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Mozart leads a rehearsal of *Die Hochzeit des Figaro* in Mannheim (22 Oct 1790)

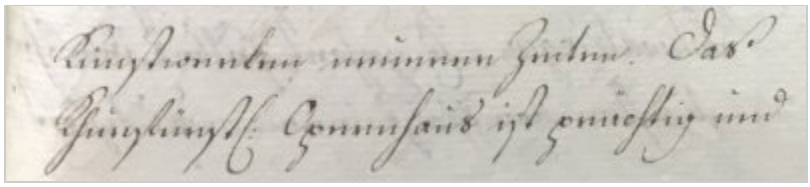
Martin Nedbal

Franz Joseph von Zierotin, "Tagebuch / meiner Reise zur Krönung / Kaiser Leopold II / im Jahre / 1790 / Geschrieben für mich / Franz Joseph Graf von Ziero- / -tin / Von meinem Freunde und / Hofmeister / Alois Rogier." Czech Republic, State Regional Archive Opava, Olomouc Branch, Zierotin Family Archive Bludov (1295), 1427-1947, inventory number 467, shelfmark VI-2306, item 84

[86r]
[...] und kamen endlich den
22. *[Oct]* um 6 Uhr früh in Mannheim an. *[...]*

[88r]

[...] Das
Khurfürstl: Opernhaus ist prächtig und

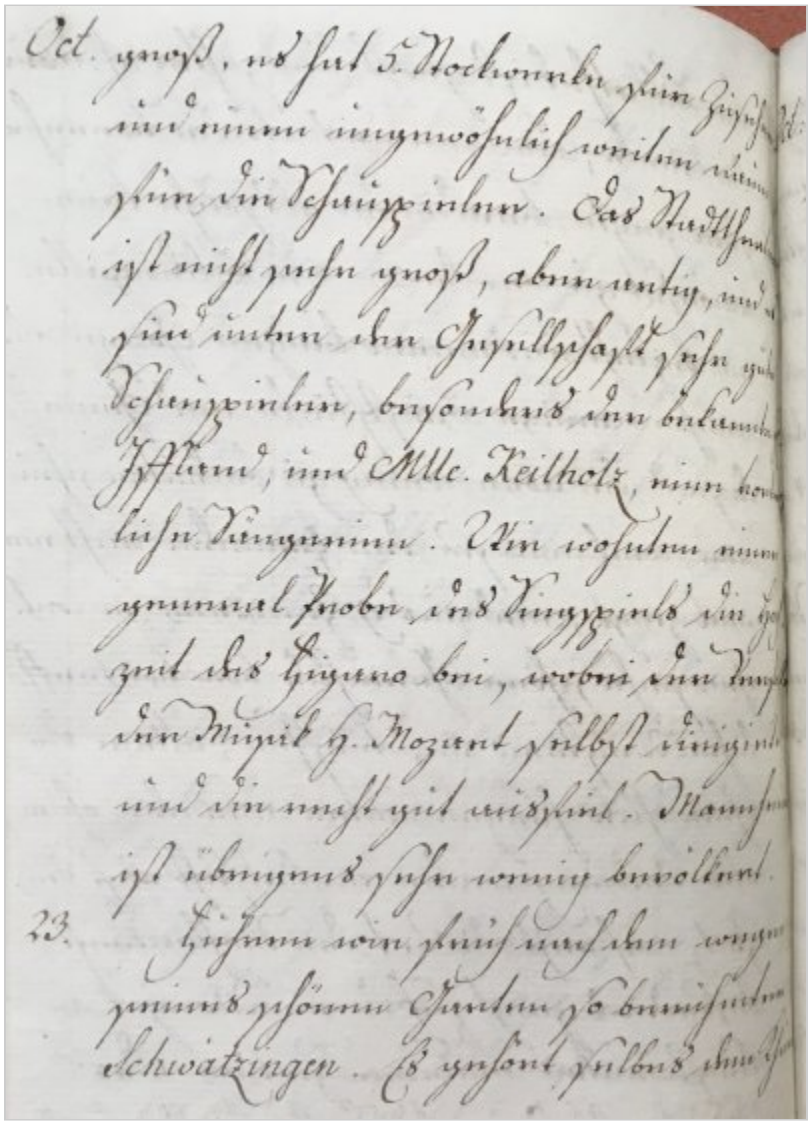


[88v]

