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A piano sonata by Mozart on a concert in Philadelphia (14 Dec 1786)

Dexter Edge

The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser **(Philadelphia), Wed, 13 Dec 1786**

[3]

CITY CONCERT.

To-Morrow Evening, the 14th Inst.
At the *City-Tavern*—Will be Performed the *Fifth Concert*.

P L A N.

A C T I.

Overture	Vanhall
Song	Reinagle.
Solo violoncello	Tilliere

A C T II.

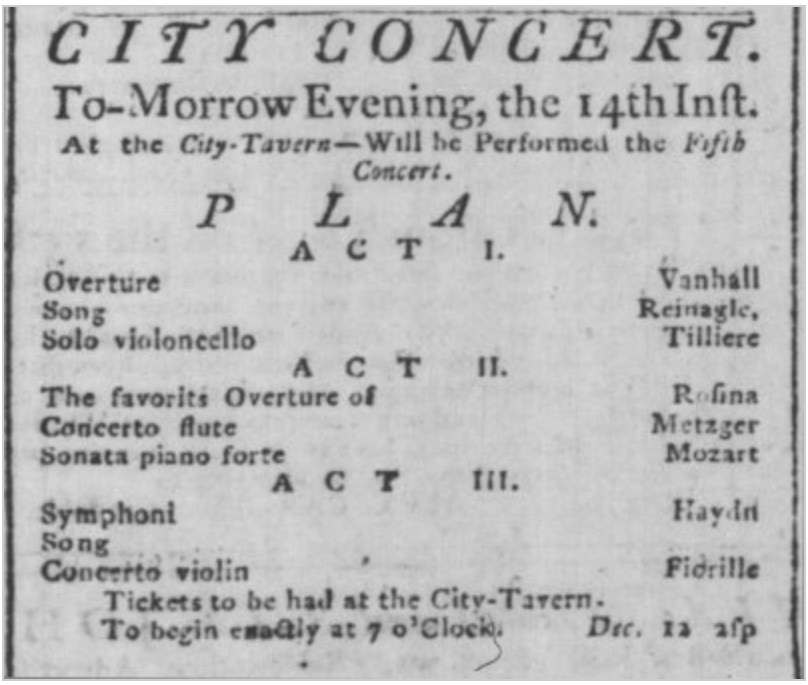
The favorits Overture of	Rosina
Concerto flute	Metzger
Sonata piano forte	Mozart

A C T III.

Symphoni [*sic*]	Haydn
Song	
Concerto violin	Fiorillo

Tickets to be had at the City-Tavern.
To begin exactly at 7 o’clock. *Dec*. 12 2sp

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Song	
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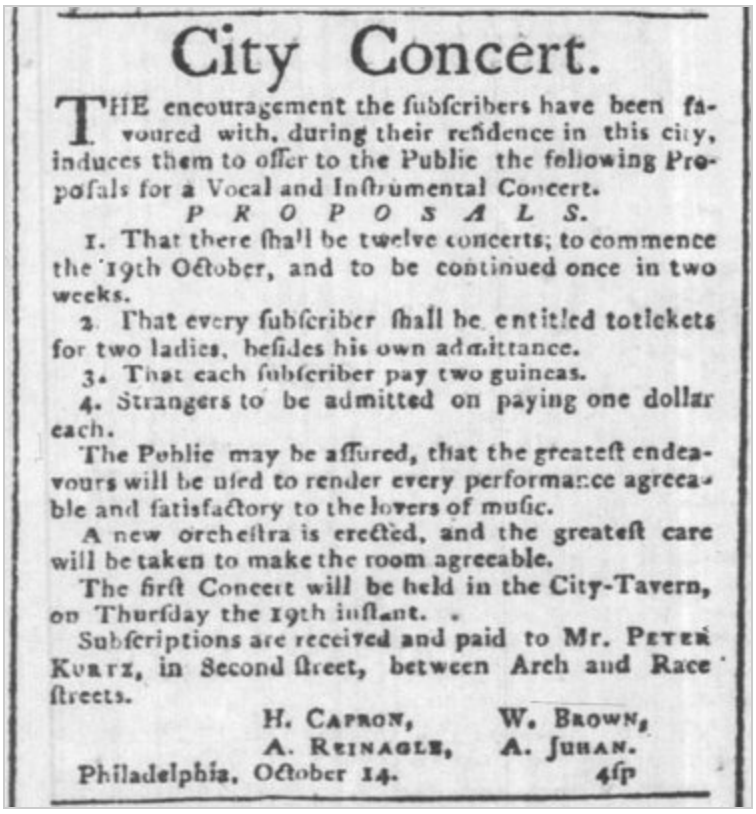
Tickets to be had at the City-Tavern.

