

Italian Opera in Central Europe

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From the Hapsburgs to the Hanswursts, up to the Advent of Count Sporck: the Slow Progress of Italian Opera on the Bohemian Scene

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“Al cortese leggitore”

The golden age of Italian opera in the Czech lands spans the whole of the eighteenth century. It is well known that the first permanent establishment to put on a continuous series of performances open to the public was the theatre of Count Franz Anton von Sporck, directed by the company of Peruzzi and Denzio from 1724 onward. The background that led to Italian opera becoming an essential part of the Czech cultural panorama of the time is a fascinating study. Yet the picture is by no means uniform: gathering all the threads is not an easy task.

The performances organised by the Hapsburg court during their more or less lengthy and forced stays in Bohemia were important, though isolated occasions. Apart from these, the most notable contributions to the creation of a favourable milieu for the opera came from different but not mutually exclusive areas: the church world, the professional theatre (not necessarily only the musical one), and initiatives taken by individual aristocrats.

The information so far available has been reported in several papers: what shall be attempted here is a review that defines the ‘state of the art’ of research in this field. At the same time, the discussion will draw in some subjects that have not yet been thoroughly explored, and which suggest new readings for some parts, or even the whole, of this story.¹

¹ Standard reference studies of theatre and opera in Prague and Bohemia, remain essential to any research in this area, and have usefully informed the present paper. These include Oscar Teuber, *Geschichte des Prager Theaters. Von den Anfängen bis auf die neueste Zeit. Erster Teil* (Prague, 1883), and, more recently, František Černý (ed.), *Dějiny českého divadla* [History of Czech Theatre] I (Prague, 1968). To be singled out, in the latter volume, is Jaroslav Hach, “Operní divadlo v šlechtických rezidencích a na městských scénách [Opera theatre in the noble residences and on the town stages]”, p. 248-280 (detailed paper, but accessible only to Czech-language readers). In recent years Tomislav Volek and Daniel Freeman have devoted many studies to Italian opera in Prague, which I have consulted on many occasions. The most detailed and recent monograph on the great venture of the Sporck theatre is: Daniel E. Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Franz Anton von Sporck in Prague* (Stuyvesant N.Y., 1992; *Studies in Czech Music*, 2). Also useful is the concise “The Foundation of Italian Operatic Traditions in Prague”, in: Alberto Colzani and others (eds), *Il melodramma italiano in Italia e in Germania nell’età barocca. Atti del V Convegno internazionale sulla musica italiana del secolo XVII*, Loveno di Menaggio (Como) 1993 (Como, 1995), p. 115-125. Concerning the following period, but including also a retrospective view, are:

1. About the delay

The spreading of Italian opera in Prague after 1723 has been described in detail,² and there can be no doubt that, once established, it played a considerable rôle in the life of the Bohemian capital. Apart from the intense activity of the capital, the Bohemian-Moravian eighteenth century was characterised by a lively and refined theatrical activity, which was sponsored by a few aristocrats in their castles. One of the most well known patrons was Count Questenberg of Jaroměřice in Moravia, who began importing Italian opera, as well as promoting the production of local Italianate operas, as early as 1723. At the end of the 1720s, compositions by Caldara, Conti, and other musicians employed at the court of Vienna were performed in his theatre.³

The late entry of Prague and of its entire region into the class of European 'Italian opera colonies' has aroused many questions. The reasons for this delay have been attributed to the historical and political situation of the region: first of all, as a consequence of the battle of the White Mountain

Tomislav Volek, "Die Bedeutung der Prager Operntradition für das Entstehen des Don Giovanni und Titus", in: Divadelní ústav (ed.), *Mozarts Opern für Prag* (Prague, 1991), p. 22-100 (also printed in the original Czech version and in an English translation); id., "Italská opera a další druhy zpávaného divadla [Italian opera and other theatrical musical genres]", in: František Černý (ed.), *Divadlo v Kotcích 1739-1783* [The Kotzen Theatre 1739-1783] (Prague, 1992), p. 43-56 (German summary, p. 452-453). This book includes essays on various theatrical aspects (opera, comedy, Jesuits theatre, and so on): it is a useful comprehensive study of theatrical activities in Prague during the second half of the century. For a brief summary included in a general history of Czech opera, see also: John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 13-19. On the situation in Moravia, see also specifically Jiří Sehnal, "Počátky opery na Moravě" [The Beginnings of Opera in Moravia], in: Eduard Petřů and J. Stýskal (eds), *O divadle na Moravě* [On Theatre in Moravia], p. 55-77 (Prague, 1974).

² For further bibliographical references, see the papers quoted above. The author wishes to point out the intense researches, leading to several Master's and Ph.D. dissertations, of the Charles University Music Department in Prague. Moreover, an international research-project financed by UNESCO, including the University of Pavia, the Charles University of Prague, and the University and Academy of Sciences of Vienna, will produce, among other initiatives, a database regarding Italian opera in Czech lands.

³ For a general but very useful outlook, see: *Czech Theatre: Théâtre Tchèque*, 7 (1994): *Castle Theatres in Bohemia and Moravia: Les théâtres de château en Bohême et Moravie* (ed. Divadelní ústav Praha). Supplied with many pictures, and with both French and English texts, the issue briefly explains the features of the theatrical production of the main castles. Excellent are the studies about Jaroměřice carried out by Vladimír Helfert, *Hudební barok na českých zámcích: Jaroměřice za hraběte Jana Adama z Questenberku* [Musical Baroque in the Czech castles: Jaroměřice under Count Johann Adam von Questenberg] (Prague, 1916), and *Hudba na jaroměřickém zámku* [Music in the Castle of Jaroměřice] (Prague, 1924). For more up-to-date research, see the papers recently published in: *Sborník prací filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity*, 31 (1996): Rudolf Pečman, "Schloß Jaromeřice und seine Musikkultur im 18. Jahrhundert", p. 5-11; Theodora Straková, "Die Questenbergische Musikkapelle und ihr Repertoire", p. 13-23; Jana Perutková, "Einige Bemerkungen zur Mičas Opera Serenada *Der glorreiche Nahmen Adami*", p. 25-30; Elisabeth Theresia Hilscher, "F. V. Mičas Fastenoratorium von 1727 und die Wiener Sepolcro-Tradition", p. 31-37.

(1620), during which the Czechs were defeated by the Imperials, and secondly, because, by the end of the Thirty Years War, Bohemia was devastated, without a resident court, and deprived of most of the local aristocracy (drastically purged for joining Protestantism).⁴ The emperor granted estates to the war aristocrats, i.e. to those who had acquired a title for their military merits: often they were foreigners, in particular Germans, who thereby replaced the Bohemian aristocracy. It took one, if not two, generations for the new nobility to settle in the region and to express their own cultural trends, which had a strong influence on life in Prague and Bohemia. But in practice, for opera, one must await the 1720s.⁵ This interpretation of the events is undeniably true: for Bohemia, war meant the loss of independence, and the Hapsburg retaliation was heavy from all points of view. The possibility that the audience and the patronage for a “*spettacolo da principi*” such as opera would grow during the second half of the century was seriously jeopardised. Moreover, the new Bohemian aristocrats (together with the local nobles who had chosen Catholicism) participated directly in the Empire’s politics, as advisors, diplomats, and ministers. Their time was spent mainly in Vienna, where there were probably enough opera performances to fulfil their longing for theatre.⁶

However, an insistence on Prague suffering from a delay in its absorption of Italian opera rests on at least two arguments, both of which I would like to problematise in order to reopen debate on the interpretation of events that, not without reason, has so far been proposed. The first argument affirms that Prague *could not not have had Italian opera*, had its development not been

⁴ For a Czech reading of this tormented chapter of history, see Josef V. Polišenský’s classic *Tricetiletá valka a evropské krize XVII století* (Prague, 1970), English translation by R. Evans, *The Thirty Years War* (Berkeley - Los Angeles, 1971), and Italian translation by Enrico Basaglia, *La guerra dei trent’anni* (Turin, 1982).

⁵ See the outline traced in Tomislav Volek, “L’opera veneziana a Praga nel Settecento”, in: Maria Teresa Muraro (ed.), *L’opera italiana a Vienna prima di Metastasio* (Florence, 1990), p. 193-206: 193-195: it briefly summarises the above-mentioned historical events, but also usefully explains how they have been generally interpreted. See also Freeman, “Foundation of Italian Operatic Traditions in Prague”, p. 117-118.

