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# Josepha Beck sings an aria from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* for Schröder (10 May 1791)

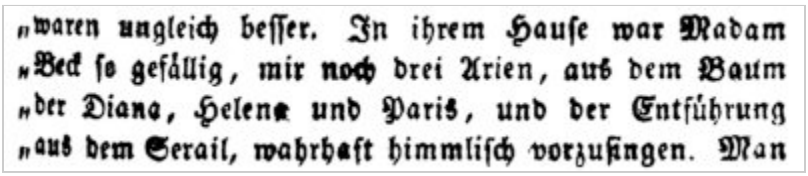
## Dexter Edge

**Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Meyer, *Friedrich Ludwig Schröder. Beitrag zur Kunde des Menschen und des Künstlers*. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe. Vol. 2, part 1. 1819**

*[10 May 1791, Mannheim]*

*[77]*

„ *[...]* In ihrem Hause war Madam
„Beck so gefällig, mir noch drei Arien, aus dem Baum
„der Diana, Helena und Paris, und der Entführung
„aus dem Serail, wahrhaft himmlisch vorzusingen. *[...]*


„waren ungleich beſſer. In ihrem Hauſe war Madam
„Beck ſo gefällig, mir noch drei Arien, aus dem Baum
„der Diana, Helena und Paris, und der Entführung
„aus dem Serail, wahrhaft himmliſch vorzuſingen. Man

*[translation:]*

"*[...]* In her home Madame
Beck was so gracious as to sing for me, in truly heavenly
fashion, three more arias, from *Der Baum der Diana*,
*Helena und Paris*, and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. *[...]*"

## *Commentary*

On 3 May 1791, the actor, director, and playwright Friedrich Ludwig Schröder (1744–1816) arrived in Mannheim, his second major stop on a two-month tour of German-language theaters, looking for new repertoire and actors for his company in Hamburg. His previous stop had been Frankfurt am Main, where he had stayed for nine days and had attended, among other things, the premiere on 1 May of *Liebe und Versuchung*, a German adaptation of *Così fan tutte*, the earliest known performance of that opera outside Vienna. Schröder documented his tour in a travel diary that his friend Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Meyer (1758–1840) transcribed in his 1819 biography

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of Schröder. The diary records Schröder's negative reactions to the German libretto for *Così*, which he read on 28 Apr 1791, and to the opera itself on 1 May. (On Schröder's travel diary and the premiere of *Liebe und Versuchung*, see our entry for that date.)

Schröder was in Mannheim from 3 to 11 May (see Meyer 1819, ii/1:69–78). Judging by the reports in his diary, his schedule was less hectic than it had been in Frankfurt. He seems to have had fewer new plays and libretti to read, and the theater in Mannheim gave performances only on 3, 5, 8, and 10 May during his time there (Walter 1899, ii:323), all of which he attended. But this light schedule left him with more free time than he had had in Frankfurt, where he had attended the theater every evening. Schröder notes in his entry for 3 May that no one in Mannheim was expecting him, because the impresario in Frankfurt, Johann August Tabor, had optimistically but incorrectly implied to contacts in Mannheim that Schröder would be staying on longer in Frankfurt. On the evening of 3 May, Schröder attended a performance (which he found entirely unsatisfactory) of his own play *Der Fähndrich*. On 4 May he took a day trip to Schwetzingen with August Wilhelm Iffland and three other actors from the Mannheim ensemble. The following day he attended a performance of Kotzebue's *Das Kind der Liebe*. Schröder's detailed critique of that performance includes an unflattering assessment of Iffland in the role of Baron von Wildenhain (Schröder refers to the role as "Hauptmann"; the Baron was a retired military man), stating that Iffland's acting was still as it had been when he had seen him in Lübeck: "Kalt, eintönig, gedehnt, ohne Leben" ("cold, monotonous, drawn out, lifeless"; Meyer 1819, ii/1:72; on Iffland's guest appearances with Schröder's company in Lübeck in Sep 1785, see the *Notes* below). Schröder did not pull punches in his diary.