To begin exactly at 7 o'Clock. *Dec.* 12 2sp

Commentary

The two earliest known performances of works by Mozart in the United States took place while he was still alive: a piano sonata at a concert in Philadelphia on 14 Dec 1786, probably performed by Alexander Reinagle; and a "Duett" for piano and violin at a concert in New York City on 6 Oct 1789, again probably with Reinagle at the keyboard. Both performances have been known since Oscar Sonneck's *Early Concert-Life in America* (1907a) and have been mentioned fairly often in the literature since then, but neither is included in *Dokumente* or its supplements. The performance in Philadelphia is discussed here and the performance in New York in our entry for 6 Oct 1789.

The piano sonata by Mozart was the third and last item in the second "act" of the fifth concert in a subscription series called the "City Concerts," and took place on Thu, 14 Dec 1786 in City Tavern in Philadelphia. The City Concerts were first organized by John Bentley and others in the season 1783–84, when they were held in the Lodge Alley Assembly Room (Potter 2011, 32). Following a second season in 1784–85, the enterprise seems to have foundered because of dissension among the organizers, and no City Concerts were held in 1785–86. But the series was revived in 1786–87 as a joint production of pianist Alexander Reinagle (recently arrived from Britain), cellist Henri Capron, flutist William Brown, and violinist Alexander Juhan. The series, now in City Tavern, was announced in the *Pennsylvania Packet* on 16 Oct 1786.



City Concert.

THE encouragement the ſubſcribers have been favoured with, during their reſidence in this city, induces them to offer to the Public the following Propoſals for a Vocal and Inſtrumental Concert.

P R O P O S A L S.

1. That there ſhall be twelve concerts; to commence the 19th October, and to be continued once in two weeks.

2. That every ſubſcriber ſhall be entitled to tickets for two ladies, beſides his own admittance.

3. That each ſubſcriber pay two guineas.

4. Strangers to be admitted on paying one dollar each.

The Public may be aſſured, that the greateſt endeavours will be uſed to render every performance agreeable and ſatisfactory to the lovers of muſic.

A new orcheſtra is erected, and the greateſt care will be taken to make the room agreeable.

The firſt Concert will be held in the City-Tavern, on Thurſday the 19th inſtant.

Subſcriptions are received and paid to Mr. PETER KUARZ, in Second ſtreet, between Arch and Race ſtreets.

H. CAPRON, W. BROWN,
A. REINAGLE, A. JUHAN.

Philadelphia, October 14. 4ſp

The Pennsylvania Packet, Mon, 16 Oct 1786
(newspapers.com)

City Concert.

The encouragement the subscribers have been favoured with, during their residence in this city, induces them to offer to the Public the following Proposals for a Vocal and Instrumental Concert.

PROPOSALS.

1. That there shall be twelve concerts, to commence the 19th October, and to be continued once in two weeks.

2. That every subscriber shall be entitled to tickets for two ladies, besides his own admittance.

3. That each subscriber pay two guineas.

4. Strangers to be admitted on paying one dollar each.

The Public may be assured, that the greatest endeavours will be used to render every performance agreeable and satisfactory to the lovers of music.

A new orchestra is erected, and the greatest care will be taken to make the room agreeable.

The first Concert will be held in the City-Tavern, on Thursday the 19th instant.

Subscriptions are received and paid to Mr. PETER KURTZ, in Second street, between Arch and Race streets.

H. CAPRON, W. BROWN,
A. REINAGLE, A. JUHAN.

Philadelphia, October 14. 4sp

The concerts took place fortnightly on Thursdays, beginning on 19 Oct 1786 and ending on 22Mar 1787. A subscription cost 2British guineas. At the time, a guinea was worth nearly 5 dollars; thus for a bit less than 10dollars a subscriber received 36 tickets, 12 for himself, and 12 for each of two female companions (Potter 2011, 39). This contrasts sharply with the price for "strangers" (non-subscribers), who were obliged to pay one dollar for a single ticket, a pricing strategy designed to exclude the socially undesirable.

Philadelphia's City Tavern, on Second Street south of Walnut, opened on 14 Feb 1774, its building having been financed by a subscription among prominent men in the community. (On the history of City Tavern as a location for music and dancing, see principally Murray 1994.)