⁶ To participate directly in the life of the Viennese court involved considerable theatrical and musical practical activity on the part of resident aristocrats, including the Bohemians. Viennese scores preserving the performances of ladies and gentlemen at court frequently give a detailed list of the performers, who often included Černín, Harrach, and so on. An example: Antonio Draghi and Nicolò Minato’s *La Chimera*, composed in 1682 and performed by the court musicians, was adapted and newly revived by aristocrats in 1692. See also Herbert Seifert, *Die Oper am Wiener Kaiserhof im 17. Jahrhundert* (Tutzing, 1985), p. 354. The following are cited at the head of the score (manuscript A-Wn, Mus. Hs. 16845): *Cotti: Il s.’ Co. Zernini, Gentih.º di Cam.º di S.M.C.; Acco: la Sig.ª Contessa Zernini; Hipparco: Il s.’ Co. Carlo di Waldestein, Gentih.º di Cam.º di S.M.C.; Arpesia: la Sig.ª Contessa di Waldestein; Mamerco: Il s.’ Co. Wr̄bna Gentih.º di Cam.º di S.M. il Re dei Romani*. Moreover, in the dances, Count Nostitz, *Gentih.º di Cam.º di S.M.C.* is quoted. We should point out that despite their participation to the Viennese theatrical life, these nobles never tried to compete with the court’s theatrical activities, even in their Viennese residences.

interrupted abruptly by historical and political events: having regular theatrical seasons only from 1724 onward would represent therefore the retrieval *in extremis* of a tradition that would otherwise have become popular well before; hence the sensation of delay. Taking into account accepted facts, such as the refinement of Humanistic and Renaissance Bohemian culture or the richness of cultural, civil, and musical life before the defeat at the White Mountain, and observing the situation from the outside, we naturally ask ourselves: why this necessity? If Prague could have continued speaking Czech, could have freely embraced Protestantism, could have chosen a king not belonging to the Hapsburg family, would Italian opera really have constantly flourished already in the seventeenth century? Maybe, instead, Prague would have attempted to adapt musical activities to its own cultural needs, probably in Czech, and with the contamination of other theatrical experiences, as happened elsewhere in the Protestant milieu of Northern Germany.

The second point is that to speak of delay presupposes a strong development of Italian opera from the 1650s onward in areas similar to Bohemia (similar in their geopolitical situation, economical organisation, and the presence of a large influential Italian community): such a comparison inverts the perspective, and instead suggests that Prague was one of the first towns in mid-Eastern Europe to successfully maintain constant public operatic activity, without having a resident court or an institution typical of republican commercial towns such as Venice or Hamburg. It was also the first town to acquire its own repertory directly from Italy. Other towns, such as Braunschweig or Leipzig, where public theatres already existed at the end of the seventeenth century, are exceptions to the rule: in any case, they are not comparable to Prague, whose trade situation at the time was much less favourable than that of the German towns. Generally speaking, the great European circulation of Italian opera begins after the 1720s, regardless of single operatic productions connected with specific situations, similar to the Hapsburg Bohemian productions. The passion of individual princes and kings, sometimes supported by their illustrious wives born Gonzaga or Medici, often determined the seventeenth-century operatic *exploit*: more or less sudden or protracted, it was inevitably bound to fail with the sponsor's death. An exemplary case is that of Warsaw, where Italian opera flourished between 1634 and 1648, during Wladislaw IV's reign: 10 operas (less than one per year) were produced, but the king's death caused the abrupt interruption of the activity, which was resumed only at the end of the century when the political situation had completely changed. Therefore, in addition to the specific situation of Bohemia, there is also an internal reason to Italian opera history that explains the presumed delay for its definitive flourishing in the area.

Full answers to these questions must wait for future research. The rest of this article addresses the different elements that created the conditions which, in 1724, allowed the company of Peruzzi and Denzio, sponsored by Count

Franz Anton von Sporck, to pave the way for the golden age of Italian opera in Bohemia.

2. “O fortunato, e d’ogni gracia adorno | più d’altro felicissimo paese”: What it could have become

Prague, capital of Bohemia, chosen by Rudolf II as the seat of the Hapsburg court, and being a culturally and economically rich town, could have adopted the model of court opera: the opera history of the region seemed to begin in this direction. Rudolf had always paid attention to Italian musical novelties, and the Czech milieu was musically rather up-to-date. Matthias, his successor as king of Bohemia from 1611, moved the imperial court back to Vienna; in October 1612, just before the transfer, Prague welcomed Francesco Rasi, one of the early operatic scene’s leading tenors, and first performer of Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*.⁷

Prague’s link to Italian musical culture on one hand, and to the Empire on the other, was never completely broken, in spite of the loss of such an important centre as the resident court. During carnival 1617, the aristocracy organised a theatrical performance in Vladislav Hall at Prague Castle in honour of Emperor Matthias.⁸ It was not really an opera, but a set of dances and

⁷ For details, see Herbert Seifert, “Monteverdi und die Habsburger”, in: Silke Leopold and Joachim Steinheuer (eds), *Claudio Monteverdi und die Folgen. Bericht über das Internationale Symposium Detmold 1993* (Kassel, 1998), p. 77-91, here 87; id., “Beiträge zur Frühgeschichte der Monodie in Österreich”, *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft*, 31 (1980), p. 7-33, here 8-9.

⁸ “Desiderando alcuni Cavag[lie]ri principali della corte di sua M[ae]stà Ces[ar]ea per servire, e dare alla M[ae]stà sua, & della Imperatrice un diletto passatempo, d’introdurre un balletto con inventione non più veduta in questa Corte [...]” (“A few noblemen of the court of His Royal Majesty, wishing, by way of serving, and to offer a delightful entertainment to His Majesty and the Empress, to present a *Balletto* with invention never before seen at this court [...]): so begins the description of the *balletto*. For a complete transcription with original Italian and German text side by side, see Herbert Seifert, “Das erste Libretto des Kaiserhofes”, *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft*, 46 (1998), p. 35-75; for a thorough commentary of the text, also including the engravings related to the description, see id., “Das erste Musikdrama des Kaiserhofes”, in: Elisabeth Theresia Hilscher (ed.), *Österreichische Musik – Musik in Österreich. Beiträge zur Musikgeschichte Mitteleuropas. Theophil Antonicek zum 60. Geburtstag* (Vienna, 1998), p. 99-111. The *balletto* was also called *Phasma Dionysiacum pragense* in a single folio preserving a brief German-language description of the entertainment and a set engraving: see also Tomislav Volek and Stanislav Jareš (eds), *Dějiny české hudby v obrazech* [The History of Czech Music in Pictures] (Prague, 1977), no. 125, with explanations of the picture in several languages (in English at p. 448). As a completion to the bibliography given by Seifert, “Das erste Musikdrama”, p. 100, the following articles in *Sborník prací filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity*, 29 (1994), should also be noted: Jaroslav Pánek, “*Phasma Dionysiacum* und die manieristischen Festlichkeiten auf der Prager Burg im Jahre 1617 (der zeitliche und typologische Rahmen)”, p. 33-44; and Miloš Štedroň and Miloslav Študent, “*Phasma Dionysiacum musicae*”, p. 45-62. The above-mentioned

recited sections, together with music to Italian texts, arranged in a luxurious choreographical frame (as one can infer from surviving descriptions and engravings). The entire event was certainly inspired by modern Italian celebrative spectacles.⁹

It is not necessary to dwell at length on this performance, but a few details should be mentioned. The extraordinary performance was supported and organised by Baron Wilhelm von Slawata together with the Jesuits: it represents not only a personal investment from one of the most ambitious and rich Catholic Bohemian aristocrats, but also implies both a cultural and a political project. Slawata and the radical Catholics aimed at reinforcing the bond between the House of Austria and the Bohemian Crown in view of the forthcoming coronation of the king of Bohemia,¹⁰ by celebrating “Austrian Glory” as well as the best qualities of their own country. The references to Bohemia are explicit: the chorus of poets sings the praises of Bohemia (13 lines), before the apparition, in a cloud, of the *Gloria dell’Augustissima, & invittissima Casa d’Austria*; Libussa, the mythical queen of Bohemia, participates at the ball with other heroes and heroines. Among the gentlemen dancers, we also find names of the Bohemian nobility.¹¹ All considered, the 1617 performance has more to do with the pro-Hapsburg propaganda of a Catholic minority that plotted against Protestant Bohemia, than about a precocious vocation of the region for new musical spectacles coming from Italy.

3. What it became: performances sporadically throughout the seventeenth century

The 1618 ‘Bohemian rebellion’, the Thirty Years War, and all its consequences effectively blocked any possibility of establishing a celebrative court opera. It could, hypothetically, have developed in Bohemia, eventually supported either by a vice-court of Vienna, or by some powerful wealthy aristocrat willing to compete with the capital, or to use the theatre for personal promotion, as was the case of Slawata in 1617. Yet it is obvious that, once

papers report the performance in detail; see also the article by Herbert Seifert in the present volume.

⁹ See also the reflections expressed by Seifert in “Das erste Musikdrama”, p. 99-100, on the actual circulation of opera during the first half of the seventeenth century.

¹⁰ Slawata had acquired a conspicuous patrimony by means of marriage, but he did not belong to the Bohemian elite: a hindrance in reaching the most brilliant positions of a political career. The entertainments organised in 1617 must be read also as a personal and familiar promotion. On this aspect, as well as on the historical and political context and the other performances, see Panek, “*Phasma Dionysiacum*”. Further research on the family documents regarding the financial support to the 1617 spectacle is needed.

¹¹ The praises of Bohemia begin with the couplet quoted in the present section’s title: see Seifert, “Das erste Libretto”, p. 56. For a complete list of the gentlemen, see p. 74. Libussa was performed by Baron von Brandis.

the political and cultural differences were cleared, and because of the drastic lack of personal resources after the war, there were no incentives to face such efforts as the preparation of an opera. Apart from the specific situation of the Bohemian Crown, the time was not yet ripe for regular opera performances by professional companies without court patronage. Therefore the seventeenth century operatic events in Prague were exclusively linked to the presence of the Hapsburgs and to their celebrative and non-celebrative demands and were performed by court musicians. The performances were inevitably sporadic during the whole century and in fact we have no more than three proper operas and a few minor theatrical pieces.