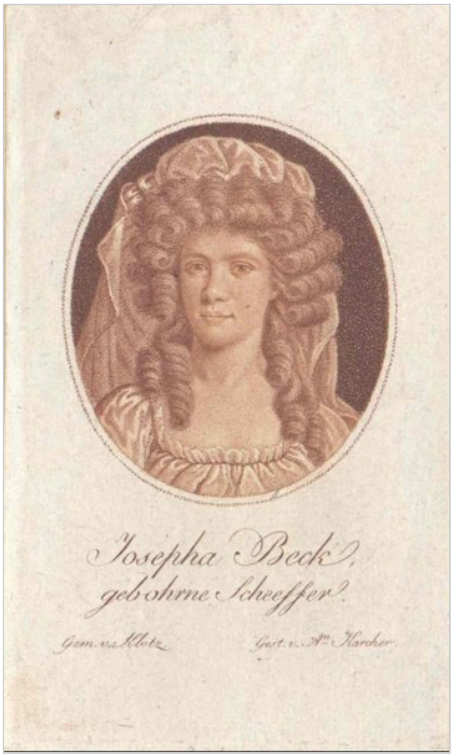
On 6 May Schröder visited the actor Heinrich Beck and his wife Josepha, the company's leading soprano, who was far along in a pregnancy and not scheduled to sing on stage during Schröder's visit. He wrote in his diary:

> Am 6ten Mai. *[...]*
> *[...]* — Ich ging
> zu Becks, um die Frau singen zu hören. Wie sie an=
> fangen wollte, bekam sie Wehen, denn sie ist hoch=
> schwanger, trat bald darauf wieder ins Zimmer, und
> sang eine der schwersten Arien von Prati so vortrefflich,
> daß mir die Thränen in die Augen traten. Sie ist
> unstreitig die beste Sängerin auf allen Deutschen Büh=
> nen, und verdiente wohl auch die schönste zu seyn.
> [Meyer 1819, ii/1:74]

> On 6 May. *[...]*
> *[...]* — I went
> to the Becks in order to hear his wife sing. As she
> was about to begin, she had pains, for she is heavily
> pregnant, but soon came back into the room and
> sang one of the most difficult arias by Prati so splendidly
> that tears came to my eyes. She is without question

> the best singer on all German stages, and probably
> also rates as the most beautiful.

Schröder is referring to Italian composer Alessio Prati (1750–1788), known especially for his serious operas from the 1780s. Prati's *Armida abbandonata* had been premiered by the court opera in Munich in 1785, and is perhaps the most likely source of the aria that Beck sang for Schröder.




*Josepha Beck, gebohrne Scheeffer*
Anton Karcher (after Klotz)
(ÖNB, Bildarchiv)

Schröder records nothing special on 7 May. The following day he attended a double bill of the play *Offene Fehde* and the singspiel *Die beiden kleinen Savoyarden* (adapted from Marsollier and Dalayrac's *Deux petits Savoyards*). On 9 May he attended a private performance (or perhaps a read-through) organized by Iffland of "Der gutherzige Vater" (probably *Der gutherzige Alte*). Early in the morning of 10 May Schröder was visited by Otto Heinrich von Gemmingen (1755–1836), and that evening he attended a performance of Paul Wranitzky's *Oberon*. Schröder also visited the Becks again on 10 May and heard Josepha Beck sing three more arias, including one from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, as described in the passage above.

## Josepha Beck

Josepha Beck was born Johanna Josepha Schäfer (also Scheefer or Schefer). The date and location of her birth appear to be unknown, although it is assumed that she was born in Mannheim.

