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A piece by Mozart on a concert in New York City (6 Oct 1789)

Dexter Edge and David Black

The Daily Advertiser (New York), Fri, 2 Oct 1789

[3]

New-York Subscription Concert,

Of Vocal and Instrumental Music

The second CONCERT will be held at the City Tavern, on

TUESDAY, the 6th inst.

PLAN of the second CONCERT.

A C T Ist.

Overture,	Of J. Stamitz
Song,	Mrs. Sewell.
Concerto Clarinet,	Mr. Wolfe.
Solo Violoncello,	Mr. Capron.

A C T 2d.

CHORUS.

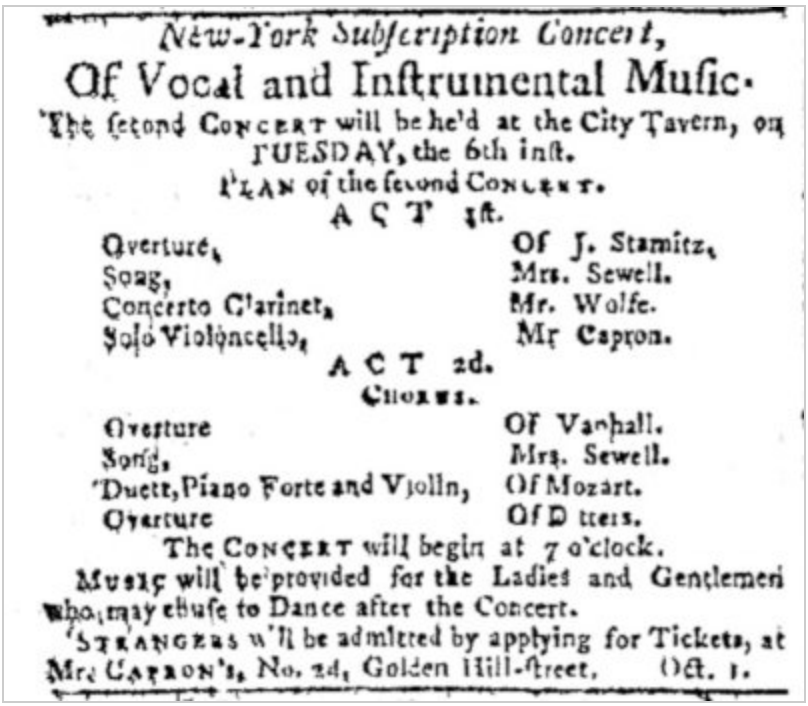
Overture	Of Vanhall.
Song,	Mrs. Sewell.
Duett, Piano Forte and Violin,	Of Mozart.
Overture	Of Ditters.

The CONCERT will begin at 7 o'clock.

MUSIC will be provided for the Ladies and Gentlemen who may chuse to Dance after the Concert.

STRANGERS will be admitted by applying for Tickets, at Mr. CAPRON's, No. 2[4], Golden Hill-street. Oct. 1.

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PLAN of the ſecond CONCERT.

ACT 1ſt.

Overture,	Of J. Stamitz,
Song,	Mrs. Sewell.
Concerto Clarinet,	Mr. Wolfe.
Solo Violoncello,	Mr Capron.

ACT 2d.

CHORUS.

Overture	Of Vanhall.
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Commentary

Only two performances of works by Mozart are known to have taken place in the United States during the composer's lifetime. The first was a piano sonata performed by Alexander Reinagle at a concert in Philadelphia on 14 Dec 1786 (see our entry for that date); the second, the topic of this entry, was a "Duett" for piano and violin at a concert in New York City on 6 Oct 1789, again most likely with Reinagle at the keyboard. Both performances have been known since Oscar Sonneck's classic *Early Concert-Life in America* (Sonneck 1907, here esp. 185–88) and have been mentioned fairly often in the secondary literature, but neither is included in *Dokumente* or its supplements.

The New York Subscription Concert was founded in fall 1785 by flutist William Brown (Sonneck 1907, 185). The following year Brown was one of four musicians (along with Reinagle, cellist Henri Capron, and violinist Alexander Juhan) who revived the "City Concerts" in Philadelphia; it was at the fifth concert of that series that Reinagle performed a Mozart piano sonata. The New York Subscription Concerts were revived by Reinagle in 1788, on 15 and 29 Sep, and 13 Oct, with the participation of Capron and a singer, "Mrs. Henry" (Sonneck 1907, 186). Reinagle and Capron organized a second series of three concerts in New York under the same rubric the following year, on 22 Sep, and 6 and 30 Oct. The "Duett" by Mozart was the next to last item in the second concert of that second series. Although Reinagle could apparently play the violin, his principal instrument was piano, and he was probably the pianist on 6 Oct 1789; the identity of the violinist remains unknown.