groß, es hat 5. Stockwerke für Zuschauer
und einen ungewöhnlich weiten Raum
für die Schauspieler. Das Stadttheater
ist nicht sehr groß, aber artig, und es
sind unter der Gesellschaft sehr gute
Schauspieler, besonders der bekannte
Iffland, und *Mlle. Keilholz*, eine vorträf=
liche Sängerinn. Wir wohnten einer
general Probe des Singspiels die Hoch=
zeit des Figaro bei, wobei der Verfasser

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der Musik H. Mozart selbst dirigirte
und die recht gut ausfiel. Mannheim
ist übrigens sehr wenig bevölkert.
23. *[Oct]* Fuhren wir früh nach dem wegen
seines schönen Garten so berühmten
Schwätzingen. *[...]*



[translation:]

[...] and we finally arrived in Mannheim
on the 22nd *[Oct]* at 6 in the morning. *[...]*

The electoral opera house is magnificent
and large. It has 5 floors for spectators
and an unusually wide space for the
actors. The city theater is not too large,

but agreeable, and there are very good
actors in the company, in particular
the famous Iffland, and *Mlle. Keilholz*, an
excellent singer. We attended a dress
rehearsal of the singspiel *Die Hochzeit*
des Figaro, which the author of the music
Herr Mozart himself directed, and which
came off quite well. Incidentally, Mannheim
is thinly populated.
23 *[Oct]* We traveled early to *Schwetzingen*,
so renowned for its beautiful garden. *[...]*

Commentary

In Oct 1790 Count Franz Joseph von Zierotin (1772–1845), a young Moravian nobleman, traveled to Frankfurt to attend the coronation of Leopold II as Holy Roman Emperor. Zierotin's diary of the journey survives in the Zierotin family archive, in a manuscript copy made by his Hofmeister Alois Rogier (on Zierotin, see our entry for 20 Oct 1790). The diary contains two references to Mozart. In his entry for 20 Oct 1790, Zierotin reports having heard Mozart perform at a concert in Mainz. The count left Mainz the following day after lunch, traveling by post coach through the night, with a layover in Worms after midnight, arriving in Mannheim on Fri, 22 Oct, at 6 in the morning. That same day, he records having seen Mozart lead a rehearsal of *Die Hochzeit des Figaro*, which had its Mannheim premiere two days later (see our entry for 24 Oct 1790).

Like Zierotin, Mozart left Mainz for Mannheim on 21 Oct; if he was able to depart earlier in the day than the count, he might have reached Mannheim that same evening; but in any case he, too, would have arrived no later than 22 Oct. Although Mozart left no description of his journey from Mainz to Mannheim, it probably resembled Zierotin's, who wrote that he could not leave Mainz earlier than the afternoon of 21 Oct because of a "lack of horses" ("Mangel an Pferden"—85v), caused by the large number of visitors traveling south from Frankfurt following the coronation. Zierotin already mentions this problem upon his departure from Frankfurt on 20 Oct:

[83r]

> *[...]*
> 20. *[Oct]* Waren wir gesonnen sehr früh
> von Frankfort aufzubrechen, um in
> unser Vaterland wieder zurückzukeh=

[83v]

> ren, allein trotz allen unseren Be=
> mühungen, war es nicht möglich Post=
> pferde zu bekommen; denn die Men=
> ge der von Frankfort schon seit der
> Krönung Abreisenden war so groß,
> daß die Post sammt den unzähligen Pfer=
> den, die vom Lande kamen, nicht zurei=
> chen konnte. *[...]*

[translation:]

> *[...]*
> 20 *[Oct]* We were of a mind to depart from
> Frankfurt very early to return to our
> fatherland, but despite all our efforts,
> it was impossible to obtain post horses;
> for the number of travelers leaving Frankfurt
> after the coronation was so great, that
> the post, even with the countless horses
> that came from the countryside, was
> insufficient. *[...]*

In a letter to Constanze written in Mannheim on 23 Oct, Mozart notes that he is about to attend the "Hauptprobe" (final dress rehearsal) of *Figaro*:

> Morgen gehen wir nach Schwetzingen um den Garten zu sehen — Abends ist hier zum erstenmal Figaro — dann übermorgen fahren wir fort. Eben Figaro ist Ursache warum ich noch hier bin — denn das ganze Personale beschwor mich noch so lange hier zu bleiben und ihnen bey der Probe beyzustehen, eben das ist auch die Ursache warum ich Dir nicht so viel schreiben kann als ich schriebe, weil es eben Zeit zur Hauptprobe ist — Ja, wenigstens der erste Act schon vorbey sein wird — [*Briefe*, iv:119]

> Tomorrow we are going to see the garden in Schwetzingen — In the evening is the first performance of *Figaro* — the day after tomorrow we depart. *Figaro* is the very reason I am still here — for the whole ensemble pleaded with me to stay and assist them with rehearsal; this is also why I cannot write as much as I would like, because it is just now time for the dress rehearsal — In fact, the first act, at least, may already be over —

At present, Zierotin's is the only other eyewitness account of Mozart's involvement in the Mannheim *Figaro* that is known to survive in its original form. Zierotin states that he saw Mozart directing a rehearsal of *Figaro* on 22 Oct. If that date is correct (and there is no reason to doubt it), then Mozart was involved with two rehearsals of the opera in Mannheim, not just one, as previously thought.

Mozart's involvement in the Mannheim *Figaro* was also noted in the diary of Wilhelm Backhaus (1754–1834), who sang the role of Antonio in the production. The diary itself does not survive, but his entry mentioning Mozart was transcribed by Stephan Grua in the nineteenth-century (on Grua's transcriptions of Mannheim theater posters, see Walter 1899, ii:239–40):

> Am 23.[tn] wahr Kappellmeister *Motzard* hier, und gab in der
> Probe vom Figaro alle Tempos an. Ich kam in große
> Verlegenheit mit *Motzard*. Ich sah ihn vor einen kleinen
> Schneidergesellen an. Ich stand an der Thür als wir die
> Probe hatten. Er kam und fragte mich nach der Probe
> ob man zuhören darf. Ich wies ihn ab: Sie werden
> doch dem Kappell. *Mozart* erlauben zuzuhören? sagte er.
> Jetzt kam ich erst recht in Verlegenheit.
>
> Aus Bakhaus Tagebuch.
>
> [reproduced in Homering and Welck 1991, 231; *Neue Folge*, 66]

> On the 23rd, Kapellmeister Mozart was here and gave all the
> tempos during the rehearsal of *Figaro*. I greatly embarrassed
> myself with Mozart. I took him for a journeyman tailor. I was
> standing at the door during the rehearsal. He came and
> asked me if one could listen to the rehearsal. I waved him
> off: "But surely you would let Kapellmeister Mozart listen?",
> he said. Now I was really embarrassed.
>
> From Backhaus's diary.

Grua's manuscript copy of the poster for the *Figaro* premiere includes the following note in his hand:

> Motzardt dirigirte selbst
> und reißte den folgenden Tag von hier ab.
> [reproduced in Homering and Welck 1991, 27; *Neue Folge*, 66]

> Mozart himself directed
> and departed from here the following day.

Grua does not explicitly link the note to Backhaus's diary, so his source is unclear. If he is correct, then Mozart also led the first performance of *Figaro* in Mannheim (see our entry for 24 Oct 1790).

Zierotin states that he attended a rehearsal of *Figaro* on 22 Oct, and that Mozart directed the rehearsal. But Mozart's letter and Backhaus's diary mention a rehearsal only on the following day, 23 Oct; these latter two references have been taken to imply that Mozart participated in just one rehearsal, the day before the premiere. How might this apparent discrepancy between those two sources and Zierotin's diary be explained?