According to Iffland (who had joined the theater in Mannheim in 1779), she made her debut there in 1782 as Zemire in *Zemire und Azor* (Iffland 1798, 127); her debut in that role is also noted in the *Theater-Kalender* for 1783 (271, based on information from the period Sep 1781 to Aug 1782). According to Walter (1899, ii:279), *Zemire* was given in Mannheim on 16 Jun 1782, and again on 7 and 14 Jul that year, so these would have been the performances in which Schäfer made her first appearances. We also know that Schäfer married the Mannheim actor Heinrich Beck around the beginning of 1788 (see below). Given the dates of her debut and marriage, then, it seems likely that she was born between 1765 and 1770. (We should not rule out the possibility that she made her stage debut as early as age 12 or 13; compare, for example, Josepha Kalmes, discussed in our entries for 25 Aug 1785 and 18 Apr 1786, who was successfully performing on stage in demanding singing roles at a comparably young age).

Josepha Schäfer studied with the eminent Mannheim soprano Dorothea Wendling (1736–1811), who created the role of Ilia in the premiere of Mozart's *Idomeneo* in Jan 1781. Wendling is complimented as Schäfer's teacher in a review of a performance of Gotter and Benda's *Romeo und Julie* in Mannheim on 16 Jul 1786, with Schäfer in the role of Julie. She had first sung the role at the premiere of this production in Mannheim on 5 Feb 1784, but the opera had not been performed there since 26 Aug 1784 (Walter 1899, ii:287 and 290), and Schäfer's skill and artistry had evidently grown in the interim.

*[83]*

Den 16. Julius.

*[...]*

Romeo und Julie, eine ernsthafte Oper in 3 Aufzügen, von Herrn Gotter, abwechselnd mit musikalischer Declamation. Die Musik ist von Herrn Kapelldirector Benda. Zum 5ten mal.

Heute erschien Mademoiselle Schäfer in der Rolle der Julie als eine grose [sic] Künstlerin; sie entzückte durch ihren herrlichen Gesang und see= lenvolles Spiel. Sie sang die Arie: — Mei= nen Romeo zu sehen &c. mit aller Kunst, Aus=

*[84]*

druck, Grazie und Empfindung. In dem Re= citativ — Sanft schlummern soll ich &c. riß sie alles zur Bewunderung hin, und entlockte füh= lenden Menschen dankbare Thränen. Bey Bendas vortrefflicher Musik, die so gesungen wird, wähnt man im Elisium zu seyn. Welch Vergnügen muß nicht der Gedanke der Mada= me Wendelin [sic] verursachen, für unsere Bühne

eine solche Künstlerin gebildet zu haben?
[*Tagebuch der Mannheimer Schaubühne*, 6. Stück, 83–84]

*[83]*

On 16 July.

*[...]*

*Romeo und Julie*, a serious opera in 3 acts, by Herr Gotter, alternating with musical declamation. The music is by Herr Kapelldirector Benda. For the 5th time.

Today Mademoiselle Schäfer appeared in the role of Julie as a great artist; she enchanted through her magnificent singing and soulful acting. She sang the aria "Meine Romeo zu sehen &c." with all art, expression,

*[84]*

grace, and sensitivity. In the recitative "Sanft schlummern soll ich &c." she transformed this all to veneration, and elicited tears of thanks from people of feeling. With Benda's excellent music sung in this way, one imagined oneself in Elysium. What pleasure must the thought not give to Madame Wendling, to have trained such a singer?

(The references are to Julie's "Ihn wieder zu seh'n, meinen Romeo?" and "Sanft schlummern soll ich?" See the score at D-DS, Mus. Ms. 94, vol. 1, vol. 2.) This review, like Schröder's report on her performance of a Prati aria almost five years later, uses the trope of bringing tears to the eyes; her singing must have had unusual emotive force.

