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The earliest known performance of *Die Zauberflöte* outside Vienna (21 Sep 1792)

Dexter Edge

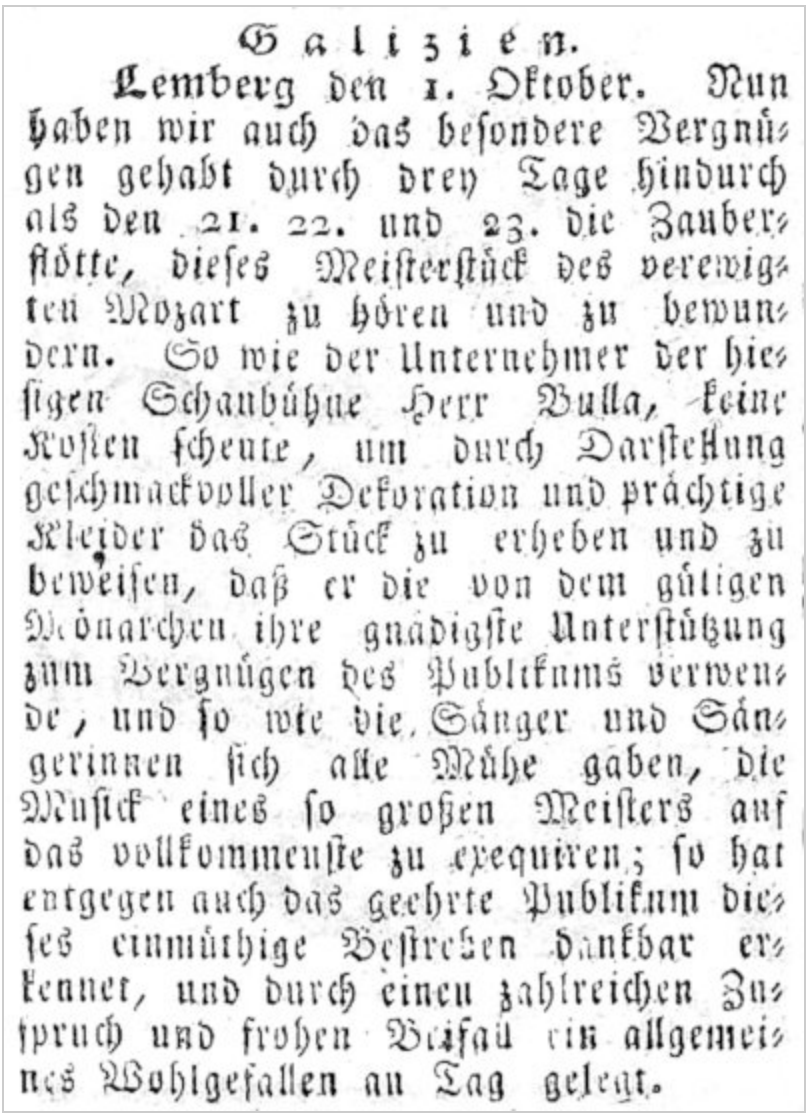
***Pressburger Zeitung*, no. 81, Tue, 9 Oct 1792**

[898]

Galizien.

Lemberg den 1. Oktober. Nun haben wir auch das besondere Vergnü= gen gehabt durch drey Tage hindurch als den 21. 22. und 23. die Zauber= flötte, dieses Meisterstück des verewig= ten Mozart zu hören und zu bewun= dern. So wie der Unternehmer der hie= sigen Schaubühne Herr Bulla, keine Kosten scheute, um durch Darstellung geschmackvoller Dekoration und prächtige Kleider das Stück zu erheben und zu beweisen, daß er die von dem gütigen Monarchen ihre gn[ä]digste Unterstützung zum Vergnügen des Publikums verwen= de, und so wie die Sänger und Sän= gerinnen sich alle Mühe gaben, die Musick eines so großen Meisters auf das vollkommenste zu exequiren; so hat entgegen auch das geehrte Publikum die= ses einmüthige Bestreben dankbar er= kennet, und durch einen zahlreichen Zu= spruch und frohen Beifall ein allgemei= nes Wohlgefallen an Tag gelegt.

