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Intrigues against *Idomeneo* in Munich (1780–1781) (1787)

Dexter Edge

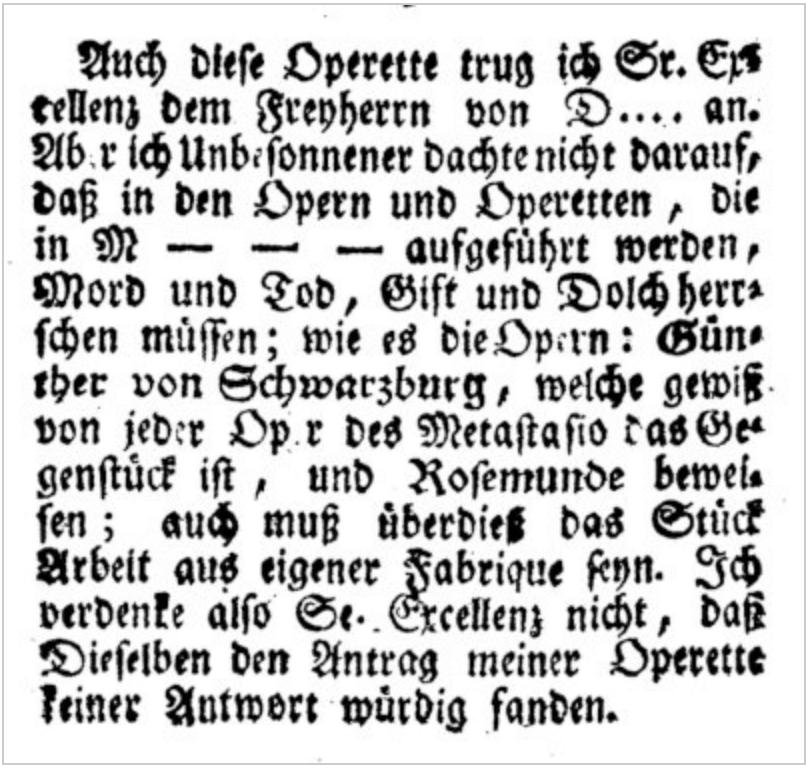
Maximilian Blumhofer, *Die Luftschiffer oder der Strafplanet der Erde: Ein komisch, satirisches original Singspiel in 3. Aufzügen von Max Blumhofer. Für das kaiserliche deutsche Hoftheater zu St. Petersburg bearbeitet.* Leipzig und Köln: J. A. Imhof, 1787

[From the Preface]

[6]

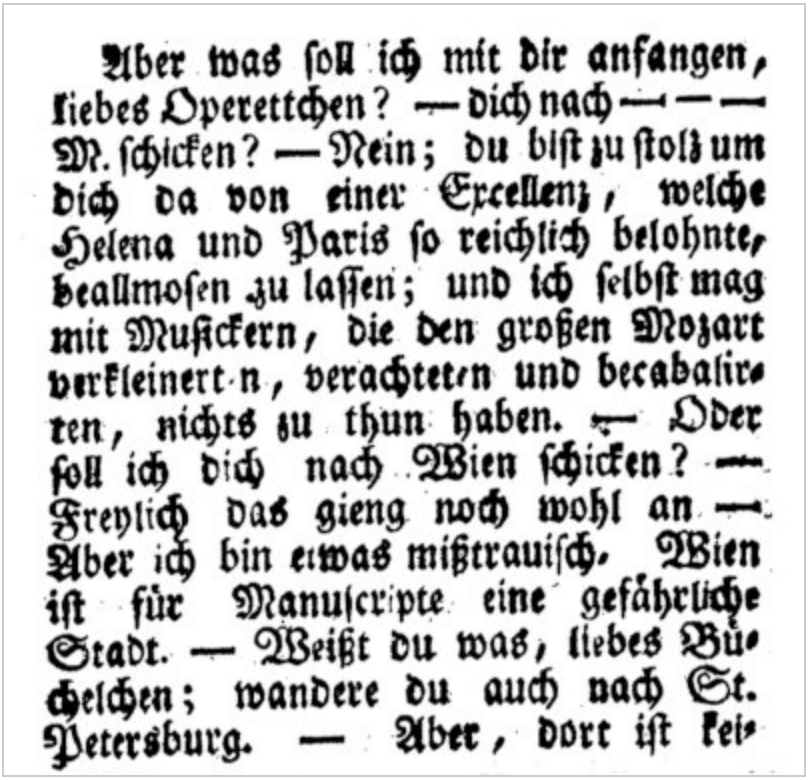
Auch diese Operette trug ich Sr. Ex=
cellenz dem Freyherrn von D . . . . an.
Aber ich Unbesonnener dachte nicht darauf,
daß in den Opern und Operetten, die
in M — — — aufgeführt werden,
Mord und Tod, Gift und Dolch herr=
schen müssen; wie es die Opern: Gün=
ther von Schwarzburg, welche gewiß
von jeder Op[e]r des Metastasio das Ge=
genstück ist, und Rosemunde bewei=
sen; auch muß überdieß das Stück
Arbeit aus eigener Fabrique seyn. Ich
verdenke also Se. Excellenz nicht, daß
Dieselben den Antrag meiner Operette
keiner Antwort würdig fanden.

