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The premiere of *Die Hochzeit des Figaro* in Bonn (14 Nov 1789)

Dexter Edge and Steven M. Whiting

Heinrich August Ottokar Reichard, *Theater=Kalender, auf das Jahr 1791*. Gotha: Carl Wilhelm Ettinger

[197]

Bonn.

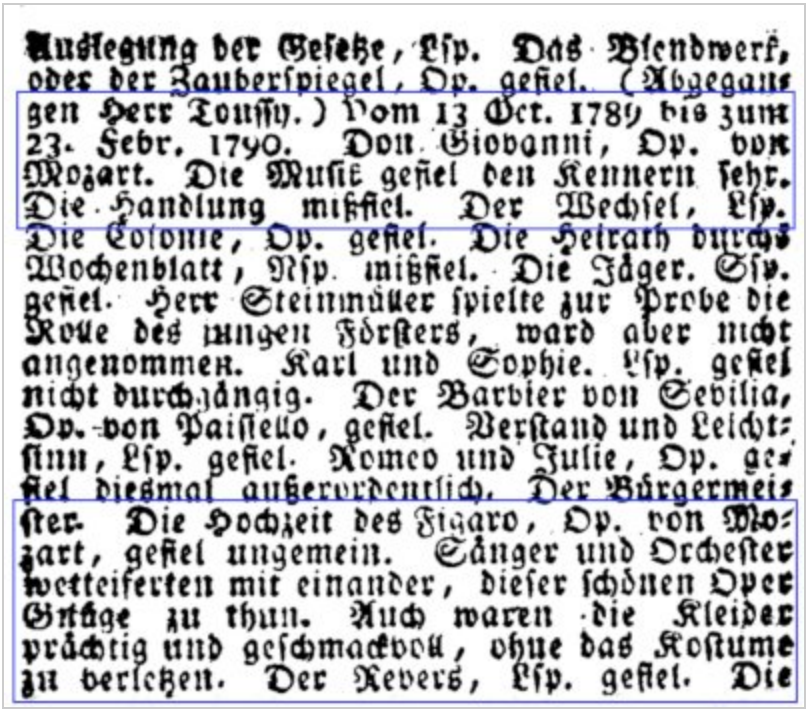
[...]

[199]
[...]

Vom 13 Oct. 1789 bis zum 23. Febr. 1790. Don Giovanni, Op. von Mozart. Die Musik gefiel den Kennern sehr. Die Handlung mißfiel. *[...]*

Die Hochzeit des Figaro. Op. von Mo= zart, gefiel ungemein. Sänger und Orchester wetteiferten mit einander, dieser schönen Oper Gnüge zu thun. Auch waren die Kleider prächtig und geschmackvoll, ohne das Kostume zu verletzen. *[...]*

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Auslegung der Gesetze, Lsp. Das Blendwerk, oder der Zauberspiegel, Op. gefiel. (Abgegangen Herr Toussy.) Vom 13 Oct. 1789 bis zum 23. Febr. 1790. Don Giovanni, Op. von Mozart. Die Musik gefiel den Kennern sehr. Die Handlung mißfiel. Der Wechsel, Lsp. Die Colonie, Op. gefiel. Die Heirath durchs Wochenblatt, Nsp. mißfiel. Die Jäger. Sp. gefiel. Herr Steinmüller spielte zur Probe die Rolle des jungen Försters, ward aber nicht angenommen. Karl und Sophie. Lsp. gefiel nicht durchgängig. Der Barbier von Sevilia, Op. von Paisiello, gefiel. Verstand und Leichtsinn, Lsp. gefiel. Romeo und Julie, Op. gefiel diesmal außerordentlich. Der Bürgermeister. Die Hochzeit des Figaro, Op. von Mozart, gefiel ungemein. Sänger und Orchester wetteiferten mit einander, dieser schönen Oper Gnüge zu thun. Auch waren die Kleider prächtig und geschmackvoll, ohne das Kostume zu verletzen. Der Revers, Lsp. gefiel. Die

[translation:]

[...]