Although the question needs further research, Josepha Beck is certainly one of the earliest singers to have sung major roles in staged performances of Mozart's last six operas, all in their Mannheim premieres, as it happens. As Mademoiselle Schäfer she sang the role of Konstanze in the Mannheim premiere of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* on 18 Apr 1784 (Walter 1899, ii:288). As Madame Beck, she sang the roles of Donna Anna in the Mannheim premiere of *Don Juan* on 27 Sep 1789 (Walter 1899, ii:315); the Countess in the Mannheim premiere of *Die Hochzeit des Figaros* on 24 Oct 1790, a performance directed by Mozart (Walter 1899, ii:321); Franziska (Fiordiligi) in the Mannheim premiere of *Die Wette* (*Così fan tutte*) on 12 May 1793 (Walter 1899, ii:332); Pamina in the Mannheim premiere of *Die Zauberflöte* on 29 Mar 1794 (Walter 1899, ii:336); and Vitellia in the Mannheim premiere of *Titus* (*La clemenza di Tito*) on 8 Aug 1802 (Walter 1899, ii:372).

Beck sang three arias for Schröder when he visited again on 10 May 1791: one from Martín y Soler's *Der Baum der Diana* (*L'arbore di Diana*), one from Winter's *Helena und Paris*, and one from Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, all operas that she had sung on stage. She had sung the role of Diana in the Mannheim premiere of Martín's opera on 17 Jan 1790, as reported in the *Annalen des Theaters*:

*[61]*

> Am 17ten im Jenner, zum erstenmal: **Der Baum der Diana**, eine Operette in 2 Aufzügen, aus dem Italiänischen. Die Musik von **Martin**. *[...]*

*[63]*

> Die Vorstellung war für Aug und Ohr gleich rei= zend. Mad. **Beck** als **Diana** und Mad. **Müller** als **Amor** bezauberten durch ihren Gesang. [*Annalen des Theaters*, vi:61–63]

*[61]*

> On 17 January, for the first time: *Der Baum der Diana*, an operetta in 2 acts, from the Italian. The music by Martín. *[...]*

*[63]*

> The performance was equally delightful for eye and ear. Mad. Beck as Diana and Mad. Müller as Amor enchanted through their singing.

(Amor was sung by soprano Marie Müller, née Boudet.) Thus Beck would have sung an aria of Diana's arias for Schröder, mostly likely from the German version of the opera used in Mannheim.

Peter Winter's *Helena und Paris* was first performed in Mannheim on 5 Dec 1786, with Mademoiselle Schäfer (as she still was) in the role of Helena (*Tagebuch der Mannheimer Schaubühne*, 9. Stück, 139–40), and it was also the role in which she appeared for the first time following her marriage, in a performance on 3 Feb 1788:

> 3. Februar.
> Helena und Paris. Ein musikalisch=he= orisches Schauspiel in drei Aufzügen, mit Mu= sik von Herrn Winter. Zum 8ten mal.

> Madame Beck (ehemal Mlle Scheefer)
> erhielt heut den lautesten Beifall von der aus=
> serordentlich zahlreichen Versammlung im
> Schauspielhause, und laute Glückwünsche zu
> ihrem neuen Stande. *[...]*
> [*Tagebuch der Mannheimer Schaubühne*, 34. Stück, 189]

> On 3 February.
> Helena und Paris. A musical-heroic
> play in three acts, with music by Herr
> Winter. For the 8th time.
> Madame Beck (formerly Mlle Schäfer)
> today received the loudest applause from the
> exceptionally numerous crowd in the
> playhouse, and loud congratulations on her
> new estate. *[...]*

(It is from this report that we know that Beck married around the beginning of 1788.) At the time of Schröder's visit, Winter's opera had most recently been given in Mannheim on 30 Oct 1790. She would thus have sung an aria of Helena's for Schröder the following May.