One possibility is that 22 Oct, the date in Zierotin's diary, is incorrect, and that he actually attended a rehearsal of *Figaro* on 23 Oct. But such a misdating is unlikely, given that Zierotin has the correct date for the concert in Mainz, 20 Oct, and there are no inconsistencies in his diary between then and his arrival in Mannheim. In any case it is difficult to imagine an alternative itinerary for Zierotin's travels along the Rhine, and 22 Oct seems to have been the only day he could possibly have spent in Mannheim. His attendance at the rehearsal there concluded a day of intensive sightseeing: in the diary, he notes the city's regular grid, the main square, the Jesuit Church, the former electoral residence with the library, the picture gallery, and the court opera house, as well as the "Stadtheater" (the "city theater," referring to the Nationaltheater). On 23 Oct, he visited Schwetzingen, then continued on to Stuttgart, where he arrived on 24 Oct at 6 in the morning. Zierotin's statement that he attended a rehearsal on 22 Oct does not necessarily contradict Mozart's letter from the following day; and Mozart's statement that he is about to go to a rehearsal on 23 Oct does not rule out his having also attended a rehearsal the previous day. The date of Backhaus's diary entry cannot be checked, but 22 Oct (rather than the usually accepted date of 23 Oct) would be a better fit for his story about not recognizing Mozart, whose arrival in Mannheim on 22 Oct (or perhaps the night before) might well have been unknown to the theater company. Mozart's letter implies, on the other hand, that by 23 Oct, the company knew he was in Mannheim and was expecting him to come to the rehearsal; so Backhaus's anecdote is a less good fit with that date. There were no performances in the theater in Mannheim on 22 or 23 Oct 1790 (see Walter 1899, ii:320–21), so it seems likely that both days would have been used for rehearsals for the premiere of *Figaro*.

Just one other bit of known evidence places Mozart at a rehearsal of *Figaro* in Mannheim: a recollection by the composer and music publisher Johann Anton André (1775–1842), reported in 1890 (100 years after the event) by his student Heinrich Henkel (1822–1899). According to Henkel, André mentioned just one rehearsal and recalled that Mozart was present only for a short time:

> Zum Schluss will ich hier noch die Antwort niederschreiben, welche mir einst Hofrath André auf meine Frage gab, ob er Mozart persönlich gesehen habe. Er sagte: nur einmal und zwar 1790 zur Zeit, da ich in Mannheim unter Kapellmeister Fränzel als Volontär im Theaterorchester Violine spielte. Mozart sei für kurze Zeit in eine Probe gekommen *[…]* [Henkel 1890, 3]

> In closing I also want to set down here the answer that Hofrat André gave to my question whether he had seen Mozart in person. He said: only once, in 1790, at the time when I was volunteering as a violinist in the theater orchestra under Kapellmeister Fränzl. Mozart came to a rehearsal for a short time *[…]*