From 13 Oct 1789 to 23 Feb 1790. *Don Giovanni*, opera by Mozart. The music pleased the connoisseurs very much. The plot displeased. *[...]*

Die Hochzeit des Figaro. Opera by Mozart, pleased tremendously. Singers and orchestra competed with each other to do justice to this beautiful opera. The costumes were also magnificent and tasteful, without departing from custom. *[...]*

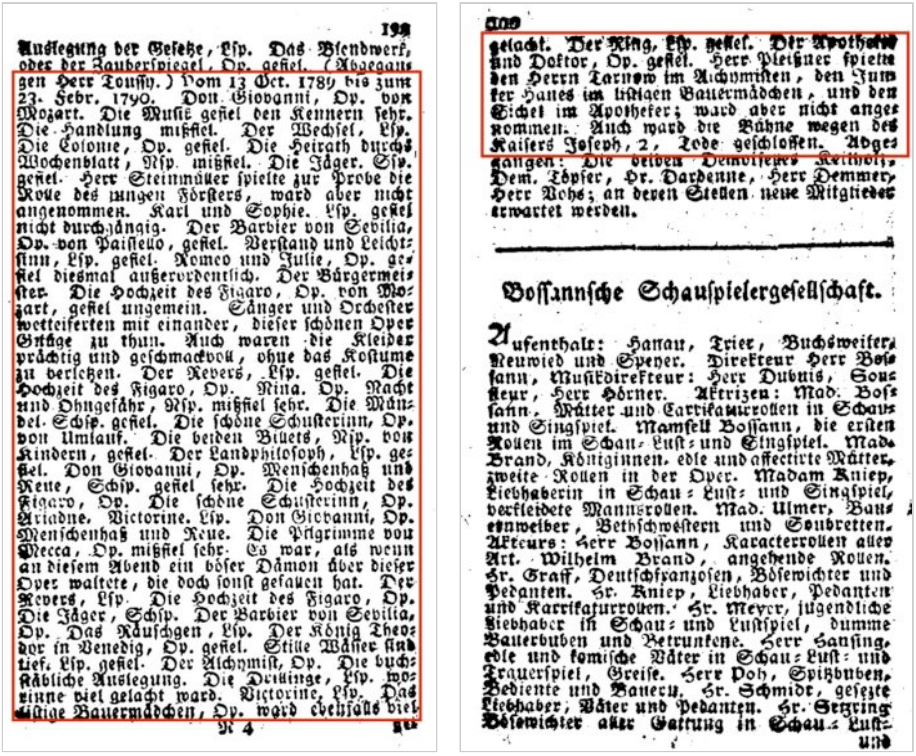
Commentary

These short evaluations of the Bonn premieres of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro*—both given in German adaptations—appear in Reichard's *Theater-Kalende*r for 1791. The premieres took place in the palace theater of the Elector and Archbishop of Cologne, Archduke Maximilian Franz, youngest brother of Emperor Joseph II. Partial transcriptions of the evaluations are given in *Dokumente* (338), omitting the words in blue above. Deutsch provides little context, writing only that the Bonn premiere of *Figaro* took place "[u]m Neujahr 1790" (around New Year's;

Dokumente, 316); he does not attempt to give a precise date. (On the Bonn premiere of *Don Giovanni*, see our entry for 13 Oct 1789.)

However, it is possible to determine the date of the premiere of *Figaro* with near certainty. Upon assuming the post of Elector in 1784, Max Franz had closed the court theater and dismissed the company of Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Großmann (see our entry for 13 Oct 1789). The renovated theater reopened on 3 Jan 1789 with a new resident company. The company initially gave a short season running until 23 May, just before Pentecost (31 May); Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was performed twice during that season. Following a summer break, the company offered a second season, from 13 Oct 1789 to 23 Feb 1790; this season was broken off earlier than planned when news arrived in Bonn of the death on 20 Feb of Joseph II in Vienna. The boundary dates for both seasons are documented in the *Theater-Kalender* for 1791 (198–200).

The *Theater-Kalender* also lists the complete repertory of the Bonn theater for both short seasons, repeating titles for repeat performances. The list gives no dates apart from those for the beginning and end of the seasons, but the titles appear to be in chronological order (*ThK* 1791, 198–200). We also know that the plan for the second season was to give performances on Tuesdays and Saturdays (see the review of the Bonn premiere of *Don Giovanni* on 13 Oct 1789). Knowing the planned days of performance and having a chronological list of all titles performed, it is possible to reconstruct the performance calendar with a high degree of confidence.



