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The improvement of the orchestra of the Nationaltheater in Berlin under Wessely (with reference to *Figaro*) (Sep 1792)

Dexter Edge

Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Musikalische Monathsschrift*, 3. Stück, Sep 1792

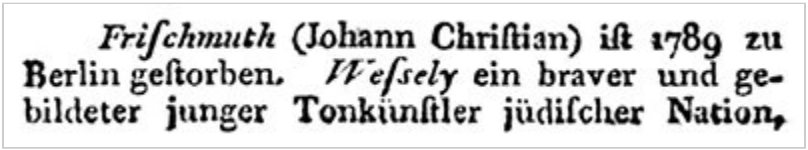
[65]

2. Fortsetzung der Berichtigungen und Zusätze zum
Gerberischen Lexicon der / Tonkünstler u.s.w. von J. F. Reichardt.

[...]

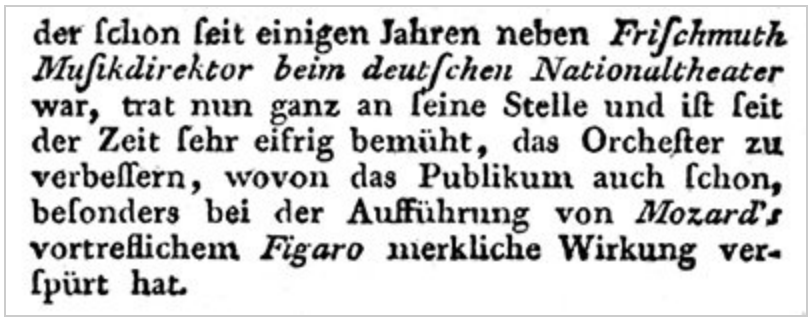
[71]

Frischmuth (Johann Christian) ist 1789 zu Berlin gestorben. *Wessely* ein braver und gebildeter junger Tonkünstler jüdischer Nation,


Frischmuth (Johann Christian) ist 1789 zu Berlin gestorben. Wessely ein braver und gebildeter junger Tonkünstler jüdischer Nation,

der schon seit einigen Jahren neben *Frischmuth Musikdirektor beim deutschen Nationaltheater* war, trat nun ganz an seine Stelle und ist seit der Zeit sehr eifrig bemüht, das Orchester zu verbessern, wovon das Publikum auch schon, besonders bei der Aufführung von *Mozard's* vortreflichem *Figaro* merkliche Wirkung verspürt hat.

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[translation:]

2. Continuation of Corrections and Additions to Gerber's *Lexicon der Tonkünstler*, etc., by J. F. Reichardt.

[...]

Frischmuth (Johann Christian) died in Berlin in 1789. *Wessely*, a fine and well-educated young musician of the Jewish nation, who for several years had been *Music Director* alongside F*rischmuth at the German National Theater*, now took over his position, and since that time has been diligently striving to improve the orchestra, of which the public has already felt a noticeable effect, especially in the performance of *Mozart's* excellent *Figaro*.

Commentary

In the inaugural issue of *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* in early Oct 1791, Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752–1814) published the first installment in a series devoted to "corrections and additions" ("Berichtigungen und Zusätze") to Ernst Ludwig Gerber's *Lexicon der Tonkünstler* (1790–92). Reichardt continued the series sporadically in subsequent issues of the *Wochenblatt*, and then in *Musikalische Monathsschrift*, the *Wochenblatt*'s successor.

The passage above is Reichardt's proposed addition to Gerber's article on Johann Christian Frischmuth (1741–1790), music director of the Nationaltheater in Berlin from 1785 until his death in 1790 (Reichardt gives Frischmuth's date of death as 1789). Reichardt's proposed addition concerns Bernhard Wessely (1768–1826), who from 1788 was second music director of the Nationaltheater under Frischmuth, and who took over as sole director following Frischmuth's death (for more on Wessely, see the entry for 23 Jun 1792). Reichardt notes that Wessely had been working hard to improve the theater's orchestra, and that this improvement was especially noticeable in performances of Mozart's "excellent" *Le nozze di Figaro* (performed in German in Berlin as *Die Hochzeit des Figaro*). Among other improvements, Wessely increased the size of the orchestra, from 18 players to around 40 (see Bauman 1985, 227, note 4). Gerber, in

his article on Frischmuth in volume 2 of the new edition of the *Lexikon* (1812) mentions that Wessely succeeded Frischmuth, but he omits Reichardt's comment about the improvement of the orchestra.

Notes (⇧)

Schwob (2015, 220–21) includes the notice transcribed above, without reference to its publication on our site in 2014. On *Musikalische Wochenblatt* and *Musikalische Monathsschrift* see the *Notes* to the entry for 10 Oct 1791.

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