example of a statement of the possibilities of what the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens might become, and the threats that it faced, the following review by Jules Réal is instructive: "Les *Bouffes-Parisiens* doivent, à peine de mentir à leur dénomination, provoquer la gaieté, mais sans tomber jamais dans cette trivialité qui peint le vulgaire, le bas côté des choses; s'ils recherchaient le rire graveleux, l'esprit de carrefour, ou les expressions osées, ils se verraient bientôt abandonnés par la bonne société qui les a pris sous son patronage. Selon nous, pour que ce théâtre continue à réussir, il faut, autant que possible, qu'il y ait sur la scène le bon goût qui se trouve dans la salle; il faut que sa musique, sans afficher de grandes prétentions, sorte de la routine des *ponts-neufs* et des *flons-flons*; qui sait? plus d'un musicien, en quittant les *Bouffes-Parisiens*, ira, peut-être, frapper à la porte de M. Perrin, car, dans notre pensée, la salle du passage Choiseul peut devenir un quatrième théâtre lyrique" (*Le Ménestrel*, 9 March 1856).

Offenbach was much praised in the Parisian press for having travelled to Vienna, 'discovered' Mozart's score and brought it back to Paris.⁴⁰ What he actually brought back was the arrangement made by Schneider and Taubert a decade earlier; there is no evidence of any attempt on Offenbach's part to disabuse the press of this misunderstanding, and the scholarly enterprise that he was thought to have undertaken remained an important thread in the public understanding of the opera.⁴¹

The public commentaries on *L'impresario* continued this scholarly thread by allusion to two recent works that had a bearing on the opera. Alexandre Oulibicheff's 1843 biography of Mozart was frequently cited for what was considered its error in describing *Der Schauspieldirektor* as consisting of an overture and four numbers whereas journalists had heard – so they thought – with their own ears that it had eight numbers.⁴² This suggests that the origins of Offenbach's *L'impresario* in Schneider's and Taubert's *Mozart und Schikaneder* were unknown to the press, but also that the journalists were convinced that they were listening to and critiquing a one-act opera by Mozart for the first time.

A second text that was a frequent *point d'appui* for the press was Paul Scudo's 1850 *Critique et littérature musicales*, which was recruited by several journalists to support their view of Mozart's work.⁴³ Jules Réal's review in *Le ménestrel* is a case in point. Here he quotes Scudo verbatim in his review of *L'impresario*:

"Mozart est aussi grand musicien que poète sublime. Il chante la grâce et les sentiments exquis des natures supérieures, les douleurs mystérieuses de l'âme qui entrevoit des horizons infinis, les tristesses et les voluptés d'une civilisation avancée. Il a l'élégance, la profondeur et la personnalité des patriciens."⁴⁴

This is generic praise that could be heaped as much on Mozart in general as on *L'impresario* in particular. But in fact, Scudo – here quoted by Réal – is not talking about *Der Schauspieldirektor* at all, but specifically about *Don Giovanni*: Réal is appropriating this discourse on genius for the benefit of a much more modest work

40 "Il a passé six mois à chercher par toute l'Allemagne la partition complète du *Schauspiel-Director*, ou si vous l'aimez mieux, de *l'Impresario*, du *Directeur de Spectacle*, car dans la collection de Mozart, il n'y avait que cinq morceaux de cette partition, y compris l'ouverture. Des quatre morceaux de chant, il n'en a gardé que trois, et s'en est procuré quatre autres, tels qu'on les exécute au théâtre de Vienne notamment" (*Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 May 1856).

41 The thread could be woven in fanciful ways. See for example *Le Figaro* (25 May 1856): "Non seulement *l'Impresario* n'a pas été gravé, mais il était aussi inconnu en Allemagne qu'à Paris. Enfouie en partition manuscrite dans la bibliothèque de Vienne, son existence seule avait été constatée par les érudits et consignée dans le *Dictionnaire des Musiciens* de M. Fétis."

42 See, for example, *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 May 1856; *La France musicale*, 25 May 1856; *La revue française*, 2/5 (1856), 293–4. Oulibicheff's text is *Nouvelle biographie de Mozart suivie d'un aperçu sur l'histoire générale de la musique et de l'analyse des principales œuvres de Mozart* (Moscow: Sener, 1843) R as *Mozart* with an introduction by Jean-Victor Hocquard (Paris: Séguier, 1991), 147 [page numbers refer to the 1991 reprint].

