Citation:

Printed: Thu, 19 Nov 2026

Edge, Dexter. 2014. “A memorial concert for Mozart in Kassel (addendum) (31 Jan 1792).” In: *Mozart: New Documents*, edited by Dexter Edge and David Black. First published 7 Dec 2014. [direct link]

A memorial concert for Mozart in Kassel (addendum) (31 Jan 1792)

Dexter Edge

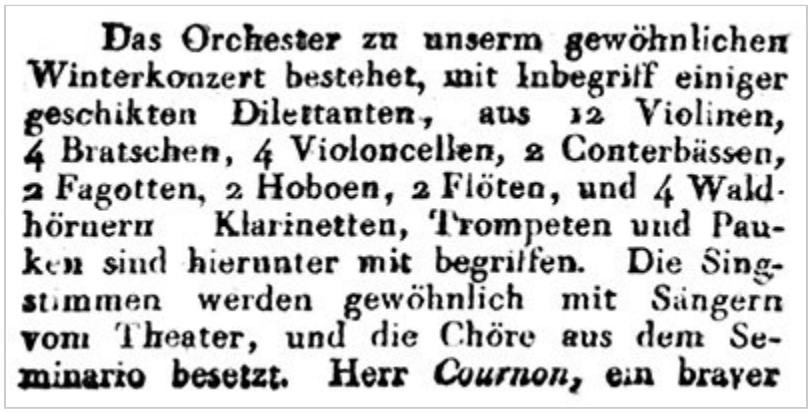
Musikalisches Wochenblatt, **xxi, ?27 Feb 1792**

4. Aus einem Briefe von Cassel, Im Februar 1792.



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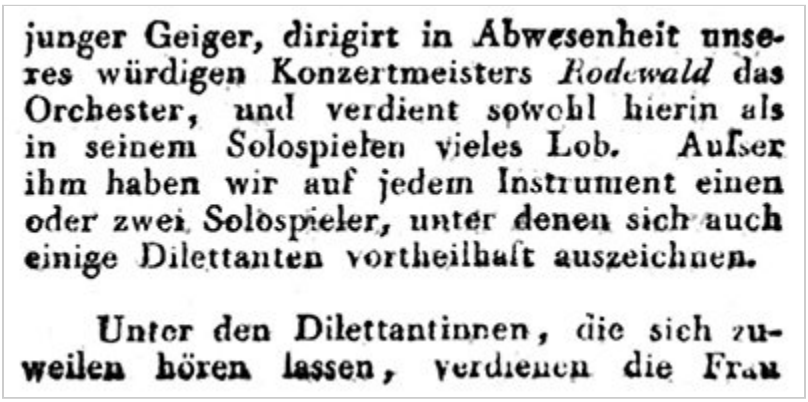
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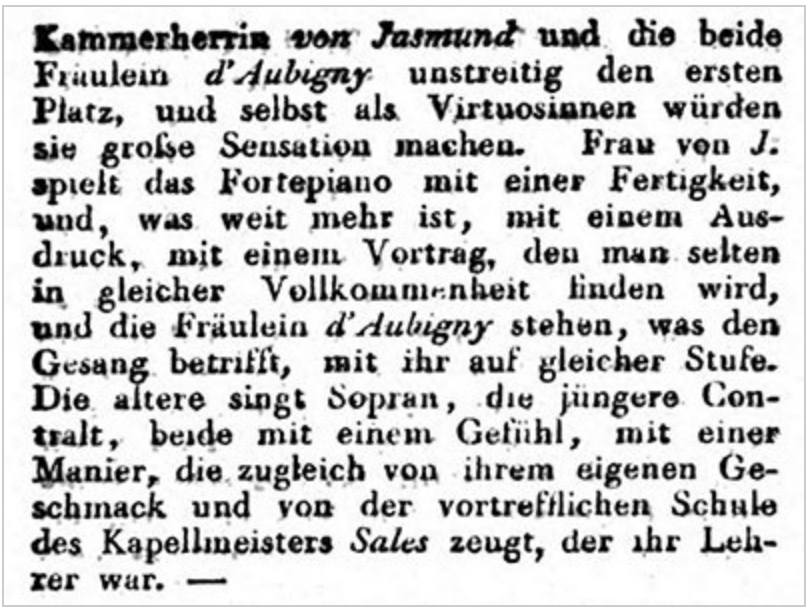
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[165]