The City Tavern was on lower Broadway. Formerly the Province Arms, it had been taken over around the time of the British evacuation of New York in Nov 1783 by John Cape, who replaced its sign with the Arms of the State of New York, and it thus became known as the State Arms, or more generally as the City Tavern (Bayles 1915, 311–12). According to Bayles, on 28 Nov 1783, three days after the British evacuation:

> ... an elegant entertainment was given [in the City Tavern] by the citizens lately returned from exile to the Governor and Council for governing the city, to which Washington and the officers of the army were invited. On the following Tuesday, December 2d, at the same place, another such entertainment was given by Governor Clinton to the French Ambassador, Luzerne, to which invitations were also extended to Washington and his officers. For this Cape rendered a bill to the State, in which he made charge for 120 dinners, 135 bottles of Madeira, 36 bottles of Port, 60 bottles of English Beer and 30 Bowls of Punch. [Bayles 1915, 315]

Again according to Bayles (an engaging, but citation-free source):

> In February, 1786, Cape suddenly disappeared, leaving his creditors in the lurch. The furniture and all the stock in the tavern were sold out under execution by the sheriff, and the house was taken in March by Joseph Corré, who opened it as a traveler's house. [Bayles 1915, 324]

On 4 Jul 1786, the tenth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the City Tavern was the endpoint of a celebratory procession from City Hall, and it was also the site of the first assembly following the inauguration of George Washington as president at Federal Hall in New York on 30 Apr 1789 (New York was the capital of the United States at that time):

> The next regular assembly after the inauguration of the President was held at the City Tavern, then under the management of Edward Bardin, on Thursday, May 7th, which Washington was requested to honor with his presence. He accepted the invitation and was present as was also the Vice-President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, most of the members of both Houses of Congress, the Governor of New York, the Chancellor, the Chief Justice of the State, the Honorable John Jay, the Mayor of the city, the French and Spanish Ministers, Baron Steuben, the Count de Moustier, Colonel Duer and many other distinguished guests. A newspaper account states that "a numerous and brilliant collection of ladies graced the room with their appearance."
>
> *[...]*
>
> The company numbered about three hundred. Washington was the guest of honor. The festivities closed about two o'clock in the morning. [Bayles 1915, 337–38]

Unfortunately, it appears that no descriptions are known of musical events in New York's City Tavern.

A wide range of Mozart's works for violin and piano were available in print by 1789, ranging from his earliest published works for that combination (K. 6–9, 10–15, 24–25, and 26–31), through the sonatas and variations of his middle career (K. 296, 301–306, 359–360, 376–380), to his most recently published sonatas (K. 454, 481, 526). Only his final sonata for violin and piano, K. 547, was not available in print; it was not published during his lifetime. Given the generic listing "Duett" on the program for 6 Oct 1789, we cannot say which of these works might have been performed, or even if the work performed was a sonata. However, it is unlikely to have been one of the works from Mozart's childhood, which would have seemed old-fashioned to Reinagle by 1789. One of the six sonatas issued by Artaria in Vienna as op. 2 in 1781 (K. 296 and K. 376–380), and reprinted several times by other publishers by 1789, is arguably most likely. (We are grateful to Christopher J. Salmon for this point.)

The other items on the program were:

Overture of J. Stamitz

> Johann Stamitz (1717–1757), undoubtedly a symphony, rather than an opera overture.

Song, Mrs. Sewell

> "Mrs. Sewell," who sang unidentified "songs" in each half of the concert on 6 Oct 1789, has not been identified. She appeared as a performer on all three concerts of the New York Subscription series in 1789 and seems to have given a benefit concert of her own on 31 Oct 1789 (Sonneck 1907, 226).

Concerto Clarinet, Mr. Wolfe

> The soloist was clarinetist Andrew Wolfe (also Wolf, Wolff, Woolfe, d. 1820; see Ellsworth 2003). In addition to his performance of an unidentified clarinet concerto on 6 Oct 1789, Wolfe played a "Quartett Clarinet" at the third concert in the series on 30 Oct (Sonneck 1907, 188).

Solo Violoncello, Mr. Capron

> Cellist Henri Capron performed on all three concerts of the subscription series in the City Tavern in New York in 1789 (Sonneck 1907, 187–88), and he was also one of the organizers of and a frequent performer at the "City Concerts" in City Tavern in Philadelphia in 1786.

Overture of Vanhall

> Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739–1813), almost certainly a symphony (of which Vanhal wrote many) rather than an opera overture.

Overture of Ditters

> Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739–1799) wrote symphonies and operas, so we cannot be sure whether the work performed on 6 Oct 1789 was a symphony or an actual overture. Carl Ditters had been ennobled in 1773 as "Ditters von Dittersdorf", but it is possible that the organizers of the New York concert did not know this or (if they did) elected not to use his titled name in the advertisement.

We are grateful to Steven Whiting for his assistance with the research for this entry.

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