City Tavern (left) and Bank of Pennsylvania, Birch's *Views of Philadelphia*, 1800
(Wikimedia Commons)

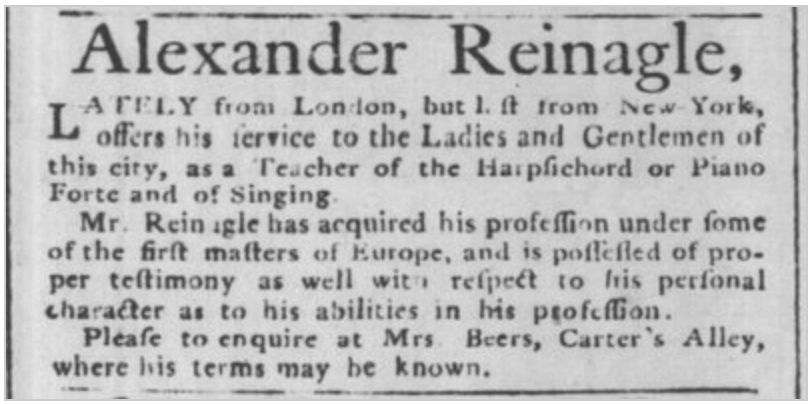
Concerts were held in the "Long Room," which stretched across the full width of the second floor and measured 48 x 21 feet, thus about 1000 square feet, with the possibility of extra space for overflow crowds in smaller rooms at the back of the building. The "new orchestra" mentioned in the advertisement was a moveable raised platform that could be installed when needed at one end of the room (Murray 1994, 17); the construction of fixed stages had been made subject to penalty by act of the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1779, in an (ultimately vain) attempt to discourage theater, considered morally suspect (Potter 2011, 30).

The history of City Tavern is closely intertwined with the early history of the United States. (There are over 170 references to City Tavern in the documents and commentaries at *Founders Online*.) The first commemoration of the Declaration of Independence was celebrated there on 4 Jul 1777. On 6 Aug 1778 an entertainment was held in City Tavern for Conrad Alexandre Gérard de Rayvenal, French minister to the United States, who had signed the first treaties recognizing the new nation (Murray 1994, 12); Gérard later became the "prétur royal" of Strasbourg, where he was honored at the end of the first performance in that city of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* on 24 Jan 1783 (see our entry for that date). City Tavern was the site of celebratory dinners at the close of both the First Continental Congress and the Constitutional

Convention (Karsch, "City Tavern"). Many luminaries in the early history of the United States lodged at City Tavern, including George Washington and John Adams. Washington attended Reinagle's benefit concert in City Tavern on 12 Jun 1787 (he later engaged Reinagle as music teacher for his step-granddaughter Nelly Custis), and on 15 Sep 1787, the First Troop of Cavalry of the City of Pennsylvania held an event in City Tavern honoring Washington; expenses for the event included payments to 16 musicians (Potter 2011, 22). The original City Tavern was demolished in the 1850s, but a carefully researched reconstruction was built in the 1970s, and remains open today at 138 South 2nd Street (see the City Tavern website).

A motivating force behind the revival of the City Concerts in 1786—as well as the likely performer of the Mozart sonata—was Alexander Reinagle (1756–1809; on Reinagle, see Krauss 1986). Reinagle's father Joseph is said to have been born near Vienna; the name was probably originally "Reinagl" or "Reinagel." Joseph, apparently a trumpeter in the imperial army, emigrated to Scotland, where he married Annie Laurie. By 1749 the couple were living in England; Alexander was baptized in Portsmouth on 23 Apr 1756, just 87 days after Mozart's birth. By 1760 or 1761, Joseph was back in Edinburgh, where he became a paid musician for the Edinburgh music society. All of his children were artistic, and all three boys became musicians. Alexander's brother Joseph Jr. was a cellist and violinist, and his brother Hugh, perhaps the most talented of the three, an outstanding cellist; Hugh died at the age of 20 on 19 Mar 1785 in Portugal, where he had gone (accompanied by Alexander) in an attempt to improve his health.