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Die altere [*sic*] singt Sopran, die jüngere Con-
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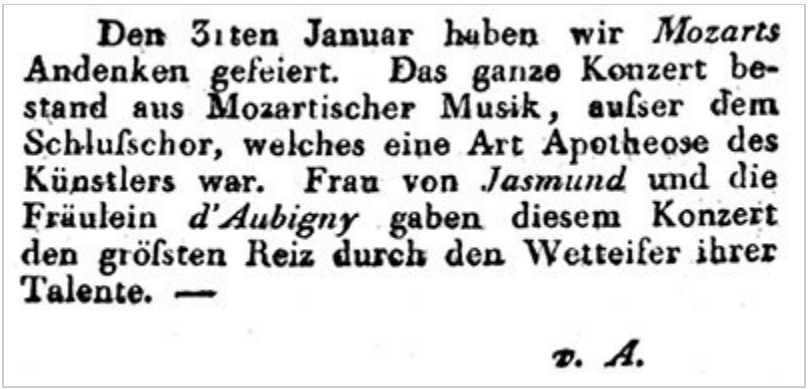


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[...]

Den 31ten Januar haben wir *Mozarts* Andenken gefeiert. Das ganze Konzert bestand aus Mozartischer Musik, ausser dem Schlusschor, welches eine Art Apotheose des Künstlers war. Frau von *Jasmund* und die Fräulein *d'Aubigny* gaben diesem Konzert den grössten Reiz durch den Wetteifer ihrer Talente. —

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Commentary

The Mozart memorial concert reported here took place on Tue, 31 Jan 1792, as part of the regular winter concert series in Kassel that extended from the beginning of October to the end of

April. Deutsch quotes the final paragraph of this report (*Dokumente*, 387), but the earlier portions, shown here in blue, are of considerable interest, as they give additional detail about the performers and the orchestra.

The initials "v. A." identifying the author of the report are not found on the list of contributors to the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* and its successor the *Musikalische Monathsschrift* (on these two journals and their eventual combined publication as a single volume, see the entry for 10 Oct 1791). However, the correspondent is almost certainly David August von Apell (1754–1832), a tax official in Kassel, who was also a skilled composer and a motivating force behind Kassel's musical life. His *Gallerie der vorzüglichsten Tonkünstler und merkwürdigsten Musik-Dilettanten in Cassel* (Kassel, 1806; not currently available online) is apparently the principal source for most subsequent lexicographical entries on the amateur and professional musicians mentioned here.

Violinist Carl Joseph Rodewald (1735–1809) studied violin with Franz Benda and composition with Kirnberger (Gerber; GerberNL; Eitner). He entered the service of the Kassel court around 1762 or 1763, and he was made concertmaster there in 1788, also evidently leading the winter concert series. In addition, he was music master to Wilhelm, the surviving son and heir of Wilhelm IX, reigning Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt. When young Wilhelm went to Marburg to study around 1789, Rodewald was obliged to follow him and could no longer lead the concert series in Kassel. The concerts for the season 1789/90 are said to have been led by Karl Stamitz, who had performed as a soloist at the winter concerts the previous season (see Wolf 2014, and the reports in the *Musikalische Real-Zeitung* discussed below). The immediately following seasons, including 1791–92, the season of the concert described here, were led by violinist Herr Cournon (probably Pierre Henri, b. Berlin, 1770), who subsequently took a position as violinist in Utrecht in 1793 (on Cournon, see GerberNL and Eitner, both drawing on Apell).

Henriette von Jasmund (née von Schlotheim; see GerberNL) is described here and in other reports of the winter concerts in Kassel as a superlative pianist; Gerber (following Apell) writes that Jasmund: "counts among the strongest and most brilliant fortepianists, whom few professional artists can surpass. Her skill is said to be equally as great as her expressive execution is ravishing" ("[von Jasmund wird] unter die stärksten und brillantesten Fortepiano=Spielerinnen gerechnet, welche wenige Künstler von Profession übertreffen möchten. Ihre Fertigkeit soll eben so groß, als ihr Ausdruck hinreissend im Vortrage seyn"). Because the report of the memorial concert states that all works on the program apart from the closing chorus were by Mozart, it is implied that Jasmund performed a Mozart concerto on the concert.



A silhouette of Henriette von Jasmund in the July 1789 issue of *Bibliothek der Grazien*.
(Source: BSB)

The "Fräulein d'Aubigny," were Susette and Nina d'Aubigny von Engelbrunner (also "Engelbronner"), daughters of Johann Conrad Engelbronner (teacher and then Hofmeister to the children of the Landgrave) and his wife Sabine d'Aubigny, descendant of a Huguenot family. Susette, born in 1768, was a soprano; Nina, born in 1770, a contralto. Both are said to have studied with composer Pietro Pompeo Sales (1729–1797) in Koblenz in 1787. The two sang often in the winter concerts in Kassel to great local acclaim (or at least to great acclaim from Apell, who seems likely to have been the author of most or all reports on the Kassel winter concerts). In 1794, Susette married August Carl Gottlieb Horstig, and Nina—whose close friendship with the married Apell had caused something of a minor scandal in Kassel—moved with Susette and her husband to Bückeburg (on the biographies of Susette and Nina d'Aubigny, see principally Elsberger 2000, esp. 20–76).