Auslegung der Gesetze, Lsp. Das Blendwerk, oder der Zauberspiegel, Op. gefiel. (Abgegangen Herr Toussy.) Vom 13 Oct. 1789 bis zum 23. Febr. 1790. Don Giovanni, Op. von Mozart. Die Musik gefiel den Kennern sehr. Die Handlung mißfiel. Der Wechsel, Lsp. Die Colonie, Op. gefiel. Die Heirath durchs Wochenblatt, Nsp. mißfiel. Die Jäger. Sfp. gefiel. Herr Steinmüller spielte zur Probe die Rolle des jungen Försters, ward aber nicht angenommen. Karl und Sophie. Lsp. gefiel nicht durchgängig. Der Barbier von Sevilia, Op. von Paisiello, gefiel. Verstand und Leichtsinn, Lsp. gefiel. Romeo und Julie, Op. gefiel diesmal außerordentlich. Der Bürgermeister. Die Hochzeit des Figaro, Op. von Mozart, gefiel ungemein. Sänger und Orchester wetteiferten mit einander, dieser schönen Oper Gnüge zu thun. Auch waren die Kleider prächtig und geschmackvoll, ohne das Kostume zu verletzen. Der Revers, Lsp. gefiel. Die Hochzeit des Figaro, Op. Nina. Op. Nacht und Ohngefähr, Nsp. mißfiel sehr. Die Mündel. Schsp. gefiel. Die schöne Schusterinn, Op. von Umlauf. Die beiden Blaets, Nsp. von Kindern, gefiel. Der Landphilosoph, Lsp. gefiel. Don Giovanni, Op. Menschenhaß und Reue, Schsp. gefiel sehr. Die Hochzeit des Figaro, Op. Die schöne Schusterinn, Op. Ariadne. Victorine. Lsp. Don Giovanni, Op. Menschenhaß und Reue. Die Pilgrimme von Mecca, Op. mißfiel sehr. Es war, als wenn an diesem Abend ein böser Dämon über dieser Oper waltete, die doch sonst gefallen hat. Der Revers, Lsp. Die Hochzeit des Figaro, Op. Die Jäger, Schsp. Der Barbier von Sevilia, Op. Das Räuschgen, Lsp. Der König Theodor in Venedig, Op. gefiel. Stille Wasser sind tief. Lsp. gefiel. Der Alchymist, Op. Die buchstäbliche Auslegung. Die Drillinge, Lsp. worinne viel gelacht ward. Victorine, Lsp. Das lustige Bauermädchen, Op. ward ebenfalls viel gelacht. Der Ring, Lsp. gefiel. Der Apotheker und Doktor, Op. gefiel. Herr Pleißner spielte den Herrn Tarnow im Alchymisten, den Junker Hannes im lustigen Bauermädchen, und den Eichel im Apotheker; ward aber nicht angenommen. Auch ward die Bühne wegen des Kaisers Joseph, 2, Tode geschlossen. Abgegangen: Die beiden Demoiselles Keilholz, Dem. Töpfer, Hr. Dardenne, Herr Demmer, Herr Ochs; an deren Stellen neue Mitglieder erwartet werden.

Bossannsche Schauspielergesellschaft.

Aufenthalt: Hanau, Trier, Buchsweiler, Neuwied und Speyer. Direkteur Herr Bossann, Musikdirekteur: Herr Dubuis, Souffleur, Herr Hörner. Aktrizen: Mad. Bossann, Mütter und Carrikaturrollen in Schau- und Singspiel. Mamsell Bossann, die ersten Rollen im Schau-Lust- und Singspiel. Mad. Brand, Königinnen, edle und affectirte Mütter, zweite Rollen in der Oper. Madam Kniep, Liebhaberin in Schau-Lust- und Singspiel, verkleidete Mannsrollen. Mad. Ulmer, Bauernweiber, Bethschwestern und Soubretten. Akteurs: Herr Bossann, Karakterrollen aller Art. Wilhelm Brand, angehende Rollen. Hr. Graff, Deutschfranzosen, Bösewichter und Pedanten. Hr. Kniep, Liebhaber, Pedanten und Karrikaturrollen. Hr. Meyer, jugendliche Liebhaber in Schau- und Lustspiel, dumme Bauerbuben und Betrunkene. Herr Sanfing, edle und komische Väter in Schau-Lust- und Trauerspiel, Greise. Herr Poh, Spitzbuben, Bediente und Bauern. Hr. Schmidt, gesetzte Liebhaber, Väter und Pedanten. Hr. Setzring Bösewichter aller Gattung in Schau-Lust- und

Chronological list of the titles of works performed by the Nationaltheater in Bonn from 13 Oct 1789 to 23 Feb 1790 (*ThK* 1791, 199–200)