Ferdinand III's coronation as king of Bohemia in 1627 was celebrated in Prague with several musical and theatrical performances, among which the first proper opera given in the Czech lands, *Calisto e Arcade*.¹² Traditionally, the next occasion is thought to be the arrival in 1648 of the court with its musicians, when Giovanni Felice Sances's *I trionfi d'amore* was, apparently, performed. As a matter of fact, sources reveal that Sances in Prague organised the rehearsal for the performance that was to take place in Linz.¹³ Only later, in 1680, was a new opera to be staged at the Castle.

During the Thirty Years War, all theatrical activities were obviously in enormous straits, with the unique exception of the theatre promoted by the Jesuits, a powerful and characteristic presence of the Bohemian-Moravian (and mid-European in general) context for a long time. After the battle of the White Mountain, the Jesuits in fact organised all education above the primary level in Bohemia: in Prague the *Clementinum* absorbed the *Carolinum*, a 'laical' institution with some Protestant tendencies; the other important University centre of the country at Olomouc (Moravia) was already Jesuit.¹⁴ It is then useful to evaluate if this encumbering presence influenced the potential development of other theatrical genres. Significant insight into this is provided in the account of Giovanni Battista Andreini, who took part to in the 1627 celebrations, writing from Prague to Ercole Marliani:

[...] Signor Hercole, mio signore, le prometto che questo imperatore [Ferdinando II], questa imperatrice [Eleonora Gonzaga], non sono tanto amati, ma sì bene adorati. Le bellezze di Praga, poi, è meglio tacerle che ombreggiarle; sono infine grandissime. Le nostre commedie piacciono fuor del segno del bene; chi piace più, chi meno, e se v'è alcuno di bassa lega passa sotto la fattura di belle commedie. [...] I Giesuiti sono i comici della Germania, or consideri come ne tratteranno: o qui ci vuol ben San Tomaso e tutti e santi delle

¹² See Seifert, *Die Oper am Wiener Kaiserhof*, p. 432-433, including a list of the theatrical events organised for the occasion.

¹³ Seifert, *Die Oper am Wiener Kaiserhof*, p. 39-40.

¹⁴ See Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire: 1526-1918* (Berkeley, 1977), here on quoted from the recent Italian translation: *Storia dell'impero asburgico (1526-1918)* (Rome, 1998) p. 173.

eletanie a far conoscere ch'essi comici sieno di Paradiso e noi (?) di casa al diavolo. L'imperatrice poi (et è così) porta grande affezione alla Florinda e a me, e gode oltremodo di queste commedie [...].¹⁵

Andreini clearly considers the Jesuit theatre, then flourishing in Bohemia and generally in central Europe, a serious rival for professional companies. This interesting point of view for the history of Bohemian theatre confirms well-known facts, but also suggests the definition of political and cultural priorities in the theatrical environment: in the middle of a religious war, it was probably easier to give more importance to the confessional propaganda of the Jesuit scholastic theatre, rather than to the secular one of the temporal power that was forcefully affirming itself by other means.

Moreover, the costs of the Jesuit theatre were surely more suitable to war and post war times than the high cost of opera. The encumbering presence of the Jesuits has been said to be one of the reasons that, directly or indirectly, impeded the affirmation of the professional theatre of the comedians' companies.¹⁶

Historical events (from the transfer of the court up to the war), Jesuit competition, costs of opera production, lack of alternative courts other than Vienna, and also internal reason within the opera genre, which had still to achieve widespread European circulation, all together suffice to explain why so few operas were performed during the first half of the seventeenth century in Prague.

In 1648 peace was restored, the estates were redistributed in order to pay the debts of the supporters of the Holy Roman Empire, the Bohemian Crown was once again included in the Catholic area: the general situation was slowly brought back to normal, although economic and political conditions of the country were not favourable for the development of a proper Italian opera tradition. The new aristocracy undertook the reorganisation of their estates and settled in the territory; the domain was without a court, ruled from a distance by Vienna, therefore reduced to the status of a province.¹⁷ The war and

¹⁵ "Sir Hercules, my Lord, I assure you that the Emperor [Ferdinand II] and the Empress [Eleonora Gonzaga] are not beloved, but adored. Moreover, it is better not to mention at all the beauties of Prague rather than to throw shade on them; in fact they are so many. Our comedies are well appreciated; some more, some less, and even if some are poor they are in some way considered pleasant [...] The Jesuits are the comedians of Germany, so imagine how they treat us: here one really needs St. Thomas together with all the saints in order to prove that they are the comedians of Heaven and we (?) of Hell. Moreover the Empress (it is true) is very fond of Florinda and me, and enjoys these comedies. [...]". Letter from Prague by Giovanni Battista Andreini to Ercole Marliani, dated 4 December 1627, included in Claudia Burattelli, Domenica Landolfi and Anna Zinanni (eds), *Comici dell'arte. Corrispondenze* (Florence, 1993), vol. 1, p. 142.

¹⁶ See Adolph Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag 1680–1739* (Vienna, 1999), p. 9.

¹⁷ In 1627, Bohemia had lost the right to vote for the king of Bohemia with the *Vernewerte Landesordnung* (see Kann, *Storia dell'impero asburgico*, p. 70) and the Czech Crown had passed to the Hapsburgs until extinction of the royal descendants. Moreover the Crown had

forced emigration decimated the population. The bourgeois middle-classes, although revealing lively cultural interests, could not financially support the institution of regular operatic activity.¹⁸ Moreover, the Jesuits still dominated the theatrical world and probably completely met the demand for entertainment expressed by the public of the time. Ecclesiastical influence was not limited to theatrical entertainments, but extended across the entire fabric of musical life. The religious orders possessed instruments and music, the repertory of private citizens seems directed towards sacred music, and the seventeenth century musical archives extant today are mostly ecclesiastical.¹⁹ Nobody in fact had the chance (nor the interest) to promote a spectacle that under different circumstances was to find a wide circulation in Europe after the 1650s. This was possible only where the intention to transmit a certain "image of sovereignty" induced even the smallest court to contact impresarios and their companies. This phenomenon completely depended on both the personal choices of the sovereign and on dynastical successions: for example, the extinction of a lineage or the marriage to an Italian princess heavily determined the changing panorama of the circulation of Italian opera in Europe.²⁰

Professional theatre, musical or not, met with the same obstacles until the last decades of the century: even the *Wandertruppen* of German comedians had to wait a long time before their presence in Prague became permanent. 1680 is a significant year for musical theatre, as the presence of the imperial court in Prague (which will be discussed later on) marks an important stage in the history of opera. It is theatre as a whole, however, that around this time

ceded northern lands to Saxony; after the defeat at the White Mountain, the Diet of the Estates lost almost all its rights (Kann, *Storia dell'impero asburgico*, p. 158-159). On the economic and social consequences, see Kann, *Storia dell'impero asburgico*, p. 148 and 161-164.

¹⁸ On the artistic collectionism and the 'cultural investments' generally of the inhabitants of the Old City of Prague after the defeat at the White Mountain, see Zdeněk Hojda, "Výtvarná díla v domech staroměstských měšťanů v letech 1627-1740. Příspěvek k dějinám kultury barokní Prahy [Works of art in the bourgeois houses of the Old City in 1627-1640. Some notes on the history of culture of Baroque Prague], I", and "Kulturní investice staroměstských měšťanů v letech 1627-1740. Příspěvek k dějinám kultury barokní Prahy [Cultural investments of the Old City bourgeoisie in 1627-1640. Some notes on the history of culture of Baroque Prague] II", respectively: *Pražský sborník historický*, 26 (1993), p. 38-102, and 27 (1994), p. 47-104, both with German abstract. In the second paper, music is specifically discussed (p. 66-68): inventories and legacies reveal lively musical interests, witnessed by the quantity of musical instruments (above all keyboard and plucked instruments) and by the music books mentioned. The repertory mentioned is mostly sacred.

¹⁹ For instance, the archives of the monastery of Osek, in Northern Bohemia, or the significant one of the bishop of Olomouc, Karl von Lichtenstein-Castelcorn (his catalogue is mentioned later in this article); see Kamila Hálová and Jiří Mikuláš, "Le fonti musicali italiane del Settecento e della prima metà dell'Ottocento in Boemia e Moravia", *Le fonti musicali in Italia*, 6 (1992), p. 8-23 (although the situation of the archive has changed since this article was written).

²⁰ Lorenzo Bianconi, *Il Seicento* (Turin, 1982), p. 225.

is finally enjoying a more prosperous climate after the difficult period following the defeat at the White Mountain. An important factor for change at the end of the century was the new interest of the more or less recent aristocracy towards art, culture, and theatre. After the consolidation of the economic and political positions of the new aristocrats, their descendents could afford to support patronage.²¹ This provided a favourable context for the artistic and cultural development of the region: results were almost immediate for the professional theatre, while opera had to wait to consolidate its presence in Bohemia; but for many aspects the turning-point is, for opera too, located in the last twenty years of the seventeenth century.