As we have seen, Beck, as Mademoiselle Schäfer, had sung in the Mannheim premiere of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in 1784. In all there had been 21 performances of Mozart's opera by the time of Schröder's visit, although Beck had not sung in the the most recent one, on 6 Jun 1790; that performance had instead featured the Keilholz sisters, Christine and Dorothea (newly engaged by the Mannheim company), as Konstanze and Blonde. (Christine Keilholz also sang the role of Susanna opposite Beck's Countess in the performance of *Die Hochzeit des Figaros* that Mozart directed on 24 Oct 1790.) Nevertheless, Konstanze's arias would have been fresh in Beck's mind and voice when she sang for Schröder: she and her husband had recently returned from several weeks of guest appearances at the court theater in Weimar, where she had sung Konstanze in performances of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* on 28 Dec 1790 and probably also on 22 Jan 1791. Of her performance on 28 Dec, a correspondent to *Annalen des Theaters* (vii:61–62) wrote (foreshadowing Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*):

> *[...]* — 28. [Dec] Die Ent=
> führung aus dem Serail. Op. in 3 A. von **Bretzner**
> und **Mozart**. Mad. **Beck**, sang die Konstanze, be=
> zaubernd schön. *[...]*

> *[...]* — 28 [Dec], *Die*
> *Entführung aus dem Serail*. Op. in 3. Acts by
> Bretzner and Mozart. Mad. Beck sang Konstanze
> bewitchingly beautifully. *[...]*

A poem attributed to the otherwise unknown Johann Christian Lorenz celebrates Beck's performance as Konstanze in Weimar; the poem was published in the short-lived journal *Nicht zu*

*wenig, Nicht zu viel* on 5 Mar 1791. It again contains a reference to the tears she elicited in listeners. The poet refers to the opera as "Mozarts Meisterstück" ("Mozart's masterpiece"):

*[73]*

An Madame Beck als Konstanze
in der Entführung aus dem Serail.

War das nicht der Ton von einer Zauberin,
Die in Welten von Schimären
Sanfte Herzen zu versetzen weiß?—
Die Konstanzen, als die sanfte Dulterin
Uns als Künstlerin so reitzend mahlt;
Daß auch selbst der Biedermann im Kreiß,
Ganz versenkt in höh're Sphären,
Staunend Ihrer Kunst mit Thränen zahlt?
Pochten nicht bey Ihrem Reitz der Kehle,
Wilde Herzen zärtlicher? —
Goß sie nicht aus Mozarts Meisterstück
Frohe Hoffnung in des Jünglings Seele,
Der gerührt an seines Mädgens Brust,
Wünscht zu theilen jenes große Glück,
Das die Herzen inniger
Gleich Belmonten bind't mit Freud und Lust?
Gleich der Fee auf deren Zauberwinke
Alles zu Gebote steht;
Die durch Ihren Machtspruch Reitze schaft,
Und nach Launen wieder läßt versinken;
So ziehst Du, o große Künstlerin!
Durch die Töne Deiner Zauberkraft,
Die so reitzend Dich erhebt,
Jeden Hörer ganz in Staunen hin.
Ja auch selbst der Greiß stimmt vom Erstaunen,
Bey dem Ton der ihn umschwebt,
Der in seinen Busen Frohseyn gießt,

*[74]*

Und ihn frey macht von des Alters Launen,
Diesen Wunsch zu Deinem Lobe an:
["]Reitzender wie dieser Abend fließt,
Den nur Deine Kunst belebte,
Sey auf immer Deine Lebensbahn!"
Joh. Christian Lorenz.