The list in the *Theater-Kalender* contains 42 titles for the period 13 Oct 1789 to 23Feb 1790; over that span there were 39μTuesdays and Saturdays. The theater would probably or certainly have been closed on three of those days: Tue, 1 Dec 1789 (after news had reached Bonn two days earlier of the death of Max Franz's sister, Archduchess Maria Anna); Tue, 8 Dec 1789, the feast of the Immaculate Conception; and Sat, 26 Dec 1789, St. Stephen's Day. This leaves 36 possible performance days. Six of the 42μtitles on the list in the *Theater-Kalender* are short works (mostly one act) that would have been combined with a longer main work as a double bill. This makes 36 performance events (6 double bills and 30 individual works) and 36 possible performance days, an exact match.

Reconstruction of the Calendar of Performances in the Electoral Court Theater in Bonn 13 Oct 1789 to 23 Feb 1790

Titles are given as they appear in the *Theater-Kalender* 1791, 199–200 (for uniform titles, authors, composers, and numbers of performances, see the second table below). Performances of Mozart's operas are given in blue; days on which the theater was presumably closed are in red. Genres for most works are specified in the *Theater-Kalender*; where they are not, the genre is given here in square brackets.

Reports in *Gazette de Bonn* (which covered events in the theater only sporadically) confirm four dates in this table; see the discussion below. A report on 29 Dec 1789 (shown in green) implies a departure from the sequence of Tuesdays and Saturdays; this performance was evidently on Mon, 28 Dec, and is discussed in more detail below.

Date	Day	No.	Title	Genre
1789				
13 Oct	Tue	1	*Don Giovanni*	Opera
17 Oct	Sat	2	*Der Wechsel*	Lustspiel
20 Oct	Tue	3	*Die Colonie*	Opera (2 acts)
			Die Heirath durchs Wochenblatt	Nachspiel (1 act)
24 Oct	Sat	4	*Die Jäger*	Schauspiel
27 Oct	Tue	5	*Karl und Sophie*	Lustspiel
31 Oct	Sat	6	*Der Barbier von Sevilla*	Opera
3 Nov	Tue	7	*Verstand und Leichtsinn*	Lustspiel
7 Nov	Sat	8	*Romeo und Julie*	Opera
10 Nov	Tue	9	*Der Bürgermeister*	[Lustspiel]
14 Nov	Sat	10	*Die Hochzeit des Figaro*	Opera
17 Nov	Tue	11	*Der Revers*	Lustspiel

Date	Day	No.	Title	Genre
21 Nov	Sat	12	*Die Hochzeit des Figaro*	Opera
24 Nov	Tue	13	*Nina*	Opera (1 long act)
			Nacht und Ohngefähr	Nachspiel (1 act)
28 Nov	Sat	14	*Die Mündel*	Schauspiel
1 Dec	Tue		Likely closed on account of the death of Archduchess Maria Anna	
5 Dec	Sat	15	*Die schöne Schusterinn*	Opera (2 acts)
			Die beiden Billets	Nachspiel (1 act, performed by children)
8 Dec	Tue		Immaculate Conception	
12 Dec	Sat	16	*Der Landphilosoph*	Lustspiel
15 Dec	Tue	17	*Don Giovanni*	Opera
19 Dec	Sat	18	*Menschenhaß und Reue*	Schauspiel
22 Dec	Tue	19	*Die Hochzeit des Figaro*	Opera
26 Dec	Sat		St. Stephen's Day	
28 Dec	Mon	20	*Die schöne Schusterinn*	Opera (2 acts)
			Ariadne	[Duodrama (1 act)]
1790				
2 Jan	Sat	21	*Victorine*	Lustspiel
5 Jan	Tue	22	*Don Giovanni*	Opera
9 Jan	Sat	23	*Menschenhaß und Reue*	Schauspiel
12 Jan	Tue	24	*Die Pilgrimme von Mecca*	Opera
16 Jan	Sat	25	*Der Revers*	Lustspiel
19 Jan	Tue	26	*Die Hochzeit des Figaro*	Opera
23 Jan	Sat	27	*Die Jäger*	Schauspiel
26 Jan	Tue	28	*Der Barbier von Sevilla*	Opera
30 Jan	Sat	29	*Das Räuschgen*	Lustspiel
2 Feb	Tue	30	*Der König Theodor in Venedig*	Opera
6 Feb	Sat	31	*Stille Wasser sind tief*	Lustspiel
			Der Alchymist	Opera (1 act)
9 Feb	Tue	32	*Die buchstäbliche Auslegung*	Lustspiel (1 act)
			Die Drillinge	Lustspiel (4 acts)
13 Feb	Sat	33	*Victorine*	Lustspiel
16 Feb	Tue	34	*Das listige Bauermädchen*	Opera
20 Feb	Sat	35	*Der Ring*	Lustspiel