Alexander was principally a keyboardist, making his first known public appearance in 1770. On a trip to the continent, he is said to have been profoundly influenced by hearing C. P. E. Bach improvise; two letters from Bach to Alexander are known (Sonneck 1907b). From 1778 to 1782, Reinagle was in Glasgow, where he taught and managed concerts, the latter experience preparing him for his work as a concert organizer in the United States. After Hugh's death, Alexander returned briefly to Britain, but soon emigrated to America, arriving in New York City on 10 Jun 1786. He gave a concert in that city on 20 Jul 1786 (which included an unidentified piano sonata as well as three numbers from *Messiah*), and advertised himself as a teacher. But his reception in New York was evidently not what he had hoped, and he soon moved to Philadelphia. On 8 Sep 1786 he advertised his availability in that city "as a Teacher of the Harpsichord or Piano Forte and of Singing."



Alexander Reinagle,

LATELY from London, but last from New-York, offers his service to the Ladies and Gentlemen of this city, as a Teacher of the Harpsichord or Piano Forte and of Singing.

Mr. Reinagle has acquired his profession under some of the first masters of Europe, and is possessed of proper testimony as well with respect to his personal character as to his abilities in his profession.

Please to enquire at Mrs. Beers, Carter's Alley, where his terms may be known.

The Pennsylvania Packet, Fri, 8 Sep 1786
(newspapers.com)

On 21 Sep he performed at a benefit concert given by cellist Henri Capron in City Tavern, and he held a benefit concert of his own in that same location on 12 Oct.



CONCERT,

At the City Tavern, on Thursday the 12th Oct. will be performed, Mr. Reinagle's *Concert of Music.*

ACT 1st,
Overture, of Haydon
Song, Mr. Reinagle
Concerto Violoncello, Mr. Capron

ACT 2d,
Sonata Piano Forte, Mr. Reinagle
Concerto Flute, Mr. Brown
Concerto, of Correlli

ACT 3d,
Sonata Piano Forte, Mr. Reinagle
Concerto Violin, Mr. Juhan
Overture of Haydon

Trio and Glee.

To begin exactly at 7 o'clock. Tickets at one dollar each, to be had of the printers, at Mr. Peter Kurtz, Second street, and Mr. Reinagle, Carter's Alley, Second street.

The Pennsylvania Packet, Mon, 9 Oct 1786
(newspapers.com)

At that concert Reinagle performed a "Song" and two unidentified piano sonatas. All three of his soon-to-be collaborators in the revival the City Concerts, Henri Capron, William Brown, and Alexander Juhan, performed concertos. Reinagle's benefit concert was divided into three "acts," a novel format for Philadelphia that Reinagle imported from Scotland and was maintained in the City Concerts.

Reinagle was almost certainly the performer of the Mozart sonata at the City Concert on 14 Dec 1786. Each of the twelve concerts in the series included a work with piano: eight solo sonatas, two items for piano and violin (a sonata and a "Duetto"), and two piano concertos. The programs for the City Concerts almost always give only one name per program item, and it is sometimes

unclear whether it is the composer or the performer. The composer alone is listed for four of the solo piano sonatas in the series (Mozart, Haydn twice, and Prati) and Reinagle's name is listed alone for three others; the sonata performed at the first concert in the series on 19 Oct is the only one to carry two names: "Haydn and Reinagle." (All programs are listed in Sonneck 1907a, 81–84; the issues of *The Pennsylvania Packet* with the concerts programs are now also available online at newspapers.com.) Only Reinagle's name is given with the items for piano and violin (the violinist was, however, almost certainly Juhan). For the two piano concertos, only the composer is named: "Bach" (8 Mar 1787) and Schroeter (22 Mar 1787). Reinagle was himself a composer, and it is sometimes suggested that when only his name is listed, he probably performed one of his own works. This is plausible, but remains speculative. In any case, since no other pianist is listed on any program of the City Concerts for the season 1786–87, Reinagle was almost certainly the pianist on all of them, including the performance of the Mozart sonata.

It is unknown which Mozart sonata Reinagle performed on 14 Dec 1786. However, it is tempting to think that he would have highlighted keyboard music that he had just brought with him from Britain, and would have been new to his Philadelphia audience.

By mid 1786 when Reinagle emigrated, nine Mozart sonatas for solo keyboard were available in print. The sonatas K. 309, K. 310, and K. 311 had first been published by Heina in Paris in 1781, and a *Nachdruck* of this edition, published by Götz in Mannheim, was reviewed in at least two English journals in 1784: *The European Magazine* (*Neue Folge*, 147–48) and the *Review of New Musical Publications*, *(Neue Folge*, 148). The set was also issued by Bland in London in 1786. So Reinagle could well have had these sonatas with him when he emigrated to the United States. Artaria in Vienna published the sonatas K. 330, K. 331, and K. 332 in 1784, so Reinagle might have gotten his hands on this set, given that music from the continent was regularly imported to London. Also in 1784, Torricella in Vienna published the solo sonatas K. 284 and K. 333, together with the sonata for violin and piano, K. 454. These sonatas were then published by Schott in 1785, and Longman & Broderip in London in 1786. Another potential if perhaps less likely contender for Reginagle's performance on 14 Dec 1786 is Artaria's Dec 1785 edition of Mozart's Fantasy and Sonata in C minor, K. 475 and K. 457.