The never-married Nina is an especially interesting figure. In Bückeburg, she is said to have taught singing, piano, harp, Italian, and sewing to the daughters of the Princess Juliane Wilhelmine Luise von Hessen-Philippsthal, and also to have been the teacher of the daughters of Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach. Nina traveled widely, spending extended periods in London (1803–1807), India (1807–1818), and Vienna (1825–1828), with shorter journeys to many other parts of Europe. Elsberger (2000) writes that she knew French, Italian, Latin, Dutch, and English, as well as, later on, Persian and Hindustani. As a writer, she began to publish in 1798. She was a frequent contributor to such journals as the *Allegemeine musikalische Zeitung, London und Paris*, and especially the *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*; Elsberger's list of her articles published in the *Journal* between 1798 and 1806 runs to seven pages (for a list of Nina

d'Aubigny's known publications, see Elsberger 2000, 283–94). Her most well-known work is *Briefe an Natalie über den Gesang, als Beförderung der häuslichen Glückseligkeit und des geselligen Vergnügen*, which might be called a "pedagogical epistolary novel," first published in 1803 and released in a second revised and expanded edition in 1824. She also composed and published several songs (see Elsberger 2000, 294–95).

In the third edition of his Beethoven biography, published in 1860, Anton Schindler, at the end of a paragraph describing the composer's small "Handbibliothek," writes:

> Als ein von ihm sehr geschätztes und viel empfohlenes Buch darf in der Sammlung noch genannt werden: "Briefe an Natalie über Gesang" von Nina d'Aubigny-Engelbrunner. [Schindler 1860, 181]
>
> Another book in the collection that he treasured greatly and often recommended may also be mentioned: *Briefe an Natalie über Gesang* by Nina d'Aubigny-Engelbrunner.

In spite of Schindler's reputation as a confabulator, this passage has been cited frequently in the Beethoven literature.

In Vienna, Nina rented a floor in a house belonging to Count Paar, where she lived with her nephew Eduard Horstig and her niece Liane Horstig (Elsberger 2000, 64–66; Deutsch 1964, 421, places her in "one of the houses" belonging to Paar in the Riemergasse). She took up the harp again with renewed intensity, even taking part at one point in a concert given by music historian Raphael Georg Kiesewetter. She held lavish parties attended by members of the aristocracy and prominent figures in Viennese political, intellectual, and cultural life. Schubert performed at one of these, as reported in a letter dated 10 Apr 1827 written by Eduard Horstig:

> Große Abendgesellschaft bei uns. Anwesend waren unter anderem: Altgraf Salm. Prinz Ferdinand von Hessen-Philippsthal, Baron Jacquin, Orientalist Baron Hammer, drei Barone Boyneburg, Präsident Graf Ugarte, von Stein, Baron Spiegelfeld samt seinen Damen, Grillparzer, Hofrat Lehmann, Baron Pereira und Hofrat Weckbecker mit Familien, Baron Schlechta; Anselm Hüttenbrenner phantasiert auf dem Flügel, Tietze singt Lieder von Schubert und Beethovens "Adelaide," von Schubert akkompagniert. Baron Ransonnet spielt Mandoline, Nina selbst ergreifend Harfe, Bayer veranstaltet Quartette. [Deutsch 1964, 421]
>
> A large evening gathering at our place. Present were among others: Altgrave [Altgraf] Salm. Prince Ferdinand von Hessen-Philippsthal, Baron Jacquin, orientalist Baron Hammer, three Barons Boyneburg, President Count Ugarte, von Stein, Baron Spiegelfeld with his ladies, Grillparzer, Hofrat Lehmann, Baron Pereira, and Hofrat Weckbecker with family, Baron Schlechta; Anselm Hüttenbrenner improvised on the keyboard, Tietze sang Lieder by Schubert and Beethoven's "Adelaide," accompanied by Schubert. Baron Ransonnet played mandolin, Nina herself on harp, Bayer led quartets.

Nina d'Aubigny died on 27 Jan 1847, Mozart's birthday.