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Lemberg den 1. Oktober. Nun haben wir auch das besondere Vergnügen gehabt durch drey Tage hindurch als den 21. 22. und 23. die Zauberflötte, dieses Meisterstück des verewigten Mozart zu hören und zu bewundern. So wie der Unternehmer der hiesigen Schaubühne Herr Bulla, keine Kosten scheute, um durch Darstellung geschmackvoller Dekoration und prächtige Kleider das Stück zu erheben und zu beweisen, daß er die von dem gütigen Mönarchen ihre gnädigste Unterstützung zum Vergnügen des Publikums verwende, und so wie die Sänger und Sängerinnen sich alle Mühe gaben, die Musick eines so großen Meisters auf das vollkommenste zu exequiren; so hat entgegen auch das geehrte Publikum dieses einmüthige Bestreben dankbar erkennet, und durch einen zahlreichen Zuspruch und frohen Beifall ein allgemeines Wohlgefallen an Tag gelegt.

[translation:]

Galicia.

Lemberg [Lviv] October 1st. Now we have also had the special pleasure of hearing and admiring for three days—the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd—*Die Zauberflöte,* this masterpiece by the immortal Mozart. Just as the impresario of the local theater, Mr. Bulla, spared no cost to elevate the piece with tasteful decorations and splendid costumes, and to demonstrate that he used the most gracious support from the benevolent Monarch for the audience's pleasure; and just as the singers made every effort to execute perfectly the music of such a great master; the

honored audience, in turn, gratefully recognized this unanimous effort and through numerous encouragements and joyful acclaim showed its general satisfaction.

Commentary

The Mozart literature has generally held that the first performance of *Die Zauberflöte* outside Vienna took place in Prague in the Nationaltheater (Nostitz Theater) on 25 Oct 1792 (see our entry for that date). Jerzy Got (1997) appears to have been the first scholar to cite a report in the *Pressburger Zeitung* of earlier performances in Lemberg on 21, 22, and 23 Sep 1792. However, Got summarizes the *Pressburger Zeitung* report rather than transcribing it, and he apparently did not realize that these performances are in fact the earliest known outside Vienna; Krzeszowiak (2009) seems to have been the first to recognize their priority in this regard. (On errors in Krzeszowiak's transcription of the report, see the Notes below).

Lemberg (now Lviv, Ukraine; also Lvov [Russian], Lwów [Polish]) was at that time the capital of the Habsburg Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, a status it had attained after the First Partition of Poland in 1772. "Der gütige Monarch" mentioned in the report is Emperor Franz II, who had acceded to the Habsburg throne upon the death of his father Leopold II on 1 Mar 1792.

The Prague-born actor and theatrical impresario Franz Heinrich (František Jindřich) Bulla (1754–1819) brought his troupe to Lemberg in 1789 and subsequently established a German theater there, which he directed for many years (on Bulla see principally Got 1997, 35ff). It was Bulla who in 1789 masterminded the conversion into a theater of the disused Minoritenkirche in Lemberg. Got (1997, 54–55) notes that at the time of the Lemberg premiere of *Die Zauberflöte* on 21 Sep 1792, the city was overflowing with Poles who had fled the large Russian army that marched into Poland in May. Got surmises that it was the large number of Poles in Lemberg at that time and the relatively small number of German-speaking Austrians that led Bulla to issue a Polish translation of the opera's libretto. Got (1997, 57) and Krzeszowiak (2009, 173) both reproduce facsimiles of the title page of the Polish libretto, which reads:

CZARNOXIĘŻKI
FLET
WIELKA OPERA
WE DWOCH AKTACH
OD
EMANUELA SCHIKANEDER
Muzyka zaś od Pana Wolfganga
Amade Mozarta, Kapelmaystra i ak-
tualnego C. Kr. Kamer. Kompozytora
pierwízy raz

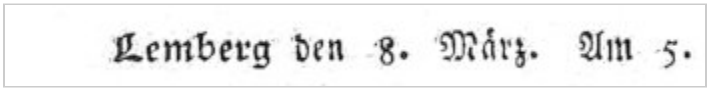
OD
TOWARZYUSTWA
PANA BULLA
W MIESIACU WRZESNIU
GRANA.