The other items on the program for 14 Dec 1786 can be quickly summarized:

Overture, Vanhall

> Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739–1813), probably a symphony. Vanhal may have written two operas but these are lost, so an actual overture is less likely; but he was a prolific composer of symphonies.

Song, Reinagle

> Reinagle was almost certainly the performer, but he may also have been the composer. The unidentified "Song" in Act III of the concert might also have been by Reinagle, and it is likely to have been performed by him, as no other singer is listed on the program.

Solo violoncello, "Tilliere"

The composer is French cellist and teacher Joseph Bonaventure Tillière (before 1750–after 1790), author of a celebrated *Méthode de violoncelle* (Cyr & Walden 2001; Cotte 2006). All of Tillière's works are for one or two cellos. Those for solo cello published by 1786 include *Airs et six sonates* (1760); *Six Sonates* (1770); *Six Sonates* for cello and bass (1782); and *Quatres Sonates*, op. 5 (no date). The performer at the concert in Philadelphia would certainly have been Henri Capron.

The favorite overture of Rosina

The overture to Rosina by William Shield (1748–1829), first performed at Covent Garden in 1782.



William Shield, Overture to *Rosina* (keyboard reduction) (IMSLP)

Concerto flute, Metzger

The composer is flutist Georg Metzger (also "Mezger," 1746–1794), a member of the Mannheim and subsequently the Munich court orchestras (Thomsen-Fürst 2004). Nine flute concertos by Metzger had been published by 1786, including a set of three published by Hummel as op. 4 in 1785. The soloist at the concert in Philadelphia would certainly have been William Brown.

"Symphoni," Haydn

> Almost certainly Joseph Haydn.

Concerto violin, Fiorillo

> The composer is violinist, violist, and mandolinist Federigo Fiorillo (1755–after 1823). It appears that just one set of three concertos by Fiorillo had been published by 1786, as op. 3 by Hummel (Finscher 2001). The soloist at the concert in Philadelphia would certainly have been Alexander Juhan.

The sonata performed on 14 Dec 1786 is the only work of Mozart's known to have been performed at any of the City Concerts in Philadelphia. But no composer is specified for many items in these series, so we cannot rule out the possibility that Mozart might have been the composer of one or more of these.

Reinagle and Brown organized a series of nine City Concerts in Philadelphia in the season 1787–88 (Sonneck 1907a, 84–87), but no series under that name was offered again until 1792–93, when the concerts were revived, now in Oeller's hotel instead of City Tavern.

Reinagle's performance in Philadelphia on 14 Dec 1786 is currently the earliest known performance of Mozart's music in the United States, but it should not be assumed that it was the first. The early distribution and performance of Mozart's music in the United States (and in the "New World" in general) has been little studied, and it is likely that discoveries remain to be made in this area.

Notes (⇧)

The advertisement for the City Concert on 14 Dec 1786 was also published in *The Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia) on the day of the concert (newspapers.com). The performance is cited in Nettl (1955, 78), Murray (1994, 21, with the incorrect year, "14 December 1788"), Biba (2006, 112), and Potter (2011, 40), among others.

Alexander Reinagle's advertisement in *The Pennsylvania Packet* on 8 Sep 1786 (transcribed above) is not in Krauss (1986). Sonneck (1907a, 80) cites the announcement for the City Concerts of 1786–87 from the *Pennsylvania Journal* of 18 Oct 1786, but the same announcement was printed two days earlier in the *Pennsylvania Packet* (see above and Krauss, 438).

Potter (2011, 35) has Alexander Reinagle's father Joseph as being of "Hungarian" descent, but gives no grounds.

We wish to thank Christopher J. Salmon for sharing the results of his research on the editions of Mozart's solo keyboard sonatas up to and including 1786, and for clarifying the relative values of the guinea and dollar at that time. We are also grateful to Steven Whiting for his assistance with the research for this entry.

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Author: Dexter Edge

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Categories: Reception

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