43 Paul Scudo, *Critique et littérature musicales* (Paris: Amyot, 1850).

44 *Le ménestrel*, 25 May 1856.

whose textual history was more complicated than he knew. The direct beneficiary is *L'impresario* and vicariously Offenbach and his theatre. *L'impresario* was not just associated with *Don Giovanni* in this way, but also with *Le nozze di Figaro* via a not implausible comparison of the two overtures.⁴⁵ It is difficult to imagine a more successful response to the work than elision with what were known as the two most important works of the composer, especially since productions of *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro* were forbidden to the Bouffes-Parisiens. This was enhanced by the fact that the press – thanks to Oubilicheff's commentary – knew that *Der Schauspieldirektor* had been composed only a few months before *Le nozze di Figaro*.⁴⁶

The impact of *L'impresario* on Parisian music-theatrical circles was immense. That was nothing, however, to the effect that it had on the reputations of Offenbach and his theatre. It succeeded in bringing the Bouffes-Parisiens to the attention of the serious musical public with a work by a composer whose music was still considered challenging and elusive; the cachet, furthermore, of any Austro-German composer was a significant prize for any theatre (the Théâtre Lyrique was in the process of capitalizing on their productions of Weber, and the Opéra only five years away from flirting with Wagner).

But it was less the nationality of the composer of *L'impresario* that was important for Offenbach than the classic status of the composer. Here, Mozart formed part of a view of comic opera that Offenbach was to develop in his manifesto, published only eight weeks later, and probably written during the first run of *L'impresario*. His interest in the eighteenth century extended to encompass the works he mounted at the Bouffes-Parisiens themselves. He had opened up the possibility of a production of Rousseau's *Le devin du village* in March 1856 (flatly refused by the Minister of the Interior), and would mount a successful reworking of Rossini's *Il signor Bruschino* at the very end of 1857 (this is classic Rossini from 1813, rather than the composer of *Guillaume Tell*). Furthermore, the antagonists of *Le compositeur de l'avenir* and Meyerbeer in Offenbach's *Le carnaval des revues* of 1860 are Grétry and Gluck, who are joined by Mozart and Weber. There was also

45 "Je vous laisse à deviner la surprise, l'enchantement du public, à partir de l'ouverture, sœur jumelle de celle des *Nozze di Figaro*, petite composition charmante, toute remplie de mélodie italienne, mais légèrement relevée par ce génie harmonique, dont Mozart ne pouvait se priver même en badinant; et dans les morceaux qui viennent ensuite, dans l'air du Directeur, dans celui de Sylvia, dans celui de Lelio, dans les deux trios, même douceur exquise, même suavité de cantilènes, même instinct des sonorités de l'orchestre" (*Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 May 1856).

46 "Lorsque Mozart l'écrivit [*Der Schauspieldirektor*], il était arrivé à cette période de talent où son inspiration, épurée par le travail et grandie par la réflexion, n'allait plus donner que des chefs-d'œuvre: le compositeur était mûr pour les *Noces de Figaro* et pour *Don Juan*" (*Le Figaro*, 25 May 1856). Scudo, in his own review, was struck by the immaturity of the writing, whatever the work's date: "Bien que cette esquisse de *l'impresario* soit de la même année que les *Nozze di Figaro*, on la dirait d'une date beaucoup plus antérieure et presque de l'enfance de Mozart; mais les dieux n'ont pas d'enfance et parlent toujours d'or" (*Revue des deux mondes*, 1 June 1856).

talk of a production of Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*.⁴⁷ And this attempt at mediation between eighteenth-century classics and the mid-nineteenth-century is perfectly embodied in the physical location of the Salle Choiseul itself, positioned mid-way between the eighteenth-century social centre of the Palais-Royal and the nineteenth-century boulevards.

L'impresario represents an important part of a process of self-positioning on Offenbach's part during the early years of the Bouffes-Parisiens existence. Its task had been to use the prestige of a work by Mozart to identify the theatre as the home of more serious, musically ambitious, operetta. It succeeded beyond Offenbach's wildest dreams.

47 See Mark Everist, "Jacques Offenbach: The Music of the Past and the Image of the Present".