*[translation:]*

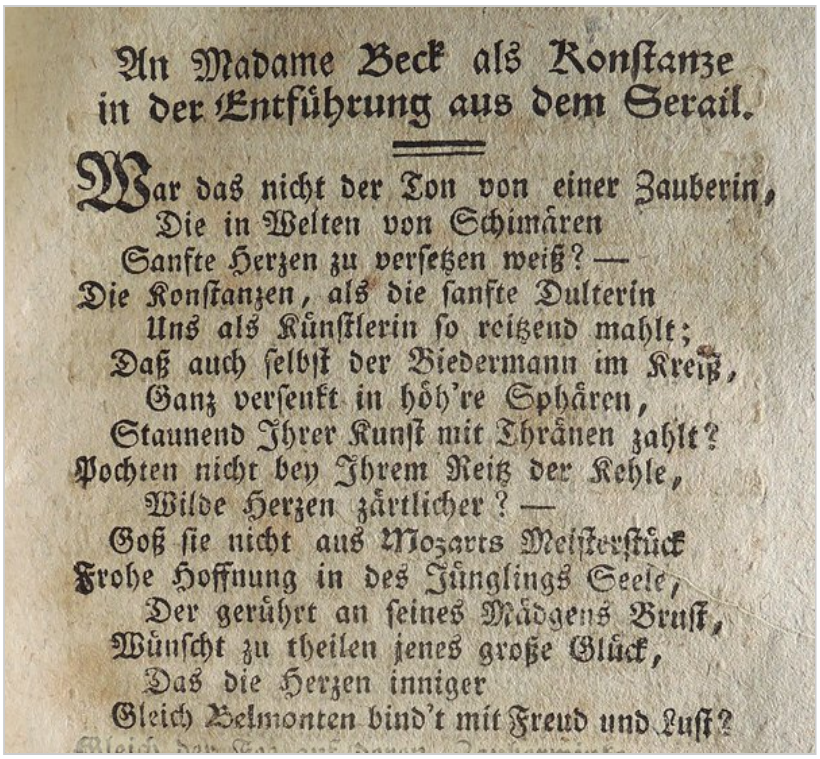
*[73]*

To Madame Beck as Konstanze
in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

Was that not the sound of a sorceress,
Who knows how to transport gentle hearts
To chimeric worlds? —
Konstanze, as the artist so enchantingly paints
For us that gentle sufferer;
So that even the stolid man in her circle,
thrust into higher spheres,
Repays in astonishment her art with tears?
From the enchantment of her throat, do not
Wild hearts beat more tenderly? —
Does she not pour from Mozart's masterpiece
Joyful hope into the soul of the young man
Who rests upon his maiden's breast,
Wishing to share that great happiness
That binds more intimately hearts
Like Belmonte's with joy and delight?
Like the fairy at whose magic wave
Everything is commanded;
Who by her decree creates enchantment,
And at a whim allows it to subside again;
Thus, oh great artist, do you move
Every listener to wonderment through
The tones of your magical power,
Which elevates you so enchantingly.
Yes even the grizzled head is filled with wonder,
At the sound that floats around him,
That pours gladness into his breast,

*[74]*

And it frees him from the cares of age,
To praise you with this wish:
"May the course of your life flow as
Enchantingly as this evening,
Which your art alone enlivened!"
Joh. Christian Lorenz.



An Madame Beck als Konſtanze
in der Entführung aus dem Serail.

War das nicht der Ton von einer Zauberin,
Die in Welten von Schimären
Sanfte Herzen zu verſetzen weiß? —
Die Konſtanzen, als die ſanfte Dulderin
Uns als Künſtlerin ſo reitzend mahlt;
Daß auch ſelbſt der Biedermann im Kreiß,
Ganz verſenkt in höh're Sphären,
Staunend Ihrer Kunſt mit Thränen zahlt?
Pochten nicht bey Ihrem Reitz der Kehle,
Wilde Herzen zärtlicher? —
Goß ſie nicht aus Mozarts Meiſterſtück
Frohe Hoffnung in des Jünglings Seele,
Der gerührt an ſeines Mädgens Bruſt,
Wünſcht zu theilen jenes große Glück,
Das die Herzen inniger
Gleich Belmonten bind't mit Freud und Luſt?

Johann Christian Lorenz, *An Madam Beck als Konstanze in der Entführung aus dem Serail* (extract)
*Nicht zu wenig, Nicht zu viel*, Sat, 5 Mar 1791
(ÖNB, Theaterbibliothek, 625036-B; photo by Michael Lorenz)

(This poem and its reference to "Mozarts Meisterstück" is mentioned in *Dokumente*, 339, but the poem itself is not given.)