Date	Day	No.	Title	Genre
23 Feb	Tue	36	*Der Apotheker und Doktor*	Opera

Three dates in the table are directly confirmed by reports in *Gazette de Bonn*. The premiere of *Don Giovanni* received an exceptionally positive review in the issue of 15 Oct 1789; the review verifies that the performance took place on Tue, 13 Oct (for the full text of the review and additional commentary, see our entry for that date). A report in the issue of Tue, 10 Nov 1789 notes that "le Bourguemaitre" (*Der Bürgermeister*) would be performed "aujourd'hui" (today), confirming that date; it goes on to say that Gotter and Benda's *Romeo und Julie* had been performed the previous "samedi" (Sat, 7 Nov), with Christiane Keilholz making a tremendous impression in the title role (for the full text of that review, see our entry for 6 & 13 Jun 1790). Confirmation that *Der Bürgermeister* was performed on 10 Nov is of particular importance for establishing the date of the *Figaro* premiere, because *Figaro* immediately follows *Der Bürgermeister* in the *Theater-Kalender*'s list of titles. Assuming that the next performance after *Der Bürgermeister* fell on Sat, 14 Nov, according to the usual schedule, the work performed on that day would have been *Die Hochzeit des Figaro*.

Two reports in *Gazette de Bonn* seem to suggest departures from the expected sequence of Tuesdays and Saturdays. The issue of Thu, 22 Oct 1789 includes a report from Bonn dated "le 20 Octobre" (a Tuesday) stating that "le mariage par une feuille périodique" (*Die Heirath durchs Wochenblatt*) had been given "hier" (yesterday), thus seeming to imply Mon, 19 Oct, rather than Tue, 20 Oct. However, on closer examination, the performance seems in fact to have taken place on 20 Oct, as per the usual schedule. The full report reads:

> DE BONN, *le 20 Octobre*.
> On a donné hier au théatre u[n]e pièce intitulé le mariage par une feuille périodique, comédie à tiroir où à scènes détachées dans le gout du Mercure galant. Le directeur Mr. Steiger, qui faisoit le rôle du soldat ivre a fait une très heureuse application à la prise de Belgrade, que la Gazette de Bonn avoit annoncée le matin même, cette saillie, amenée si à-propos a été fort goûtée du public, qui y a répondu par des applaudissemens redoublés.
> [*Gazette de Bonn*, no. clxix, Thu, 22 Oct 1789 (4)]

> FROM BONN, *20 October*.
> Yesterday a play was given in the theater entitled *Le mariage par une feuille périodique, comédie à tiroirs*, with detached scenes in the style of the *Mercure galant*. The director Monsieur Steiger, who played the role of the

> drunken soldier, made a very timely reference to the taking of Belgrade, which the *Gazette de Bonn* had announced that very morning; this quip, so appropriately added, was greatly enjoyed by the audience, who responded to it with redoubled applause.

The report on the "taking of Belgrade" (actually the taking of its suburbs on 30 Sep 1789) was reported in the issue of *Gazette de Bonn* on Tue, 20 Oct 1789; there was no issue on 19 Oct. Thus the performance in which Steiger made his interpolation must have taken place on 20 Oct, and is not an exception to the sequence of Tuesdays and Saturdays. In this case, then, the word "hier" in the report dated "20 Octobre" seems to have meant "this past day" rather than "yesterday."

The issue of *Gazette de Bonn* for Tue, 29 Dec 1789 reports that "*Arianne à Naxos*" (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) and "*souliers mordorés*" (*Die schöne Schusterinn*) had been performed "hier" (yesterday). In this case (unlike the previous one), the dateline of the report is the same as the date of the issue. Because it appears that the *Gazette* was generally issued in the morning, before any theatrical performances in the evening, it appears that the usual sequence of Tuesdays and Saturdays was indeed interrupted for some reason, and that these two works were performed on Mon, 28 Dec. The report in *Gazette de Bonn* does, however, confirm that the works appeared together as a double bill, as hypothesized in the table above.