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Auch dieſe Operette trug ich Sr. Ex-
cellenz dem Freyherrn von D.... an.
Aber ich Unbeſonnener dachte nicht darauf,
daß in den Opern und Operetten, die
in M — — — aufgeführt werden,
Mord und Tod, Gift und Dolch herr-
ſchen müſſen; wie es die Opern: Gün-
ther von Schwarzburg, welche gewiß
von jeder Oper des Metaſtaſio das Ge-
genſtück iſt, und Roſemunde bewei-
ſen; auch muß überdieß das Stück
Arbeit aus eigener Fabrique ſeyn. Ich
verdenke alſo Se. Excellenz nicht, daß
Dieſelben den Antrag meiner Operette
keiner Antwort würdig fanden.

[7]

Aber was soll ich mit dir anfangen,
liebes Operettchen? — dich nach — — —
M. schicken? — Nein; du bist zu stolz um
dich da von einer Excellenz, welche
Helena und Paris so reichlich belohnte,
beallmosen zu lassen; und ich selbst mag
mit Musickern, die den großen Mozart
verkleinert[e]n, verachteten und becabalir=
ten, nichts zu thun haben. — Oder
soll ich dich nach Wien schicken? —
Freylich das gieng noch wohl an —
Aber ich bin etwas mißtrauisch. Wien
ist für Manuscripte eine gefährliche
Stadt. — Weißt du was, liebes Bü=
chelchen; wandere du auch nach St.
Petersburg. *[...]*



Aber was ſoll ich mit dir anfangen, liebes Operettchen? — dich nach — — — M. ſchicken? — Nein; du biſt zu ſtolz um dich da von einer Excellenz, welche Helena und Paris ſo reichlich belohnte, beallmoſen zu laſſen; und ich ſelbſt mag mit Muſickern, die den großen Mozart verkleinert-n, verachteten und becabalir-ten, nichts zu thun haben. — Oder ſoll ich dich nach Wien ſchicken? — Freylich das gieng noch wohl an — Aber ich bin etwas mißtrauiſch. Wien iſt für Manuſcripte eine gefährliche Stadt. — Weißt du was, liebes Bücheichen; wandere du auch nach St. Petersburg. — Aber, dort iſt kei-

[translation:]

I also brought this operetta to His Excellency Baron von D . . . . But thoughtlessly I did not consider that in the operas and operettas performed in M — — —, murder and death, poison and dagger must reign, as shown by *Günther von Schwarzburg*, which is certainly the counterpart of every opera of Metastasio; and *Rosemunde*. What is more, every piece must be the work of their own mill. So I do not blame His Excellency that He did not find the submission of my operetta worthy of an answer.

But what should I do with you, dear little operetta? — Send you to — — — M. ? — No, you are too proud to be left to beg to an Excellency who so richly rewarded *Helena und Paris*. And I myself want nothing to do with musicians who belittled, scorned, and intrigued against the great Mozart. — Or should I send you to Vienna? — Of course that would go much better. But I am somewhat mistrustful. Vienna is a dangerous city for manuscripts. —

Do you know what, little booklet: you should
travel to St. Petersburg.

Commentary

Ursula Broicher (2006, 132) mentions Blumhofer's reference to Mozart, but seems to have been unaware that it was unknown to the Mozart literature. She also cites a review of the play in the *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung* (Jena).