As mentioned earlier, 1680 is significant for the history of Italian opera in Bohemia because, after decades of absence, the imperial court stayed for a few months in Prague, to escape from the plague raging in Vienna. The Hapsburg suite also included the court musicians: Prague received musical performances that normally took place in Vienna. Sometimes the theatrical-musical wave also touched smaller towns along the route of the imperial company, like for instance Pardubice where, in June 1680, on the way back to Vienna, the court celebrated Leopold I's anniversary with *Gli obblighi dell'universo*, a great cantata similar to a small opera. In actual terms, the only positive consequence of the Czech season of Leopold's court seems to be the addition of a new title to the list of the court operas occasionally performed in Bohemia: *La pazienza di Socrate con due mogli* by Antonio Draghi.²² Compared to the previous sporadic occasions on which Prague had welcomed imperial opera, however, this case differs in that its purpose was not to celebrate an event of importance to the House of Austria. Rather, it was a carnival opera, probably with an allegorically disguised political content, but certainly with a *divertissement* character.

After the Hapsburgs had left, it seems that the population was not sufficiently impressed by the musical events as to be induced to autonomously produce opera performances. Generally speaking, all the operas promoted by the imperial court in the region seem not to have influenced the strong development of the theatrical demands which followed in Bohemia.

A libretto dated 1689, unnoticed up to now, is the only source of what probably was the last Prague opera performance of the seventeenth century, and apparently the first one autonomously produced independently from the Hapsburg court. The libretto was printed in Prague and is preserved in

²¹ Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 9-10.

²² For a detailed treatment of this opera, see Angela Romagnoli, "Galline, «specolationi» e pene d'amore: La Pazienza di Socrate con due mogli di Draghi e Minato (Praga 1680)", in: Emilio Sala and Davide Daolmi (eds), *«Quel novo Cario, quel divin Orfeo»: Antonio Draghi da Rimini a Vienna* (Lucca, 2000; *ConNotazioni*, 7), p. 171-223. On the general impact of the musical presence of the court in Prague, see also, in the same volume, Marc Niubó, "Le cappelle imperiali e la stagione praghese 1679-80", p. 291-319.

Vienna:²³ *L'Erminia pastorella. Scherzo drammatico per musica. Da rappresentarsi per l'Illust[rissi].me & Eccel[lentissi].me Signorie de' Cavalieri e Dame di Praga nel corrente carnevale* (Prague, printed in 1689 for Carl'Arnolfo di Dobroslavina). This libretto is interesting for several reasons. First of all, it was not an opera produced for the court: the title-page quotes "cavalieri e dame di Praga" and the fact that the opera was performed during carnival, a 'civil' season, and not a celebrative occasion, confirms the 'normality' of the event, compared to the great entertainments for weddings, coronations, and court celebrations. The expression "per [...] cavalieri e dame" is ambiguous in the Italian of the time: we could assume it was a performance organised by a professional company *per* (for enjoyment by) Prague's public; but it is slightly odd that the impresario eventually did not print a more detailed and signed dedication, as was usually the case. Alternatively, the *per* could be read as "by", meaning that *Erminia* was performed by ladies and gentlemen for their own pleasure; but in this case the lack of references to the place and the actual participants of the performance also seems strange. As a final reading, this *scherzo drammatico* could have been organised "on the initiative of" Prague's ladies and gentlemen, who could have contacted a theatrical company and financed the performance. The subject, deriving from Tasso, lends itself to all hypotheses: the type of *favola* is suitable for a self-production by the aristocrats, but it would not have been an unusual subject for a professional company to have tackled. Not long before the *Erminia* in Prague, operas on the same subject were performed in Düsseldorf: in 1687 an *Erminia ne boschi. Divertimento musicale rappresentato nel giorno natalizio [...] dell'arciduchessa Maria Anna d'Austria per comando [...] del duca di Giuliers prencipe elettorale palatino et alla medesima altezza consacrato. Posto in musica dal sign. D. Sebastiano Moratelli [...] con l'arie per li balli del sig. Giorgio Crafft*, and in 1688 an *Erminia al campo*.²⁴ Seemingly, they are the only operas (in all of Europe) chronologically close to the *Erminia pastorella*. Although it is impossible to establish a direct connection between these operas, it is not senseless to presume a certain influence, at least on the choice of the subject, also considering the relationship between Moratelli, the court of Düsseldorf, and Vienna.

²³ A-Wn, Musiksammlung, 407.374 A-M TB. I am indebted to the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften for its support during my stay in Vienna, during which I was able to personally examine the libretto.

²⁴ The librettist of these operas, Giorgio Maria Rappardini, had a German career, especially in Wolfenbüttel and Düsseldorf; the composer, Moratelli, had contacts with the Viennese court and with the elector of the Palatinate. In *Erminia ne boschi's* libretto, Moratelli is described as "capellano d'onore della [...] arciduchessa e musico di camera di S.M.C.". From 1691 he was among the altos of the imperial chapel: see Ludwig von Köchel, *Die kaiserliche Hof-Musikkapelle in Wien von 1543 bis 1867* (Vienna, 1869). On Moratelli, Rappardini, and the performances in Düsseldorf, see also Heinrich Riemenschneider, *Tanz und Hofoper in der Residenz Düsseldorf* (Cologne, 1972; *Die Tanzarchiv-Reihe*, 13-14), p. 18-21, and id., *Theatergeschichte der Stadt Düsseldorf*, (Düsseldorf, 1987), vol. 1, p. 61-63.

Another interesting coincidence consists in the 1689 libretto's use of the same expression of *scherzo drammatico per musica* as was used in 1680 for *La pazienza di Socrate*; the printing house is the same, although the libretto of the *Pazienza* was engraved by Giovanni and that of *Erminia* by "Carlo Arnolto di Dobroslavina". The opera by Draghi and Minato might have sown a few seeds in Bohemia after all...²⁵

In between the stay of the Hapsburgs in Prague and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the theatrical panorama was still dominated by the Jesuits' scholastic theatre. The only relevant novelty is the unclamorous presence of the comedians, that will assume – as we will see further on – an important rôle in the circulation of opera. Nevertheless, at the end of the century, we can trace a few weak signals of interest for opera and for the idea of endowing Prague with an opera-house. The above-mentioned *Erminia*, however the title-page is read, represents a signal of the autonomous attention of the city for Italian opera. Moreover, at the end of the century, Count Černín definitively expressed the desire to open an opera-house in the Bohemian capital, and discussed the idea with Nicolaus Adam Strungk, a composer active in Dresden and organiser of the theatrical activities in Leipzig.²⁶

4. Exceptions to the rules

The panorama traced so far corresponds to an average situation that may be found in the region. But not all seventeenth-century Bohemian nobles were of recent appointment, nor had the entire original Czech aristocracy been expelled: those who had embraced the right confessional cause had preserved and enforced their positions and were the bearers of ancient, learned traditions. At the same time, not all those who had acquired credits from the emperor were skilled but rough and uneducated soldiers; amongst them there were also aristocrats of ancient tradition and of conspicuous finances, willing to patronise art and culture.

An example case of importance for the history of opera in the region is that of the Eggenbergs, a noble family from Styria, which in 1622 received the estate of Český Krumlov in South Bohemia in exchange for their, mainly

²⁵ It would be interesting to evaluate if there was a reception of the opera in the 1680 carnival season, but I have not yet found enough elements. *L'Erminia* could be an important turning-point of the Italian opera history in Prague, but it requires further discussion.

²⁶ We can trace these contacts in a letter from Strungk to Černín dated 23 September 1698: see Jan Port, "Divadelní výtvarníci staré Prahy" [Theatrical Productions of Old Prague], in: *Kniha o Praze III* [Book on Prague III] (Prague, 1932), p. 70-120, in particular p. 72 and 102. For a commentary, see Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 10; Hach, "Operní divadlo", p. 256; Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 19. Strungk was *Kapellmeister* in Dresden between 1693 and 1696. To date, this important element has always been considered without consequences: The subject will be discussed below, in the section, "Theatre revival: the situation at the beginning of the eighteenth century".

financial, support of the imperial war effort. Hans Ulrich Eggenberg, who received the gift from Ferdinand II (who in 1628 conferred the rank of principedom to Bohemia) was bound to Italy and to music in many ways: he was in fact a Hapsburg diplomat in Rome. Concerning his contacts with opera, it is significant to note that in 1632 the first performance of Stefano Landi's *S. Alessio* not only inaugurated the Barberini Theatre, but also honoured the presence of Hans Ulrich in Rome.²⁷ Johann Anton, his successor, also received musical attention from Roman circles: the family cultivated long-standing, though indirect, interests in musical theatre. In 1665 Johann Christian, grandson of Krumlov's first prince, moved his residence to the Bohemian estates and enthusiastically cultivated music and theatre. His activity in this field is relevant for at least four reasons: the construction of the castle's theatre, begun in the 1680s;²⁸ the appointment of a permanent company of comedians; the re-establishment of the musical chapel, which flourished under his Rožmberk predecessors;²⁹ the collection of Italian opera scores, some of which still survive.³⁰

The theatre certainly welcomed comedy performances as well as scholastic dramas of the local Jesuits, although we know very little of the exact repertory and the calendar of the performances. It is quite certain that there is no direct correspondence between the music collection and the opera performances: scholars dealing with this subject have not yet found traces of early opera seasons, nor do the scores reveal marks testifying to practical use. Nonetheless the "Krumlov case" is a testimony to the cultural interests of Bohemian aristocrats. A valuable heritage, albeit from the eighteenth century, of costumes, wings, stage machinery, and accessories still survives. On the other hand, it cannot be considered to have acted as a bridge for Italian

²⁷ See the preface by Sandra Righetti to: Stefano Landi, *Il S. Alessio*, facsimile ed. (Bologna, 1974; *Bibliotheca Musica Bononiensis*, Sezione IV/11), where Eggenberg is not clearly identified with Hans Ulrich Eggenberg from Styria. On the relationship between the Eggenbergs and music, particularly opera, a detailed article by Lucie Chvátílová, "Venezia e Český Krumlov: su alcune fonti boeme per l'opera veneziana", is forthcoming. I owe much of the information that follows to this article.