In spite of this one discrepancy in the schedule for the second short season, there is no reason to doubt that the Bonn premiere of *Die Hochzeit des Figaro* took place on Sat, 14 Nov 1789. The opera was performed four times in all in Bonn that season; if our reconstruction is correct, then the other performances were on 21 Nov and 22 Dec 1789, and 19 Jan 1790. *Figaro* was the only work given four times over that span: *Don Giovanni* was performed three times (on 13 Oct and 12 Dec 1789, and 5 Jan 1790), and no other work was performed more than twice. The capsule evaluation of *Figaro* in the *Theater-Kalender* is also the longest and most positive for any work in either of the short seasons. The mixed evaluation of *Don Giovanni* ("Die Musik gefiel den Kennern sehr. Die Handlung mißfiel.") should be read in the context of the rave review in *Gazette de Bonn* (see our entry for 13 Oct 1789); that *Don Giovanni* was performed three times also suggests that it was well received.

Works performed in the Electoral Court Theater in Bonn
13 Oct 1789 to 23 Feb 1790

Works are given here by uniform title in alphabetical order. Of the 31 different works performed in the second short season, from 13 Oct 1789 until 23 Feb 1790, 21 were new productions by the Bonn company. Titles are linked to scans of contemporaneous playbooks and libretti (mostly not from Bonn or Cologne). The link for *Don Giovanni* leads to the Frankfurt songbook of 1789, which may not match the text performed in Bonn, although the versions were related (for details, see our entry for 13 Oct 1789). Evaluations in brackets are from the first short season (3 Jan to 23 May 1789). The right-hand column shows the number of performances during the season from 13 Oct 1789 to 23 Feb 1790.

Title	Author	Composer	Evaluation	#
Der Alchymist	Meissner	Schuster	[gefiel]	1
Ariadne auf Naxos	Brandes	Georg Benda	[gefiel]	1
Der Barbier von Sevilla	Petrosellini	Paisiello	gefiel	2
Die beiden Billets	Wall		gefiel	1
Die buchstäbliche Auslegung	Brömel		—	1
Der Bürgermeister	Brühl		[gefiel sehr]	1
Die Kolonie	Framery	Sacchini	gefiel	1
Doktor und Apotheker	Stephanie d. J.	Dittersdorf	gefiel	1
Die Drillinge	Bonin		worinne viel gelacht wird	1
Don Giovanni	Da Ponte (Neefe)	Mozart	Die Musik gefiel den Kenner sehr. Die Handlung mißfiel.	3
Die Heurath durch ein Wochenblatt	Schröder		mißfiel	1
Die Hochzeit des Figaro	Da Ponte (Vulpius)	Mozart	gefiel ungemein. Sänger und Orchester wetteiferten mit einander, dieser schönen Oper Gnüge zu thun. Auch waren die Kleider prächtig und geschmackvoll, ohne das Kostume zu verletzen.	4
Die Jäger	Iffland		gefiel. Herr Steinmüller spielte zur Probe die Rolle des jungen Försters, ward aber nicht angenommen.	2
Karl und Sophie	Bretzner		gefiel nicht durchgängig	1
Der König Theodor in Venedig	Casti	Paisiello	gefiel	1
Der Landphilosoph	Paul Weidmann		gefiel	1

Title	Author	Composer	Evaluation	#
Das listige Bauermädchen	Chiari	Paisiello	ward ebenfalls viel gelacht	1
Menschenhaß und Reue	Kotzebue		gefiel sehr	2
Die Mündel	Iffland		gefiel	1
Nacht und Ungefähr	Capacelli		mißfiel sehr	1
Nina	Marsollier	Dalayrac	[gefiel]	1
Die Pilgrimme von Mecca	Dancourt	Gluck	mißfiel sehr. Es war, als wenn an diesem Abend ein böser Dämon über dieser Oper waltete, die doch sonst gefallen hat.	1
Das Räuschgen	Bretzner		[gefiel]	1
Der Revers	Jünger		gefiel	2
Der Ring	Schröder		gefiel	1
Romeo und Julie	Gotter	Benda	gefiel diesmal außerordentlich	1
Die schöne Schusterin	Stephanie d. J.	Umlauf	—	2
Stille Wasser sind tief	Schröder		—	1
Verstand und Leichtsinn	Jünger		gefiel	1
Viktorine	Schröder		[gefiel sehr]	2
Der Wechsel	Jünger		—	1

Seven of the 42 performances of individual works during this season were operas by Mozart, either *Don Giovanni* or *Die Hochzeit des Figaro*. The frequency of performance indicates that both operas were popular with the Bonn audience. The preponderance of Mozart during the season (and taking into account the two performances of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in the previous season) may also reflect Max Franz's particular interest in the composer. (For more on Max Franz and Mozart, see our entries for 8 Oct 1782, 18 Dec 1791, and 23 Dec 1791.)