According to Broicher, Maximilian Blumhofer was born in Munich on 17 Feb 1759, and died in Aachen on 9 Apr 1835. After finishing school in Munich, Blumhofer, who also apparently trained as a musician, seems to have been active for a few years in St. Petersburg, perhaps with the German Theater there. The title page of *Luftschiffer* states explicitly that the work was fashioned ("bearbeitet") for that theater. The title page of another play by Blumhofer, *So handelt ein guter Fürst, so handeln rechtschaffene Bürger* (Leipzig and Düsseldorf, 1786), carries a similar annotation, and the play is explicitly dedicated to Catherine the Great. However, by the mid 1780s Blumhofer was living in Krefeld, northwest of Düsseldorf. The preface to *So handelt ein guter Fürst* is dated "Düsseldorf den 24. Nov. 1785" and that of *Luftschiffer* is dated "Düsseldorf den 21 August 1786."

Broicher (n. 18) identifies "Freyherr von D . . . ." in "M — — —" as Freiherr Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg, intendant of the Nationaltheater in Mannheim. *Günther von Schwarzburg*, composed by Ignaz Holzbauer on a text by Anton Klein, was premiered in Mannheim on 5 Jan 1777. Anton Schweitzer's *Rosemunde*, on a text by Wieland, was first performed in Mannheim on 20 Jan 1780.

The second anonymous reference is evidently to the theater in Munich. Peter Winter's *Helena und Paris* (a work referred to explicitly in Blumhofer's preface) was written for the Nationaltheater in Munich in 1782, and Blumhofer himself reports that he had an altercation of some kind with Count Joseph Anton von Seeau, the intendant of the Munich theater, after submitting a play. This altercation was serious enough that Blumhofer subsequently received an official judicial warning (Broicher 2006, 131).

In 1780, Mozart had been commissioned by the very same Count Seeau to compose an opera for Munich, the opera which became *Idomeneo*, first performed on 29 Jan 1781. Thus Blumhofer's reference to musicians who had "belittled, scorned, and intrigued against" Mozart ("verkleinerten, verachteten und becabalirten") must refer to musicians in Munich.

Mozart had hoped to parlay his commission for *Idomeneo* into a permanent position in Munich. Although Mozart's letters to his father speak repeatedly of his warm reception by the electoral court, and although *Idomeneo* is generally considered to have been a success, no offer of a position was forthcoming. In a letter to his father on 24 Nov 1780 (*Briefe*, iv:29, lines 13–118), Mozart refers to "a little cabal" against him, but predicts it will come to nothing: "— wegen <*meiner*

opera> seyen sie ausser Sorg, mein liebster vatter — Ich hoffe das alles ganz gut gehen wird. — <*ein kleine Cabale*> wird es wohl absetzen — die aber vermutlich sehr Comisch ausfallen wird —. denn — ich habe unter der <Noblesse> die <ansehnlichsten> und <vermöglichsten häuser> — und die <ersten Bey der musick> sind alle für mich [...]”

Blumhofer’s reference to cabals might be regarded merely as hearsay, were it not for the fact that he was born in Munich and went to school there, so he may well have maintained close contacts with the musical community in the city.

Notes (⇧)

The first edition of the play appears to be Maximilian Blumhofer, *Die Luftschiffer, ein Lustspiel in 3 Aufz.*, Augsburg: Conrad-Heinrich Stage, 1786. Google Books includes a scan of a copy of this edition from ÖNB (3355-A [Alt Mag]); this copy has no preface. (The Bibliothek of the Theatermuseum in Vienna holds a second copy, 625564-A.The; this copy is not on Google Books.)

Google Books includes scans of two different copies of the 1787 edition with the preface that refers to Mozart:

> ÖNB, 3701-A [Alt Mag]
>
> BSB, L.eleg.m. 1101 m

(Google Books give the author’s name for the BSB copy as “Blaimhofer,” although the title page clearly says “Blumhofer.”)

The Bibliothek des Theatermuseums in Vienna holds two further copies of this edition:

> 845000-A.185 [The] and 698427-A.92 [The]

The Library of Congress also has a copy of the 1787 edition: ML 48 [S1108]

Bibliography (⇧)

Broicher, Ursula. 2006. "Vom bayrischen Theaterautor zum rheinischen Republikaner. Der Lebensweg Maximilian Blumhofers." *die Heimat* 77:129–136.

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