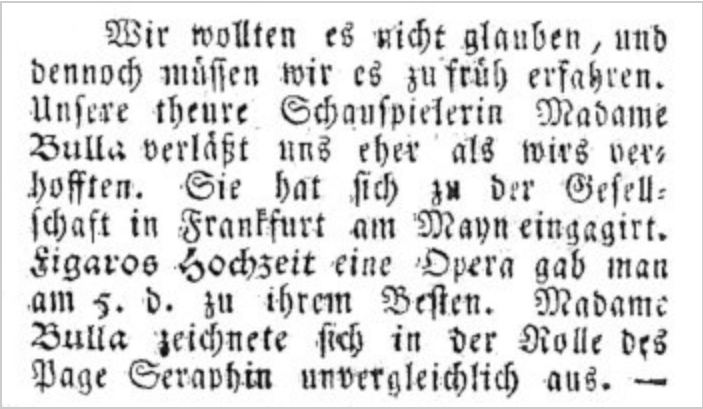
W LWOWIE
1792.

The German libretto from the production also survives (see the listing here).

Got (1997, 56), citing the Lemberg journal *Dziennik Patryotycznych Polityków* (1792, no. 11, 173) and the *Pressburger Zeitung* (1792, no. 96, 30 Nov, 1074), notes a further performance of *Die Zauberflöte* in Lemberg on 16 Nov 1792, following a performance of Kotzebue's *Menschenhaß und Reue* the preceding day. These performances took place at the request of Count Kazimierz Rzewuski, in honor of the visiting Polish general and patriot Tadeusz Kościuszko.

Got (1997, 54) also mentions a performance by Bulla's company on 5 Mar 1792 of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, presumably in German, under the title *Figaros Hochzeit*. The performance was a benefit for Bulla's wife, Edmunda (née Fiedler; see Got 1997, 35), a beloved actress in Bulla's company, who is said in the report to have played the role of "Seraphin" (Cherubino) in the performance. According to Got, the marriage had long been on the rocks, and Madame Bulla had rejoined her husband's company in Lemberg only in the preceding season, 1790/91. Got's source is again a report in the *Pressburger Zeitung* (1792, no. 22, 17 Mar, 234) that he does not transcribe. The report reads:

> Lemberg den 8. März. *[...]*
>
> 
> Lemberg den 8. März. Am 5.
>
> *[...]*
> Wir wollten es nicht glauben, und dennoch müssen wir es zu früh erfahren. Unsere theure Schauspielerin Madame Bulla verläßt uns eher als wirs ver= hofften. Sie hat sich zu der Gesell= schaft in Frankfurt am Mayn eingagirt. Figaros Hochzeit eine Opera gab man am 5. d. zu ihrem Besten. Madame Bulla zeichnete sich in der Rolle des Page Seraphin unvergleichlich aus. — *[...]*



Wir wollten es nicht glauben, und dennoch müssen wir es zu früh erfahren. Unsere theure Schauspielerin Madame Bulla verläßt uns eher als wirs verhofften. Sie hat sich zu der Gesellschaft in Frankfurt am Mayn eingagirt. Figaros Hochzeit eine Opera gab man am 5. d. zu ihrem Besten. Madame Bulla zeichnete sich in der Rolle des Page Seraphin unvergleichlich aus. —

After her departure from Lemberg, Madame Bulla joined the theater in Frankfurt am Main; she ended her career at the Burgtheater in Vienna, where her daughter, the actress Sophie Koberwein (1783–1842), spent most of her career.

Notes (⇧)

The scans from the *Pressburger Zeitung* are available at the *Digitales Forum Mittel- & Osteuropa* (DiFMOE). The scans are quite dark; we have adjusted the images used here for legibility.

Krzeszowiak's transcription of the report of the Lemberg performance on 21 Sep 1792 contains three errors:

- "dieses Meisterstück vom [*recte* 'des'] verewigten Mozart"
- "um durch Darstellung geschmackvoller Dekoration und prächtige Kleider das Stück zu erleben [*recte* 'erheben']"
- "frohen Beifall ein allgemeines Wohlgefallen en- [*recte* 'an'] Tag gelegt."

For a general critique of Kzreszowiak, see Lorenz (2013).

DE would like to thank David Buch for bringing the Lemberg performance of *Die Zauberflöte* to his attention, and Michael Lorenz for answers to specific queries regarding the commentary.

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Credit: Jerzy Got; Tadeusz Krzeszowiak

Author: Dexter Edge

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