The evident popularity of *Figaro* in Bonn contrasts sharply with the opera's initial reception in Mannheim, where it was performed just once in 1790 (probably under Mozart's direction; see our entry for 24 Oct 1790), then not again until 29 Jun 1794, when it was again performed just once, followed by an even longer hiatus until 4 Jan 1801. We have suggested that the problem in Mannheim might have been the German adaptation of the libretto by Christian August Vulpius, whose translations of the sung texts in *Figaro* range from awkward to unsingable. Yet it seems likely that this same version was used in Bonn, where the opera was a hit: Vulpius's version was published in Cologne in 1789, the same year as the Bonn premiere (for further discussion and

facsimiles from the Cologne edition, see our entry for 24 Oct 1790). Another problem in Mannheim might have been the differences between the play and the opera. The Mannheim audience was well acquainted with Beaumarchais's *Le mariage de Figaro*, which had already been given 11 times in a German translation by the time of the premiere of Mozart's opera, and was very popular. In contrast, Beaumarchais's play had never been performed in Bonn, and much of the audience would have been experiencing the plot for the first time.

No known source documents the cast of the premiere production of *Figaro* in Bonn, but it is possible to make informed guesses based on our knowledge of the singers in the company, their voice types, and other roles they sang (for additional information on the singers in the Bonn company, see our entry for 13 Oct 1789):

- By the time of the premiere of *Figaro*, the Bonn company had two bass singers, Joseph Lux (1756–1818) and Johann Baptist Spitzeder (also Spitzeter, 1764–1842). One of these men would have sung Figaro in the Bonn production and the other Bartolo. Lux had sung Bartolo in the Frankfurt premiere of *Figaro* on 11 Oct 1788 (Mohr 1968, 94), so seems likely to have reprised the role in Bonn. Spitzeder (born on 24 Dec 1764 in Salzburg) was only 24 at the time of the Bonn premiere, and thus a more natural choice for Figaro than for Bartolo. On the other hand, Lux was especially known for his comic acting, and he probably sang Leporello in the Bonn production of *Don Giovanni*. It was not (and is not) uncommon for singers to appear as both Leporello and Figaro. So Lux should probably not be ruled out as Figaro in Bonn.
- Two sopranos in the Bonn company are known to have sung Susanna in productions elsewhere. Magdalena Willmann (1771–1801) had sung the role in the Frankfurt premiere of *Figaro* on 11 Oct 1788 (see our entry for that date, and Mohr 1968, 92–94), and Susanna is included on an undated list of Willmann's roles made around the time of her engagement by the Bonn company (Reisinger et al. 2018, 146–47). Because she knew the role already, she would have been an obvious choice for Susanna in Bonn. Willmann had been in Vienna with her father and siblings during the premiere run of *Le nozze di Figaro* in 1786, and would almost certainly have first experienced the opera there (for more on Magdalena, see our entry for 11 Oct 1788; her older sister Walburga may have been a student of Mozart; see our entry for 13 Jul 1791).

  Soprano Christiane Keilholz (1764–1820), like several other members of the new Bonn company, was a refugee from the collapsed company of Christian Wilhelm Klos, and she was a member of the Bonn company for both short seasons in 1789/1790, before joining the Nationaltheater in Mannheim. We know that Keilholz made a guest appearance as Susanna in Frankfurt on 25 Sep 1790 with the company of the Mainz Nationaltheater, and a month later she sang the role in the Mannheim premiere of *Figaro* on 24 Oct 1790, a performance that Mozart probably directed. We have no evidence that Christiane Keilholz sang Susanna *before* 25 Sep 1790, but she cannot be ruled out for the role Bonn. Even if she did not sing Susanna in that production, she would certainly have had the opportunity to become familiar with the opera and the role there. (On Christiane Keilholz, see our entry for 6 & 13 Jun 1790.)
- The role of the Countess in the Bonn production seems likely to have been taken by Veronika Bekenkam (Bekenkamp, b. 1754). Bekenkam had been with Großmann's company in Bonn, and she remained in the city after Großmann's company was dismissed in 1784. She is known to have performed the role of the Königin in *Lilla* (a German adaptation of Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara*) in Bonn in the season running from 27 Dec 1790 to 7 Mar 1791 (*ThK* 1792, 338). With two