²⁸ It is still possible today to visit the theatre of the castle, completely restored in the mid-eighteenth century; it represents one of the world's most original and fascinating theatrical monuments. Apart from Czech bibliography, on Český Krumlov see Vera Ptáčková (ed.), *The Baroque Theatre in the Chateau of Český Krumlov. Miscellany of Papers for a Special Seminar (Český Krumlov 27.9.–30.9.1993)* ([Prague], 1993), and, in the above-mentioned *Czech Theatre: Théâtre Tchèque*: Jan Pömerl, "Life in the Wings", p. 2-11; Jiří Hilmera, "The Chateau Theatre in Český Krumlov", p. 12-26; Kateřina Cichrová, "The Wardrobe of the Baroque Theatre", p. 27-31; Vladimír Adamczyk, "The Magic of the Baroque Stage", p. 32-42.

²⁹ The chapel included also a castrato, who was, exceptionally, not Italian; see Chvátílová, "Venezia e Český Krumlov", and Lucie Chvátílová and Ladislav Švestka, "The Eggenbergs and their Operatic Interests Supplemented by the Transcription of some Archive Sources", in: Ptáčková (ed.), *The Baroque Theatre*, p. 77-91.

³⁰ Specifically on these scores, see Chvátílová, "Venezia e Český Krumlov".

opera's entry into Bohemia: Eggenberg's scores seem to correspond to a personal passion, without playing a rôle in the circulation of the genre; opera never became an 'enterprise' here.³¹

During the seventeenth century, it was mainly the ecclesiastical aristocracy who patronised theatrical performances, although restricted to Jesuitical dramas or, when the nobles had direct or indirect (through Vienna) contacts with Italian circles, to comedies. Despite the fact that the information is not continual, a certain enlivening of theatrical interest can be read out of the surviving seventeenth-century documents. For example, Ernest Adalbert Harrach, Archbishop of Prague from 1623 to 1667, patronised various performances in his residences and in several churches.³²

The circulation of dance music included in court operas represents a possible contact between both ecclesiastical and laical Bohemian aristocracy and the Viennese Italian opera milieu: although it was a weak contact, it is indicative of a general interest that may only have been prevented from taking shape due to the political and economic reasons outlined above. One of the most significant examples in this sense is that of the bishop of Olomouc, Karl Lichtenstein-Castelcorn: in his residences, especially at Kroměříž, he collected Heinrich Schmelzer's music for the dances included in Antonio Draghi's operas, and organised regular performances of it.³³

The first concert-house in Prague, the Music Academy of Baron Johann Hubert Hartig,³⁴ created in 1714 in the house "zur eisernen Thüre" does not

³¹ At Eggenberg's Palace in Graz, instead, a certain practical activity is reported in the 1680s.

³² Harrach, who knew Italian well (he had also been archbishop in Trent), wrote his personal diaries in Italian and was certainly aware of the Italian novelties. Sporadically, he enjoyed translating theatrical texts. Alessandro Catalano kindly informed me about Harrach's translation of Benedetto Ferrari's *Inganno d'amore*, music by Antonio Bertali and sets by Giovanni Burnacini, dedicated to Ferdinand III and performed in Regensburg at the 1653 imperial Diet. For exact, but incomplete, information about the performances promoted by Harrach, see Ferdinand Menčík, *Príspevky k dějinám českého divadla* [Some Notes on the History of Czech Theatre] (Prague, 1895), p. 90-92, 98 and 108-113.

³³ The bishop also fondly cultivated Italian and Viennese sacred and instrumental music, as his music library reveals. On this important music archive, and specifically on his relationship with Schmelzer, see the catalogue of the archive introduced in: Jiří Sehnal and Jitřenka Pešková, *Caroli de Liechtenstein-Castelcornio episcopi olomouensis operum artis musicae collectio Cremsirii reservata* (Prague, 1998).

³⁴ A true identification of Hartig remains difficult, because of the presence in Prague of both brothers, Ludwig Joseph and Johann Hubert. The former is the founder of the Bohemian lineage of the family (see "Hartig, Franz de Paula Anton Graf", in: Constantin Wurzbach, *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Österreichs* (Vienna, 1861), vol. 7, p. 392-399: 397, and "z Harzigu", in *Ottův Slovník Naučný* [Otto's Encyclopaedic Dictionary] [Prague, 1888-1809], vol. X, p. 916-917. Traditional historiography usually identifies him as the "Freiherr von Hartig" who enlivened several musical activities in Prague, but never reported his christian-name (for instance, see Johann Gottfried Dlabacz, *Allgemeines historisches Künstlerlexikon für Böhmen und zum Theil auch Mähren und Schlesien*, entry "Hartig, Graf von", vol. 1 [Prague, 1815; 2nd reprint Hildesheim, 1998], col. 566). Nevertheless, the

appear to have a specific role in the circulation of musical theatre. Hartig was certainly in touch with Jan Dismas Zelenka and apparently was particularly fond of Antonio Lotti's music. We have a dated description of his *accademie*, referring to 1715-18:

Der Anfang wurde mit einer Ouvertüre gemacht; hierauf wurden Concerte gespielt, und auch wechselsweise darunter gesungen, oder Solo gehöret. Den Schluß machte eine starcke Symphonie. Fremde und durchreisende Musici hatten hier die beste Gelegenheit, sich nicht nur hören zu lassen, sondern auch bekannt zu machen.³⁵

Hartig is pictured as an excellent harpsichord player and passionate music collector, known for his relationship with several Italian composers (he had studied in Italy for a while at the beginning of the 1700s). Johann Hubert's promotion of performances of great sacred music is also described in Mattheson's account, whereas no mention is made of his operatic interests, nor of the performances of theatrical music promoted in his *accademie* or elsewhere.

5. Theatre revival: the situation at the beginning of the eighteenth century

The first references to operatic activity independent from the Viennese court (apart from *Erminia pastorella*) date back to the beginning of eighteenth century: the opening of Count Sporck's theatre to the companies of professional comedians definitely contributed to the stabilisation of theatrical activity.³⁶ During the seventeenth century, places for performances, although not lacking, were not appropriately equipped, while the beginning of the next century saw the situation changing in Prague: Regenhardt house, for instance, in the

studies of the Zelenka manuscripts reveal that "Count" – as it seems he liked to be called, even before the official appointment – Hartig was, instead, Ludwig Joseph's younger brother, i.e. Johann Hubert: see Jana Vojtěšková "Die Zelenka-Überlieferung in der Tschechoslowakei", *Musik des Ostens*, 14 (1993), p. 85-99. I'm most grateful to my friend and colleague Jana Vojtěšková for bringing her article to my attention, and for her personal suggestions.

³⁵ "The beginning was marked by an overture; then, concertos were played and sung alternately, or solos heard. A strong symphony brought it to a close. Foreign and travelling musicians have the best opportunity, here, not only to allow themselves to be heard, but also to become known". "Hartig", in Johannes Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte* (Hamburg, 1740), facs. ed. by Max Schneider (Berlin, 1910; reprint Kassel-Graz, 1994), p. 102-103: 102. This biographical description of Hartig as music amateur, originating with the German composer Gottfried Heinrich Stötzel as witness (see below), is the main source for all detailed information included in current literature.

³⁶ On Sporck's theatre and his permanent company, see Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 26-73.

Malá Strana (Lesser side) district, was equipped with new stage machinery which was appropriate for ambitious projects, such as music performances; the first professional company to arrive in Prague performed there.³⁷ The regularisation of the comedians's activity probably formed a premise for an introduction of the professional companies into the operatic context, although development was slow.

Prague's familiarity with Italian comedians stretches from as far back as Andreini's visit with the court in 1627 to the recent performances of the company of Sebastiano di Scio (or "di Sio"), a Venetian enterprising impresario who worked in Prague between 1699 and the first years of the eighteenth century.³⁸ Giovanni Federico Sartorio, the pioneer of professional opera in Prague (and, as far as we know, of the entire region), arrived in town soon after, and made several contacts with Scio's company.

Sartorio is little more than just a name in current literature on opera and theatre in Prague.³⁹ However, some details of his personality appear in a careful *collage* of fragments from which important elements may be established. Giovanni Federico was probably the son of Girolamo (Hieronymo) Sartorio, a stage-designer and theatre architect active in German courts.⁴⁰ Girolamo belonged to a family of musicians: his brother Antonio was a composer,⁴¹ and they both served Johann Friedrich, Duke of Hanover in the 1670s; unlike his brother, Girolamo developed his career principally, if not exclusively, abroad.⁴² We certainly know that Antonio and Girolamo Sartorio were together in Hanover around 1674-75; the latter stayed in Germany, while his brother went back to Venice, but kept in touch with the Duke of

³⁷ Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 28.

³⁸ Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 22-23. See also later in the present article for a hypothesis of his operatic activity.