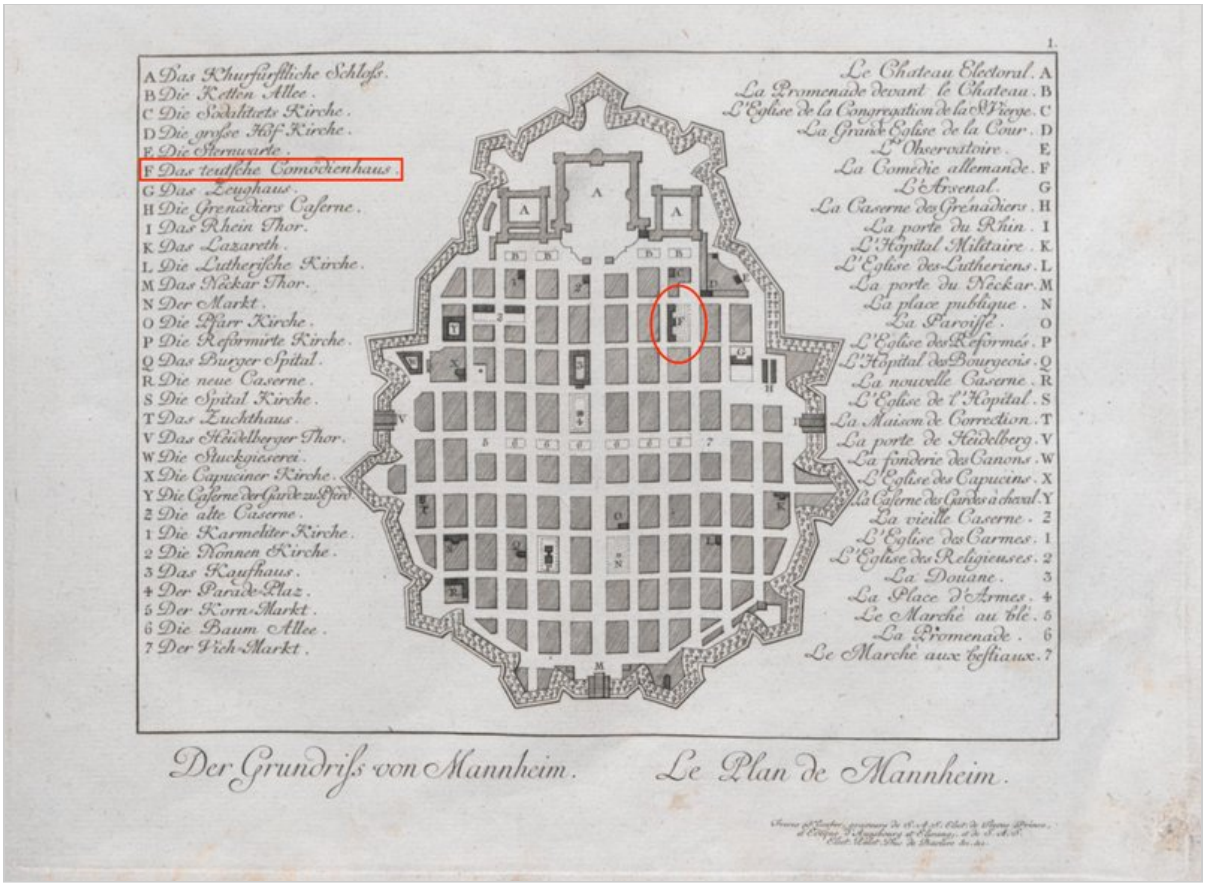
This story is undated. It seems likely that André would have remembered if Mozart had taken an active part in one or two rehearsals and then led the orchestra at the premiere. But André's reminiscence very late in life, then reported nearly 50 years later by Henkel, cannot necessarily be considered a reliable source.

If the date in Zierotin's diary is correct, then Mozart apparently took part in two rehearsals of *Figaro* in Mannheim, on 22 and 23 Oct 1790, rather than just one, and he may have led the first performance on 24 Oct as well. Mozart uses the word "Hauptprobe" (for 23 Oct), whereas Zierotin uses "general Probe" (for 22 Oct); today, both terms can mean "dress rehearsal," which now typically refers to the final rehearsal before the first performance. But it is unclear whether the two terms were synonymous in the eighteenth century. In particular, "Generalprobe" might simply have indicated a rehearsal (not necessarily the last) with full cast and orchestra, whereas Mozart's "Hauptprobe," the day before the premiere, was clearly what we would now call the final "dress rehearsal."

Zierotin visited the gardens of Schwetzingen Castle on 23 Oct. That same day, Mozart writes in his letter to Constanze that he is planning to visit the gardens the following day, 24 Oct. Mozart left no record of his visit to Schwetzingen, but Zierotin gives an extensive description of the castle and its grounds. He was particularly impressed with and describes in great detail the "Turkish mosque" ("die türkische Moschee"), still under construction in 1790. (On the gardens of Schwetzingen Castle, see Stief 1979; the completed Moschee survives.)

Zierotin's interest in architecture also prompted his remarks about the two theaters in Mannheim. The court opera house, in the west wing of the electoral palace, was designed by theater architect Alessandro Galli da Bibiena and opened in 1742. Among the works premiered in that theater was *Günther von Schwarzburg*, by Ignaz Holzbauer and librettist Anton Klein. Mozart attended a performance of this opera in Mannheim on 5 Nov 1777, a few months after its premiere on 5 Jan. The following year, Elector Karl Theodor moved his court to Munich, and the opera house was no longer used for performances, but was still admired by visitors such as Zierotin. The court opera house burned down in 1795, during a French siege.

Mannheim's second theater, the Nationaltheater, was constructed in 1777, on plans by architect Lorenzo Quaglio.


