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Mozart and Sterkel's variations on "Lison dormait" (3 Nov 1790)

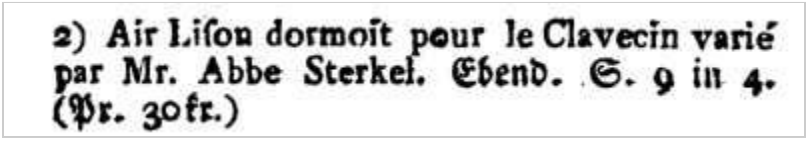
David Black

***Musikalische Korrespondenz der teutschen Filharmonischen Gesellschaft*, Wed, 3 Nov 1790**

[col. 138]

2) *Air Lison dormoit pour le Clavecin varié par Mr. Abbe Sterkel*. Ebend. S. 9 in 4.
(Pr. 30kr.)

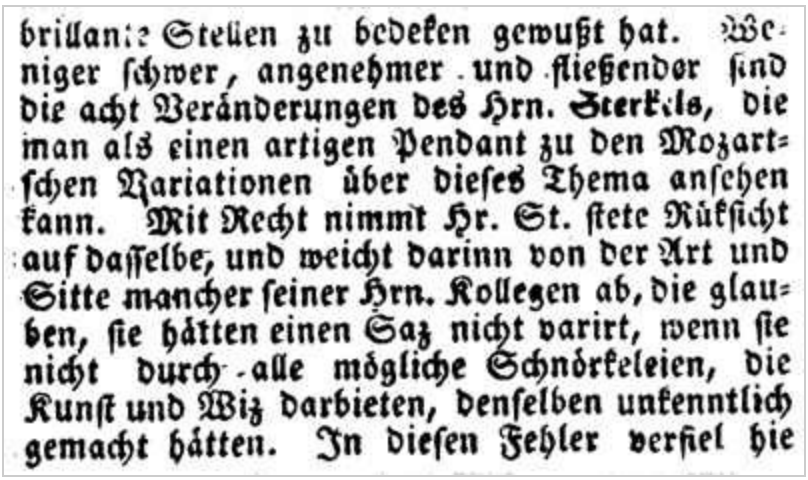
[...]


2) Air Liſon dormoit pour le Clavecin varié par Mr. Abbe Sterkel. Ebend. S. 9 in 4. (Pr. 30kr.)

[col. 139] [...]

We=
niger schwer, angenehmer und fließender sind die acht Veränderungen des Hrn. Sterkels, die man als einen artigen Pendant zu den Mozart= schen Variationen über dieses Thema ansehen kann. Mit Recht nimmt Hr. St. stete Rüksicht auf dasselbe, und weicht darinn von der Art und Sitte mancher seiner Hrn. Kollegen ab, die glau= ben, sie hätten einen Saz nicht varirt, wenn sie nicht durch alle mögliche Schnörkeleien, die Kunst und Wiz darbieten, denselben unkenntlich gemacht hätten.

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brillante Stellen zu bedeken gewußt hat. Weniger ſchwer, angenehmer und fließender ſind die acht Veränderungen des Hrn. Sterkels, die man als einen artigen Pendant zu den Mozartſchen Variationen über dieſes Thema anſehen kann. Mit Recht nimmt Hr. St. ſtete Rükſicht auf daſſelbe, und weicht darinn von der Art und Sitte mancher ſeiner Hrn. Kollegen ab, die glauben, ſie hätten einen Saz nicht varirt, wenn ſie nicht durch alle mögliche Schnörkeleien, die Kunſt und Wiz darbieten, denſelben unkenntlich gemacht hätten. In dieſen Fehler verfiel hie

[translation:]

[...] Less difficult, more pleasant, and more flowing are the eight variations of Mr. Sterkel, which can be seen as a charming pendant to Mozart's variations on this theme. Rightly, Mr. Sterkel continually keeps this [theme] in view, departing from the manner and custom of many of his colleagues, who believe they have not varied a theme if they have not made it unrecognizable through all possible fillagree that art and wit offer.

Commentary

This passing reference to Mozart's music is found in a review of three sets of keyboard variations: Jan Ladislav Dussek's on "O ma tendre musette"; a set attributed to Johann Franz Xaver Sterkel on "Lison dormait"; and Friedrich Heinrich Himmel's on an original theme. After noting the difficulty of the Dussek variations, the reviewer comments more favorably on the Sterkel, which is said to be a "charming pendant" to Mozart's variations on the same theme (K. 264).

K. 264, a set of variations on an ariette from Dezède's *Julie*, is traditionally said to have been written in Paris in 1778. The set was circulating in manuscript by 1785 and was first published complete by Artaria in 1786. Mozart's pupil Johann Nepomuk Hummel performed the variations in Dresden on 10 March 1789 (*Dokumente*, 303).

The variations attributed to Sterkel, first published in 1788, were reviewed again in 1792 in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, where they were compared unfavorably to Mozart's; on that occasion Sterkel wrote to the journal and denied his authorship (see the entry for 13 Feb 1792).

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