³⁹ No existing dictionaries, even specialised ones, assign him an entry, except Dlabacz, *Allgemeines historisches Künstlerlexikon*, vol. 3, entry: "Sartorius, Johann Friedrich", coll. 13-14, that defines him a "composer". From Teuber onward, on the basis of the few surviving librettos, researchers have established several elements referable to the repertoires proposed by Sartorio. Very little is added even by the often-quoted detailed research of Scherl. Not even Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini fino al 1800* (Cuneo, 1990-95), helps us: Sartorio does not appear in any of the numerous categories indexed.

⁴⁰ For documentary references, see Fritz Berend, *Nicolaus Adam Strunck 1640-1700. Sein Leben und seine Werke mit Beiträgen zur Geschichte der Musik und des Theaters in Celle, Hannover, Leipzig* (Hanover, [1913]), particularly p. 105 and 242. I am indebted to Norbert Dubowy, who has always been generous in giving me his advice, for this suggestion, which has allowed me to support my conjectures. Moreover, Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 28, refers to a son of Giovanni also called Hieronymus: this would confirm the familiar descent Gerolamo – Giovanni Federico – Gerolamo; but the information given is, however, ambiguous, and the Hieronymous in question still could be Giovanni Federico's father. In any case, it represents another element that confirms the kinship between Gerolamo and Giovanni Federico.

⁴¹ See Edward H. Tarr and Norbert Dubowy, "Sartorio, Antonio", in: Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (London, 1992), vol. 4, p. 186-187.

⁴² I have not found traces of his name in connection with Italian productions of operas.

Hanover. Girolamo's son was called Giovanni Federico (or probably Johann Friedrich, as quoted in all sources except the title-pages of Italian librettos): this is certainly not a typical Italian name, nor was it then used in the Sartorio family. The Hanoverian Duke Johann Friedrich died in 1679. All these elements allow us to conjecture that Giovanni Federico was born in Hanover between 1675 and 1679, and to imagine that he was named in honour of the powerful and beloved patron of the two Venetian brothers. Thus the 'Venetian'⁴³ Giovanni Federico Sartorio was probably of German birth, i.e. 'immigrant of the second generation'.

Girolamo stayed in Germany: traces of his activity are found in connection with performances in Hanover,⁴⁴ Amsterdam, probably Brussels, Hamburg, Mainz, where he was "architetto di S.A.S."; he then arrived in Dresden, where he became one of the architects of the court. With regards to our subject, it is particularly interesting that during his *iter* he was often in contact with the German composer Nicolaus Adam Strungk, who was working in Hanover when Antonio and Girolamo arrived. They probably also met in Hamburg or in other towns, but were definitely in close contact in Dresden and Leipzig. The fellowship between Sartorio sr. and Strungk fully flourished in the 1690s, in the same years that Prague, as we have seen, intended to create an opera-house. From 1692 Strungk was *Kapellmeister* in Dresden; in the same year he was authorised by Elector Johann Georg IV to produce in Leipzig musical entertainments in German during the fairs; Sartorio too was involved in this activity. The idea was successful and in 1693 Sartorio built a permanent theatre with a regular activity, organised by Strungk, who also composed most of the operas. Strungk's wife and daughters (who were singers) helped him and ran the activity even after his death, while Sartorio was responsible for the scenes and the stage machinery.⁴⁵ Strungk was *Kapellmeister* in Dresden until 1697, when he was replaced. Strungk's contact with Černín (a trace of which dates back to 1698) probably coincides with a search for new places in which to work: Prague could well have been an interesting site at the end of the seventeenth century.

The first attempt to establish a managerial opera theatre in the Bohemian capital is due to several factors: to the Dresden-Leipzig-Prague axis; to Černín and probably to other aristocrats in contact with the German circles; to the initiative of personalities such as Strungk and Girolamo Sartorio, who

⁴³ Hach, "Operní divadlo", p. 256, which, like all literature deriving from Hach, is probably based on Dlabacz's above-mentioned entry.

⁴⁴ He certainly created the stage machinery for Aurelio Aureli / Valente – Domenico Freschi's *Helena rapita*, performed in 1681 in honour of Sofia Amalia of Denmark.

⁴⁵ See Dieter Härtwig, "Strungk, Nicolaus Adam", in Sadie (ed.), *Opera Grove*, vol. 4, p. 587-588. On operatic activity in Leipzig, see also Norbert Dubowy, "Italienische Opern im mitteldeutschen Theater am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts: Dresden und Leipzig", in: F. Brusniak (ed.), *Barockes Musiktheater im mitteldeutschen Raum im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 1994; *Arolser Beiträge zur Musikforschung*, 2), p. 23-48.

was Italian by birth but definitely 'German' by career. It is also certain that the Italian milieu had nothing at all to do with the question: the first opera theatre was born in Prague as an off-shoot of Dresden-Leipzig. A Leipzig document clearly ascribes the building of the first opera-house in Prague, in "der kleinen Stadt Prag" (Malá Strana district) to Girolamo Sartorio. It also credits him with beginning operatic activity,⁴⁶ through the equipping of the hall at Regenhardt house, as mentioned at the beginning of this section. Usually the rôle of Girolamo is considered to be a secondary one, and the initiatives are attributed directly to Giovanni Federico, who worked on staging and theatrical decoration with his father.⁴⁷

The enterprises of Leipzig and Prague, though deeply connected, were separated by one essential element: the death of Strungk in 1700 prevented him from being involved in the realisation of the Prague venture. On Strungk's initiative, in Leipzig the theatre had preferred a German repertory, although adapted from Italian. In Prague, instead, the Sartorios openly proposed Italian opera, although drawn from the repertory of those that circulated in the north, rather than directly from Italy. Probably this change of course is due to the death of the company's musical reference, and also to the reasonable expectation of finding fertile ground in Prague. Italian opera could have been welcomed, considering the rapport of the potential public with this genre, which had been well known to the Bohemian aristocracy at the court of Vienna and already experimented with at home. We cannot exclude an explicit invitation by Černín or by whoever mediated the arrival of Sartorio's company in the Bohemian capital. As regards the specific rôle of Giovanni Federico Sartorio, evidently he was the impresario of the company that reached Prague in 1702. He was the one who requested the permissions, and managed the complicated relations with the local administration and with the several companies of German and non-German comedians contending the theatrical spaces. Finally, he was the one who was imprisoned for debts soon after arriving in Prague, and released on bail after the intervention of Peter Regenhardt, the owner of the hall in which he was going to perform.⁴⁸ Giovanni Federico has been thought to be a musician,⁴⁹ but the few documents available up to now neither confirm nor exclude this hypothesis. He signs the dedications, as impresarios usually do (this is not enough to identify him as either a poet or a composer), but he leaves the authorship of text and music

⁴⁶ Document preserved in the Reichsarchiv of Leipzig and quoted in Berend, *Nicolaus Adam Strungk*. Once more, I am grateful to Norbert Dubowy for this important suggestion.

⁴⁷ Hach, "Operní divadlo", p. 256 and p. 372, fn 47. Volek, "L'opera veneziana a Praga", p. 196, states that Giovanni Federico Sartorio personally painted the wings; generally it seems that it has been unnoticed that Giovanni Federico had the well-known architect Girolamo behind him.

⁴⁸ On these aspects of G. F. Sartorio's stay in Prague, see Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 27-29.

⁴⁹ Hach, "Operní divadlo", p. 256, states this, although he does not supply the documentary evidence. Subsequently, all scholars have followed this reference.

uncertain or ascribes them to someone else. Why did he not draw attention to himself as a composer, considering the fact that he could have taken advantage of his family name, well-known because of Antonio, his famous uncle?

We have partial knowledge of the company's repertory thanks to a few librettos and some detailed information. In 1702 *La Rosaura*⁵⁰ and *Il Gige fortunato*⁵¹ were staged. This gives us a first idea of Sartorio's possible circuit: *Gige* in fact leads us to Bartolomeo Bernardi, who worked for the court in Copenhagen.⁵² *Libussa* (1704) was certainly composed by Bernardi himself and probably based on an homonymous libretto by Flaminio Parisetti, already staged in Wolfenbüttel in 1692 with music by Clemente Monari.⁵³ *La rete di Vulcano* (1704) is initialled, but I do not think that there is enough evidence to believe that these refer to Sartorio himself.⁵⁴ The dedication is interesting, because it is addressed to the elector Palatine of the Rhine, and not to a Czech or Viennese aristocrat: was this an occasion for Giovanni Federico to draw attention to himself and attempt to move to a German Catholic court, which in those years was more interested in Italian opera?

Sartorio's company and repertory belonged to the German cultural milieu. The choice of *Libussa* is indicative in this sense: Sartorio could have chosen a Venetian text, for instance Giulio Cesare Corradi's *Primislao primo re di Boemia*,⁵⁵ circulating at the end of the seventeenth century; rather than use a libretto set ten years earlier in Wolfenbüttel. Secondly, the choice of the

⁵⁰ *La Rosaura. Melodrama da rappresentarsi nel Teatro di Praga* (Prague, Adalberto Giorgio Konias, 1702). I have not managed to consult this libretto in person; Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 19, supplies the following shelf-mark: CZ-Pu 65 E 4553.

⁵¹ *Il Gige fortunato, divertimento teatrale da rappresentarsi in musica. Nel Teatro di Praga, l'anno 1702*. The libretto, announced in Otokar Kamper, *Hudební Praha v XVIII. věku* [Eighteenth Century Musical Prague] (Prague, 1935) p. 299, and Hach, "Operní divadlo", p. 372, fn 42, was preserved in D-Dlb (shelf-mark Lit. It. D272), but was destroyed during the second world war.