Without additional evidence we cannot know which of Konstanze's arias Beck sang for Schröder in Mannheim on 10 May 1791, but given her evident skill in eliciting tears, it is attractive to think it might have been "Ach ich liebte, war so glücklich."

**Schröder's Tour after Mannheim**

Schröder left Mannheim the following day, 11 May, along with Iffland and Heinrich Beck. Together they saw a performance of *Der Baum der Diana* in Heidelberg, given by the company of Johann Appelt. Schröder then continued on his journey, passing through Ulm on 13 May and reaching Munich on 14 May, where he remained for three days. He saw a performance of *Doktor und Apotheker* in Linz on 19 May, and arrived in Vienna the following evening. On 23 May he attended a performance of *Oberon* at Schikaneder's Theater auf der Wieden, although he left after the second act. He found something to criticize in the performances of all cast members except Franz Xaver Gerl in the role of the Oracle ("sehr brav"); Gerl went on to create the role of Sarastro in the premiere of *Die Zauberflöte* just a little over four months later. Also of interest are Schröder's comments on four other singers in *Oberon* who later appeared in the premiere of *Die Zauberflöte*: Josepha Hofer, Mozart's sister-in-law, who sang the role of Queen of the Night;

Benedikt Schack, who sang Tamino; Anna Gottlieb, who sang Pamina; and Mademoiselle Klöpfer, who sang the Erste Dame.

*[85]*

Am 23sten Mai. *[...]*
Bei Schikaneder auf der Wieden: Obe=
ron. Oberon, Madam Hofer, ehemals Weber. Eine
sehr unangenehme Sängerin, hat nicht Höhe genug zu
dieser Rolle, und erquiekt sie. Dabei reißt sie den
Mund auf, wie Stephanie der Aeltere. *[...]*
*[...]* Hüon, Schack, ein braver Tenorist, aber
mit Oesterreichischer Mundart und Vorstadtsdeclamation.
Doch ist er mir im Ganzen lieber als Pondera. *[...]*
*[...]* Amanda, die jüngere Gottlieb, nicht
übel im Spiel und Gesang, nur ist das Händespiel et=

*[86]*

was hölzern. *[...]*
Fatime, Demoiselle Klöpfer. Gesang erträglich,
Händespiel erbärmlich. Orakel, Gerl, sehr brav. Als
Almansor hab' ich ihn und die Uebrigen nicht gesehn,
weil ich nach dem zweiten Aufzug wegging.
[Meyer 1819, ii/1:85–86]

*[85]*

On 23 May. *[...]*
At Schikaneder's auf der Wieden:
*Oberon*. Oberon, Madame Hofer, formerly Weber.
A very unpleasant singer, who does not have the
high range for this role, and squeaks it. In doing so
she opens her mouth wide, like Stephanie Senior. *[...]*
*[...]* Hüon, Schack, a good tenor, but
with Austrian dialect and suburban declamation.
Even so, on the whole I prefer him to Pondera. *[...]*
*[...]* Amanda, the younger Gottlieb,
not bad in singing, only her hand gestures are

*[86]*

somewhat wooden. *[...]*
Fatime, Demoiselle Klöpfer. Singing
bearable, hand gestures pitiful. Oracle, Gerl, very good.

I didn't see him as Almansor or the others because
I left after the second act.

("Stephanie der Aeltere" was Christian Gottlieb Stephanie, from the company of the court theater in Vienna. "Pondera" was tenor Bartolomäus Bondra, whom Schröder had heard in the role of Eduard in *Das Sonnenfest der Braminen* at the Theater in der Leopoldstadt two days earlier. Gerl played a dual role in *Oberon* as the Oracle and Almansor.) Schröder was sufficiently impressed by the private audition of another member of Schikaneder's company, Jacob Herzfeld to engage him for the Hamburg theater (on Herzfeld, see our entry for 19 Feb 1792)

Schröder attempted to leave Vienna on 28 May, but his coach broke down (Meyer 1819, ii/1:89). He was finally able to depart on 30 May, arriving in Prague on 1 Jun, leaving 2 days later. He arrived in Berlin on 6 Jun, and the following evening, heard the tenor Joseph Karl Ambrosch, formerly a member of Schröder's company in Hamburg, sing the role of Orpheus in Dittersdorf's *Die Liebe im Narrenhaus* (Meyer 1819, ii/1:93; on Ambrosch, see our entries for 25 Aug 1785 and 18 Jun 1787). Schröder departed Berlin on 11 Jun, and arrived back in Hamburg three days later.