A report published in the *Musikalische Real-Zeitung* on 25 Nov 1789 (cols. 374–75) provides additional detail on the winter concert series in Kassel. Deutsch (*Dokumente*, 314) gives a brief extract from this report mentioning the performance of symphonies by Mozart, but the entire report (which one suspects was written by Apell) is worth citing in full for the additional light it sheds on the organization of the Kassel concerts and the performers who took part (the portion quoted by Deutsch is in blue):

> Cassel, 14 Oct.
>
> Our usual winter concert series began again on the 6th of this month. The loss that we suffered of our good concertmaster Rodewald, who had to follow the hereditary prince to Marburg, has been filled by the famous Karl Stamitz, who has settled here and taken over the direction of the concerts. Taking several excellent dilettantes into account, [the concerts] consist of: 12 violinists, 4 violists, 4 cellists, 2 contrabassists, 2 bassoonists, 2 oboists, 2 flutists, 2 clarinetists, 4 hornists, 2 trumpeters, and 1 timpanist. The soloists among these are: Herr Kapellmeister Stamitz on viola and viola d'amore; Herren Cournon, Womrath, and Schmelz on violin; Herren Catus and Heilgeist on violoncello; the middle Herr Michel on bassoon; Herr Knauf on oboe; the elder and younger Herren Michel on flute; Herr Baumkirch on clarinet; and the brothers Holzapfel on horn. The fortepiano is exclusively reserved for the ladies. Frau Chamberlain von Jasmund (*) distinguishes herself as a true virtuoso. The only regular concert singer is Herr Toscani, first tenor of the theater here, because Herr Morelli is now on leave. However, the first ranks in song indisputably belong to the two Fräulein d'Aubigny, who, while dilettantes, possess the talent of true artists, and each time are heard with new acclaim. The elder sings soprano, the younger contralto, and both are pupils of Kapellmeister Sales in Koblenz.—The concerts are held every Tuesday, beginning at 6 pm and lasting until 8:30. They are divided into two parts, and typically consist of six pieces: 1) a grand symphony, 2) an aria, 3) an instrumental concerto, in the first part, followed by an intermission for conversation; the second part consists of 4) another concerto 5) a grand *scena* for one of more voices, and 6) a closing symphony. The symphonies are mostly by Haydn, Pleyel, Wranitzky, and Mozart, and in general the instrumental music is for the most part by German masters; but the vocal music is mostly by the newest Italian composers, such as Sarti, Cherubini, Tritta, Zingarelli, Rispoli, and the like, because the Italian language is indisputably the most advantageous for song; however German and Latin oratorios are also sometimes performed. Thus for example, next Caecilia's Day *Das Lob der Tonkunst* by Schuster will be performed, on Christmas a Latin oratorio by Stamitz, and on Good Friday *Das sterbende Jesus* by Rosetti. The choruses are occupied by the seminary students here.
>
> (*) The July issue of the *Grazienbibliothek* prints her silhouette.

(See a transcription of the German original of this report here.)

A report in the *Musikalische Real-Zeitung* earlier that same year (likely by the same correspondent, judging by the similarities in wording) notes that the d'Aubigny sisters had taken the roles of Mary Magdalene and Peter in a performance of Paisiello's oratorio *La passione di Gesù Cristo* on Good Friday (10 Apr).

It is notable that the Kassel concerts included an intermission specifically for “conversation.” The string section of the orchestra at the winter concerts in Kassel (12 violins, 4 violas, 4 cellos, 2 contrabasses) was nearly identical in size to that of the Burgtheater in Vienna during Mozart’s era, the disposition of which was 6–6–4–3–3.

Notes (⇧)

For detailed background on the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* and its successor the *Musikalische Monathsschrift*, including a list of the references to Mozart in those journals, see the entry for 10 Oct 1791.

According to Deutsch (1964, 421), the passage mentioning Schubert’s performance at a party given by Nina d’Aubigny is found in a letter dated 10 Apr 1827 from Eduard Horstig to his parents in Bückeburg. Deutsch gives no primary or secondary citation for this letter, and its location is unclear.

Elsberger’s study of Nina d’Aubigny is a published version of his dissertation at the Univeristät Passau (2000). Elsberger notes that his book relies heavily on a large body of (mainly) unpublished research collected by Dietrich Erben (d. 1990). By and large, the “primary sources” cited in Elsberger’s book are actually Erben’s typescripts (see, for example, the list of “unpublished primary sources” on 295–96); unfortunately, the locations of Erben’s sources (which presumably survive) are not given. While the book is the most detailed study of Nina d’Aubigny to date, it should be considered far from the last word.

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Source Library: BSB, 4 Mus.th. 1492-1/2

Categories: Reception

First Published: Sun, 7 Dec 2014

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