⁵² The following year a *Gige* was performed there. In those years the Bolognese Bernardi was Kapellmeister of Frederik IV of Denmark: in 1703 he composed at least two works, *Gige fortunato* and a *Serenata di Diana e Flora*, for the court.

⁵³ See Sartori, *Libretti*, nr. 14249. On this derivation and for further bibliography, see Volek, "L'opera veneziana", p. 196-197 and fn 3. The libretto of the Prague performance is missing in Sartori, but a copy can be found in CZ-Pu: *La Libussa, dramma per musica da rappresentarsi nel teatro di Praga, posto in musica dal signor Bartolomeo Bernardi academico filarmonico alli exc. exc. e ill. Sig. i Reggii Locotenenti e tutta la excelsa Nobiltà del Regno di Boemia dedicata da me Fedrico Sartorio*. For a critical summary of the librettist's treatment of the plot, in contrast to the true history of *Libussa* and *Primislao*, see Teuber, *Geschichte des Prager Theaters*, p. 41-43.

⁵⁴ *La rete di Vulcano, burlletta drammatica dedicata e rappresentata alla Ser. Altezza Elettorale Co. Palatino del Reno, al teatro di Praga, poesia e musica del Sign. DDD, da Giov. Federico Sartorio*, title-page transcribed by Teuber.

⁵⁵ *Primislao primo re di Boemia. Drama per musica da rappresentarsi nel teatro di S. Casiano l'anno 1698 Di Giulio Cesare Corradi. Consacrato All'illustriss. et Excellentiss. Signor Giacomo Ricardi sargente (sic) generale Per la Serenissima Republica di Veneria (sic) nel Levante* (a copy in I-Vnm, Racc. Dramm. 1189/5).

composer also is consistent with this milieu: Bernardi was an Italian opera composer, yet he never worked in Italy. Rather, at the time at which Sartorio showed an interest in his work, he was active at Copenhagen.

From this it seems fair to claim that, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Prague became one of the poles of the south-east German operatic circuit, just as it became one for German and Italian theatre companies. Nonetheless, it was not yet a destination that could be influenced directly from Italy.⁵⁶

It is not easy to trace the activity of the first professional opera companies in Prague, for two main reasons: the many lacunas in the surviving documents, and the intermittent presence of professional singers in Prague and its surrounding.⁵⁷ Besides, opera companies, even more so than those performing comedies, needed both economically and technically reliable organisations: which did not seem to be available at the time in Bohemia. After Sartorio's venture, many years passed before another attempt was made to present Italian opera to the Czech public, and even then, this new attempt was discrete.

Prague was, and still is, divided into several districts. Already during the second half of the seventeenth century, there were stages available for theatrical entertainment located in different parts of the town: gymnasiums, thermal baths, private houses. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Count Sporck opened a theatre in his garden in the New City (Nové město) to the comedies and to the public; a few years later another important stage opened in Manhart house (Manhartský dům) in the Old City (Staré město).⁵⁸ The

⁵⁶ When seeking further motivations for the Sartorios' move to Prague, wider historical events obviously cannot be ignored. In 1691 Johann Georg III, to whom Strungk was bound, died. His successor Johann Georg IV died prematurely in 1694. Saxony's history then underwent a particularly eventful period, both politically and theatrically. In 1694 all Italians musicians in the musical establishment were dismissed. Frederik August I succeeded his brother and converted to Catholicism in 1697 in order to accede to the Polish throne. This also had consequences for the establishment of the musical chapel: when Frederik became king of Poland, with the name of August II, he transferred the capital's operatic life to Warsaw for a few years. In addition, in 1700 war broke out against Sweden, involving all north-eastern Europe. A secure employment and a relationship with the court of Dresden were no longer guaranteed in the 1690s and war did not seem to promise anything better. The companies looked for new places because they could no longer expect a regular activity in Saxony.

⁵⁷ Even Scherl admits that, despite some new documentation coming to light, the outline traced by Teuber in 1883 has not been altered and much remains to be known. The situation of opera theatre is even less defined than that of comedy.

⁵⁸ Today the Manhartský dům is the seat of the Theatre Institute (Divadelní ústav), in Celetná Street. On the history of the house and its theatrical activities, see the standard literature on Czech theatre and, in particular, Jan Pömerl, "Manhartský Dům v Celetné ulici (Příspěvek k pražské divadelní topografii) [Manhart House in Celetná Street (Some notes on theatrical Topography in Prague)]", *Divadelní Revue* (1994/2), p. 43-49. In Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, passim, there is information on the companies that performed in the Manhart house.

house had a proper theatre, with boxes, a gallery, and stalls with benches; the staging equipment was probably better than in Sporck's theatre.⁵⁹ The first comedies were staged in 1717, and performances continued until the end of 1736, when Maria Barbara, widow of Johann Friedrich Manhart, founder of the theatre, sold the house to Count Franz Nikolaus Hartmann von Klarstein, who dismissed the comedians and put an end to the theatre's success.⁶⁰

Apart from German itinerant companies, marionette-players, and Italian comedians, the Manhart house also welcomed operas, although sporadically. A certain historiographical tradition affirms that Antonio Lotti's opera company performed there: between 1718 and 1720, he presumably stopped in Prague several times, possibly, for example, in 1720, on his way from Dresden to Venice.⁶¹ Nevertheless this cannot be ascertained and there remains no trace of the repertory performed by Lotti during his presumed stay in Prague. On the other hand, it is certain that in March 1724 Antonio Maria Peruzzi, a Venetian impresario, arrived in Prague with his father Giovanni Maria. In the summer of the same year, he officially applied for permission to perform "un'opera italiana con soggetti tutti italiani"⁶² at the Manhart house.

They obtained permission to perform from Easter onward, although this meant having to compete with the company of Defrane, who claimed it was his right to take turns with the Italians's spectacles.⁶³ Nevertheless we do not have precise information on Peruzzi's repertory at the Manhart house. Clearly, their enterprise must have been successful, because, in the same year, they managed to organise the first important Italian opera season in Prague at Sporck's Theatre, which had been renovated and set up for great musical performances.

⁵⁹ See Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 50, and Pömerl, "Manhartský Dům", p. 44.

⁶⁰ See also Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 138.

⁶¹ See Dlabacz, *Allgemeines historisches Künstlerlexikon*, vol. 2, entry: "Lotti, Anton", col. 233: "Zwischen den Jahren 1718-1720 besuchte er Prag öfters, und führte sowohl seine Opern, als die Oratoria mit einem solchen Beifalle auf, daß man auch später seine kompositionen in der Kirchen dieser Hauptstadt sehr gern aufgeführt hat"; and also Heinrich Benedikt, *Franz Anton Graf Sporck (1662-1738). Zur Kultur der Barockzeit in Böhmen* (Vienna, 1923), p. 361. Both report the presence of Lotti in Prague in those years. This reference is then mentioned in all the following literature; but all attempts to prove it through other elements, have so far been useless. Pömerl, "Manhartský Dům", p. 45, does not document the passage of Lotti's presumed company in Prague. The fact that his oratorios and sacred music were certainly performed does not prove that the composer was in town.

⁶² Petition dated 15 March 1724: see the transcription in Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 281.

⁶³ See Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 93. According to Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 24, Peruzzi's company had actually not been assembled yet. Peruzzi's intention was realised later with the recruitment of Antonio Denzio's company (through the mediation of Peruzzi's father, working in Venice as an agent). See also the contract between the Peruzzis and Denzio, dated 6 May, in Freeman (p. 281-284). It is quite odd that some Czech scholars seem to ignore Freeman's work, though it is important for the rich and detailed documents it includes.

6. Germanic-Italian comedy appendices

We have often mentioned the Italian and German comedians, because of the promiscuity existing between theatrical and opera companies. Within these two genres, a strong link developed between their respective professionals simply because they shared the same theatrical spaces, equipment, audience, and calendar.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it is unclear as to whether or not the companies credited as being comedians organised also musical entertainment; let us not forget that comedy was accompanied by instrumental and vocal stage music. For instance, the above-mentioned company of Scio probably had operas in its repertory.⁶⁵ The permission he obtained in 1702 mentions “wällische Comoedien und Burleschen”,⁶⁶ which is not a very clear definition: it could refer to music entertainment, but probably not to genuine operas.⁶⁷ In June 1702, a few months after Scio returned to Prague, the company of the puppeteer Johann Gruber obtained permission “seine kleine Opera oder Poulzinellospiel in 3 Cronen produciren zu können”.⁶⁸ What “kleine Opera” referred to is yet to be established: the expression ‘Opera’ was, in fact, generally employed in a specific way to indicate a musical opera and musical marionette shows belonged to European as well as Italian tradition.

Of potentially great significance to the understanding of areas where Italian opera had difficulties becoming autonomous are operatic arrangements in the repertory of German extemporary theatre. Even though the audience did not have the chance to see original operas, it could become familiar with opera subjects, characters and common *topoi*, through the parody of the “Hanswurst”. This phenomenon is well-known, especially in relation to later-eighteenth-century Vienna.⁶⁹ The full acceptance of the comedian’s presence in Prague coincides with the birth of the “Viennese axis”.⁷⁰ Some of the per-

⁶⁴ Contacts between opera and professional theatre were not unusual, nor were they specific to the Czech milieu. However, it would be valuable to investigate this aspect further specifically for the Bohemian-Moravian area in order to establish its particularities. See also Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*.