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*Notes* ( ⇧ )

In addition to the primary sources on Josepha Beck cited above, the most useful secondary sources for this commentary have been Kutsch & Riemens (2003, 305) and the references and discussion in Emde (2004, 111 and 276, notes 72–74).

Schröder's unflattering assessment of Josepha Hofer ("Eine sehr unangenehme Sängerin") is included in the fourth volume of the first edition of Jahn's Mozart biography (Jahn 1859, iv:646). Schröder's other comments in that passage on Schikaneder's singers have occasionally appeared in the secondary literature on *Die Zauberflöte.*

The issue of *Nicht zu wenig, Nicht zu viel* directly preceding the one containing the poem transcribed above begins with another appreciation of Josepha Beck, signed "K*", much of it in rhyme, with irregular meter (26 Feb 1791, 65–67). It begins:

Freund!
Zuerst ein Wort von Madame Beck, Sängerinn
des Mannheimer National=Theaters, einer Sän=
gerinn, deren Sie wenige finden werden,
Mit einer Silberstimme, wie man
Sie in Elysium nicht schöner hören kann.

Friend!
First a word on Madame Beck, singer in
the Mannheim Nationaltheater, a singer

> the like of which you will seldom find,
> With a silver voice more beautifulthan any you can hear in Elysium.

The poem goes on to imagine Zeus making an incognito trip to Mannheim to hear her sing in an unspecified opera by Dittersdorf, which the writer refers to as "Dittersdorfs Meisterstück."

Iffland writes in his memoir that he had performed in Lübeck in Schröder's presence in 1785:

> In eben diesem Jahre 1785 machte ich
> eine Reise nach Lübeck und Hamburg. Ich
> spielte in Lübeck, auf Herrn Schröders Ein=
> ladung, in seiner Gegenwart, aber eben deß=
> halb nicht minder mittelmäßig, als einst in
> Manheim.
> [Iffland 1798, 121]

> In this same year, 1785, I made a trip
> to Lübeck and Hamburg. I acted in
> Lübeck at Herr Schröder's invitation, and in
> his presence, but just for that reason I was
> not any less mediocre than the time inMannheim.

This would likely have been the episode in Lübeck that Schröder alludes to in his assessment of Iffland's acting as "Kalt, eintönig, gedehnt, ohne Leben." After returning to Hamburg at the end of his four-season residency in Vienna early in 1785, Schröder had formed his own theater company, which he intended to install in the Hamburg theater in 1786. Schröder's new company performed in Lübeck from 22 Aug to 7 Oct 1785; according to Meyer, Iffland visited Lübeck in September, and appeared as a guest in three roles with the company: Vater Ruhberg in his own play *Verbrechen aus Ehrsucht* on 12 Sep; Graf Wodmar in Gemmingen's *Der deutsche Hausvater* on 13 Sep; and Pastor Seebach in his own *Die Jäger* on 15 Sep (Meyer 1819, ii/1:3–5). According to Meyer, he was not a success:

> Sein Spiel erhielt damals den Beifall nicht, den es in
> späteren Jahren gefunden. Er schrieb das einer Befan=
> genheit zu, von der er sich in Schröders Gegenwart nie
> befreien können.

> His acting at that time did not receive the approval that
> it found in later years. He attributed this to a diffidence
> from which he could never free himself in Schröder'spresence.

It was probably this same diffidence in Schröder's presence on 5 May 1791 that led to Schröder's criticism of Iffland's acting in Mannheim.

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