A Das Churfürstliche Schloss.
B Die Ketten Allee.
C Die Sodalitets Kirche.
D Die grosse Höf Kirche.
E Die Sternwarte.
F Das teutsche Comödienhaus.
G Das Zeughaus.
H Die Grenadiers Caserne.
I Das Rhein Thor.
K Das Lazareth.
L Die Lutherische Kirche.
M Das Nèckar Thor.
N Der Markt.
O Die Pfarr Kirche.
P Die Reformirte Kirche.
Q Das Burger Spital.
R Die neue Caserne.
S Die Spital Kirche.
T Das Zuchthaus.
V Das Heidelberger Thor.
W Die Stuckgieserei.
X Die Capuciner Kirche.
Y Die Caserne der Garde zu Pferd.
Z Die alte Caserne.
1 Die Karmeliter Kirche.
2 Die Nonnen Kirche.
3 Das Kauffhaus.
4 Der Parade-Plaz.
5 Der Korn-Markt.
6 Die Baum Allee.
7 Der Vich-Markt.
Le Chateau Electoral. A
La Promenade devant le Chateau. B
L'Eglise de la Congregation de la S.te Vierge. C
La Grande Eglise de la Cour. D
L'Observatoire. E
La Comédie allemande. F
L'Arsenal. G
La Caserne des Grénadiers. H
La porte du Rhin. I
L'Hôpital Militaire. K
L'Eglise des Lutheriens. L
La porte du Nèckar. M
La place publique. N
La Paroisse. O
L'Eglise des Reformés. P
L'Hôpital des Bourgeois. Q
La nouvelle Caserne. R
L'Eglise de l'Hôpital. S
La Maison de Correction. T
La porte de Heidelberg. V
La fonderie des Canons. W
L'Eglise des Capucins. X
La Caserne des Gardes à cheval. Y
La vieille Caserne. Z
L'Eglise des Carmes. 1
L'Eglise des Religieuses. 2
La Douane. 3
La Place d'Armes. 4
Le Marché au blé. 5
La Promenade. 6
Le Marché aux bestiaux. 7
Der Grundriss von Mannheim.
Le Plan de Mannheim.



Vues de Mannheim, représentées sur vingt six planches dessinée d'apres nature par Jean François de Schlichten, et gravées par les fréres Klauber à Augsbourg. Avec une explication des planches. Mannheim, 1782. (Hochschul- und Landesbibliothek Fulda)

The theater initially hosted itinerant companies, but in 1779 Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg (1750–1806) became its director and formed a resident ensemble. It was under Dalberg's supervision that Mozart's operas were first performed in Mannheim in the 1780s (for an overview, see our entry for 18 Apr 1784).

Dalberg engaged famous actors and singers for the Nationaltheater, including playwright and actor August Wilhelm Iffland (1759–1814), whom Zierotin specifically mentions. Zierotin also praises "Mlle. Keilholz", a singer. The company of the Nationaltheater in Mannheim at that time in fact employed two Keilholz sisters, both of whom had recently made their debuts with the company on 6 Jun 1790, in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (see our entry for their debut). Christiane (1764–1820), the elder sister, sang Konstanze in that performance and appeared as Donna Anna in a performance of *Don Juan* a week later; she then played the role of Susanna in the Mannheim premiere of *Figaro* on 24 Oct. Christiane Keilholz was also a highly regarded actress in spoken theater: for example, on 8 Jun 1790 she played the central role of Eulalia in Kotzebue's hit play *Menschenhaß und Reue*; and on 21 Oct, three days before the premiere of *Figaro*, she had appeared as Ophelia in a performance of *Hamlet* (Walter 1899, ii: 320). Her younger sister Dorothea (d. 1804) sang Blonde in *Entführung* on 6 Jun, Zerlina in *Don Juan* on 13 Jun, and Cherubino in the Mannheim premiere of *Figaro* on 24 Oct. It seems likely that Zierotin is referring to Christiane, who generally took lead female roles and whose career was

more prominent than her sister's. (On the Keilholz sisters see our entry for 6 & 13 Jun 1790; on the Mannheim premiere of Figaro and their participation in it, see our entry for 24 Oct 1790.)

Notes (⇧)

Our transcriptions of Grua's entries on his manuscript copies of the Mannheim theater posters are based on the facsimiles in Homering & von Welck, 1991, and deviate in several minor details from those in *Neue Folge*.

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