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Porwanie z seraju (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) in Warsaw (25 Nov 1783)

Anna Parkitna and Dexter Edge

Ludwik Bernacki, *Teatr, Dramat i Muzyka za Stanisława Augusta.* Vol. 1, Źródła i materjały (Lwów, 1925), 265. Transcribed from a subsequently destroyed poster

25. Wtorek. W anniwersarz koronacyi Najjaśniejszego Pana, przy odgłosie trąb, kotłów, muzyki janczarskiej i illuminacyi całego teatru, pierwsza reprezentacya opery wielkiej, nowej "Porwanie z seraju", potem nigdy tu niewidziany, a wcale nowo od p. Kurtza skomponowany balet heroiczny, w 4 aktach "Powrót Ulissesa do Itaki". Antrepryza teatralna spodziewa się, że te dwa kosztowne co do strojów, dekoracyi i innych ozdób widowiska prześwietne *publicum* mile przyjąć raczy, starania zaś ile możności dokładać będzie, aby jak najwspanialej wystawione być mogły.

[translation:]

On Tuesday, 25 November, on the anniversary of His Majesty's coronation, the first presentation of the great new work *Porwanie z Seraju* [Abduction from the Seraglio] will be given, accompanied by the sound of trumpets, timpani, and janissary music, with illumination of the whole theater, followed by the new ballet in four acts *Powrót Ulissesa do Itaki* [The Return of Ulysses to Ithaca] composed by Mr. Kurtz. The entrepreneur expects that the costly costumes, decorations, and other embellishments will please the audience, and he will make every effort to present the shows splendidly.

[translation by Anna Parkitna]

Commentary

Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was first performed in Warsaw on 8 May 1783, the name day of the Polish King Stanisław August Poniatowski (Stanisław II August, 1732–1798, reigned 1764–1795). The performance was given by a German theater company under the management of Prince Jerzy Marcin Lubomirski (1738–1811; pl.wikipedia); the company had formerly been led by Bartolomeo Constantini and two Italian partners, but their enterprise had collapsed at the end of the preceding theatrical season. Lubomirski retained Constantini's actors, but his

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enterprise likewise broke down by the end of June, after which the company was dissolved. (On this performance and its context, see our entry for 8 May 1783.)

On 25 Nov 1783, the anniversary of the king's coronation—Stanisław August had been elected and crowned in 1764—a Polish theater company under the direction of Wojciech Bogusławski (1757–1829) performed Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Polish translation under the title *Porwanie z seraju*. The only known documentation of the performance is Ludwik Bernacki's transcription (given above) of a subsequently lost poster (Bernacki 1925, 265). The performance on 25 Nov 1783 is noted by Deutsch (*Dokumente*, 195), who gives no source and does not give the Polish title; Deutsch probably took the date from Loewenberg's *Annals of Opera*, which likewise gives no source and omits the Polish title (see Loewenberg 1978, col. 1782).



Józef Sonntag, *Woyciech Bogusławski*, lithograph, ca. 1820
(Polona)

According to another lost notice transcribed by Bernacki, *Porwanie z seraju* was repeated on 4 Dec 1783, along with the ballet *Mąż oszukany* (The Deceived Husband):

> Czwartek. Druga reprezentacya opery, z niemieckiego tłumaczonej, z muzyką p. Mozart "Porwanie z seraju", w której to operze bardzo wiele poczynioinych jest odmian, potem balet "Mąż oszukany". [Bernacki 1925, 265–66]
>
> On Thursday, 4 [December], the second presentation of the opera translated from German, with music by Hr. Mozart, *Porwanie z Seraju*, in which numerous changes have been made, followed by the ballet *Mąż oszukany*.

The performances took place in Warsaw's public theater, later known as the National Theater (Teatr Narodowy) on Krasiński Square (for a 1790 painting of the interior, see the *Commentary* to the entry for 8 May 1783). Nothing further is known about the production: no copy of the libretto is known to survive, and there is no known source documenting the cast. Although no reports on the reception of the production are known to survive, it may be that the production was not a success. At any rate, the notice for 4 Dec states that the opera would be given with "numerous changes," perhaps suggesting that the company felt changes were necessary in response to the reception of the first performance. Bogusławski does not mention the production in his autobiography (Bogusławski 1820), which may imply that he thought it was better left forgotten.

Notes (⇧)

Bilińska (1993, 11) mentions the performance on 25 Nov 1783, but incorrectly implies that the performance was in German.

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