younger sopranos in the Bonn company, Magdalena Willmann and Christiane Keilholz, vying for younger romantic roles like Susanna, Bekenkam seems the more likely choice for a noble and mature role like the Countess. However, we cannot entirely rule out Christiane Keilholz, as her repertoire generally tended toward serious and noble female parts rather than comic ones (Konstanze and Donna Anna became staples of her repertoire); her appearance as Susanna in Frankfurt and Mannheim was something of an exception for her. On the other hand, Keilholz is not known ever to have sung the Countess anywhere else.

- Count Almaviva in the Bonn *Figaro* was probably sung by Friedrich Müller (dates unknown) or Carl Demmer (1766–after 1824). Both were high baritones who sometimes took romantic tenor leads. Demmer is known later to have sung the Count in Weimar (see the poster for 24 Oct 1793), so we may tentatively suggest that he knew the role from having sung it already in the Bonn production.
- Cherubino in Bonn may have been sung by the soubrette Dorothea Keilholz († 1804), younger sister of Christiane. Dorothea went on to sing Cherubino in the Mannheim premiere of the *Figaro* just eleven months later (see our entry for 24 Oct 1790; for more on Dorothea Keilholz, see our entry for 6 & 13 Jun 1790). However, Christiane Brandt (1761–1826), wife of Christoph Brandt (a tenor in the Bonn ensemble), was also a soubrette and might also have sung the role.
- Suzanne Neefe, wife of Christian Gottlob Neefe, specialized in mother roles in both operas and plays, and she probably sang Marcellina in the Bonn production.
- The Bonn ensemble had two tenors at the time of the premiere of *Figaro*, Christoph Hermann Joseph Brandt (1747–1818) and Johann Jakob Dardenne (also Dardener, b. 1763 in Bonn). Brandt, who was his early 40s at the time of the premiere, seems a more natural fit than the much younger Dardenne for the roles of Basilio and Don Gusmann (Curzio) in the Bonn production of *Figaro*, which are likely to have been doubled by one singer.
- The role of Hannchen (Barbarina) in the Bonn production was probably taken by one of the children in the company. The roster for Bonn in the *Theater-Kalender* for 1791 lists three girls: Therese Brandt (1780–after 1821), and Neefe's daughters Luise (Louise, 1779–1846) and Felice (Felicitas, 1782–1808). All three girls were still very young at the time of the premiere. Luise Neefe is mentioned favorably for her performances in singspiel in subsequent seasons in Bonn, so she may be the most likely Hannchen in 1789, but this is just a guess.

In summary, our best guesses for the cast of *Figaro* in Bonn are:

Role	Performer
Figaro	Johann Baptist Spitzeder (or Joseph Lux)
Susanna	Magdalena Willmann (or Christiane Keilholz)
Count Almaviva	Carl Demmer or Friedrich Müller
Countess Almaviva	Veronika Bekenkam
Cherubino	Dorothea Keilholz (or Christiane Brandt)
Marcellina	Suzanne Neefe
Bartolo	Joseph Lux (or Johann Baptist Spitzeder)
Basilio/Curzio	Christoph Brandt
Barbarina	Luise Neefe?

Notes (⇧)

Several scholars have suggested that Neefe wrote the report on Bonn published in the *Theater-Kalender* for 1791; see for example Thayer (1917, i:251), Leux (1925, 94), and Woodfield (2012, 291n12). This is a plausible assumption, but unproven. Reisinger et al. (2018, 196) reproduce facsimiles of two out of the three pages from the Bonn repertoire list in the *Theater-Kalender*. They also transcribe the opera titles (but not the plays) in chronological order, noting the verified dates for *Don Giovanni* (13 Oct 1789), *Romeo und Julie* (7 Nov 1789), and the double bill of *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Die schöne Schusterin* (28 Dec 1789). However, they make no attempt to reconstruct the dates of the other performances.

The *Gazette de Bonn* was a French-language newspaper published in Bonn. It appeared for only one year, from 1 Jan 1789 until 31 Dec 1791.

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