⁶⁵ Volek, “L’opera veneziana”, p. 196: “Verso il Settecento, negli atti dell’archivio municipale, compare il nome di Sebastiano di Sio, il quale rappresentò a Praga qualche opera e pagò le tasse prescritte”.

⁶⁶ Mentioned in Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 27.

⁶⁷ Hach, “Operní divadlo”, p. 372, fn 41, says that the term “opera”, as found in the documents, denotes *commedia dell’arte* with musical inserts, such as arias, canzonets and dances.

⁶⁸ See Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 27.

⁶⁹ References are easiest to find with the beginning of the Kärntnertheater seasons, during which comedians rearranged the operas performed at court. The texts and music, which survive from the 1750s, represent this practice at an advanced stage. See also the old but indispensable Robert Haas, *Die Musik in der Wiener deutschen Stegreifkomödie* (Vienna, 1925); id., “Wiener deutsche Parodie-Opern um 1730”, *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, 8 (1925-26), p. 201-225.

⁷⁰ The reasons are also due to the confessional vocation of the companies. The Catholic Austrians probably guaranteed a theatrical orthodoxy, more than the German Protestants (or

sonalities present at the beginning of the eighteenth century on the theatrical scene in Prague were the same as those who opened the golden season of comedy in Vienna. All this could lead us to imagine a 'subliminal' operatic presence in the Bohemian entertainment too.

The traces of opera in the repertoires of the itinerant comedian companies remains to be examined. We will necessarily refer not only to traces exclusively regarding Italian opera, but also to contaminations deriving from the German theatre. In fact, as we have seen, the first attempts to import opera in Prague derive directly from the German milieu. Therefore, it is important to consider the German context for two main reasons: German opera derived from arrangements and translations of the Italian repertory, and it contributed significantly to the creation of an opera audience in Prague and Bohemia. Opera became definitely Italian when social, economical, cultural, and musical conditions permitted.

Looking closer into the repertory of the companies active in Prague, it is possible to evaluate the importance of mediation by the comedians; sometimes it could have been a sort of double mediation, for instance, when the German companies organised shows deriving from German operas that were themselves arrangements of previous Italian librettos.⁷¹

An important seventeenth-century example is that of the *Eggenbergische Hofkomödianten*, the permanent company of Český Krumlov, which performed in Prague and other towns between 1676 and 1691. The Eggenberg comedians performed a mixed repertory of German, English, and also of Italian origin: translations and operatic arrangements were quantitatively and qualitatively substantial, and specific of this company, as Bärbel Rudin has underlined on several occasions.⁷² Significant names in Italian opera, for instance, the dramatist and librettist Giacinto Andrea Cicognini and Nicolò Minato, appear in their repertory: Krumlov's company, for example, performed an arrangement of *Artemisia*, an opera conceived by Minato in Venice early in 1656 and set by Francesco Cavalli, in a transformed version known as *Die verliebte Königin Artemisia oder Die heimliche Liebe*.

The company of the Hilverding family, native of Vienna, and specialising in marionette-shows, was active in Prague between 1698 and 1699. The rep-

mixed). The need to closely link Prague to the Catholic area, and generally to the Southern German regions, deeply influenced the performances promoted in the theatrical circles, both ideologically and technically. See Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 15.

⁷¹ The 'historical' Czech literature on theatre is very detailed on the subject. More recently, Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, also furnished a precise outline. But the references we possess are still incomplete: the repertory of the itinerant companies is often only mentioned in generic terms; there are very few cases that allow us to determine the derivations by means of a textual comparison.

⁷² For further bibliography and a thorough discussion of the subject, see in particular Bärbel Rudin, "Das fürstlich eggenbergische Hoftheater in Böhmischem Krumau (1679-1691)", *Daphnis*, 25 (1996), p. 467-488 (also in Czech translation: "Knížecí dvorské divadlo Eggenbergů v Českém Krumlově (1679-1691)", *Divadelní Revue* (1997/2), p. 12-20.

erty they performed is not certain, but Hilverding himself claims to have had a classical repertory, derived from Ovid. Such themes would coincide with those commonly used in the operatic repertory of the same time.⁷³

Information on the repertory performed during the 1710s is fragmentary: in April 1713 the marionette-shows once again create a link with opera. The company of Joseph Geißler organised at least three shows based on coeval operatic subjects or direct arrangements of librettos. The first one is *Hercule und Alceste*, for which there are two possible models: the Italian *Alceste*, performed in Vienna a few years before (of which a German translation also existed), and an opera produced in Leipzig in 1701 called *Der ruhmwürdige Hercules*. The play-bill announcing the show emphasised the marvellous staging equipment with the best “Opera-Machinen”. For the second show, *Von den Fall unserer ersten Eltern Adams und Evä*, its relationship with opera is declared in the play-bill, and “ein sattsames Contentement” is guaranteed for both eyes and ears, thanks to the abundance of scene-changes, machinery, and good music. The third one, *Der Raub von Proserpina*, is once more a rearrangement, probably based on *Raptus Proserpinae* composed in 1662 by Samuel Capricornus.⁷⁴

In 1713, the companies of Johann Christian Spiegelberg and Johann Caspar Haake (the *Württembergische Hof-Komödianten* and the *Mecklenburgische Hofkomödianten*) presented several performances in Prague, based on operatic models, some of which were indeed Italian. *Das Leben und Tod des grossen Welt-schröckenden Attilae* was performed in July, a forte of the itinerant companies probably based on Matteo Noris’s Venetian libretto *Attila*.⁷⁵ Moreover, *Das glückselige Römische Reich / unter der klugen und weisen Regierung dess Numa Pompilius* can be linked to a Viennese spectacle based on a text by Pietro Antonio Bernardoni.⁷⁶

If it were possible to dig further into the repertory of the companies active in Prague and Bohemia until 1724, we would probably find other traces of contacts between opera and comedy. It is worth mentioning one further title,

⁷³ Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 24.

⁷⁴ See Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 36, who points out the models of the performances mentioned. The play-bill for *Hercules* is reproduced on p. 37, while that for *Fall unserer Eltern*, on p. 38. Another important fact is given there: in the play-bill announcing the same show when it was produced in Frankfurt by the widow Velten in 1698, it is described as “Eine rare nach Operen Art eingerichtete Biblische Aktion” (p. 36, fn. 48). On *Der Raub von Proserpina*, see p. 36. The subject of this *pièce* was familiar to Italian tradition: several “Ratti” and “Proserpine” circulated in the seventeenth century. In 1708, Johann Hugo Wilderer’s *Proserpina. Tragicommedia pastorale per musica* was performed in Düsseldorf at the court of the elector Palatine.

⁷⁵ *Attila. Drama per musica da rappresentarsi nel teatro Grimano a SS. Gio. e Paolo l’anno 1672. Di Matteo Noris*, music by Pietro Andrea Ziani.

⁷⁶ *Numa Pompilio. Poemetto drammatico (Serenata)*, performed on 9 June 1703 at the Favorita theatre for Leopold I’s anniversary. The text is printed in Pietro Antonio Bernardoni, *Poemi drammatici* (Vienna, 1707), vol. 3.

because it is generally considered as the founder of the tradition leading to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the pride and joy of Italian opera in Bohemia. In September 1723 the company of Tommaso Ristori, which bore the title of "Königliche Pohnische und Chur-Sächsische Italiänische Hoff-Comoediante", performed *Das grosse steinerne Gastmahl* at the Manhart house: it was one of the many forerunners of Da Ponte's stone guest. Truly interesting is the fact that this company, which usually performed comedies, had a special flair for music: Ristori's son, the composer Giovanni Battista, and other members of the company had the double talent of acting and singing. The play-bill announcing the show promised "ungezweiffeltes Vergnügen", especially because of music and dances; the comedy itself is described as "Eine Opera mit schönen Erscheinungen / und lächerlich".⁷⁷

In the years between 1715 and 1718, real operas, even if apparently not based on Italian texts, were produced by Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, who arrived in Prague after a few years spent in Italy.⁷⁸ It is unclear where the entertainments took place: the residence of Count Losy has been suggested, but I do not think that the references to the activity of the well-known lute-playing Count confirm such an idea.⁷⁹ Stölzel himself describes the musical activities of Losy's house, and he would surely not have forgotten to mention the performance of his own operas.⁸⁰ Moreover, in the autobiography published by Mattheson, the list of Stölzel's compositions written for Prague mentions the musical relationship with Losy, and is introduced by the term 'sonst', this confirms the impression that Stölzel's activity in Prague was a

⁷⁷ Reproduction in Scherl, *Berufstheater in Prag*, p. 88.

⁷⁸ See Fritz Hennenberg, "Stölzel, Gottfried Heinrich", in: *Opera Grove*, vol. 4, p. 550; see also the autobiography in Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte*, p. 342-348. The operatic works written for Prague are: *Venus und Adonis*, *Acis und Galathea* and *Das durch die Liebe besiegte Glück*; also written for that city were the oratorios: *Die büssende Sünderinn Maria Magdalena*, *Jesus patiens*, and *Caino, ovvero il primo figlio malvaggio*.

⁷⁹ Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 20. Count Johann Anton Losy von Losenthal (c. 1650-1721; "Logy" as he was known at the time, "Lozy" as often found in Czech literature) was an important figure in the private musical life of eighteenth-century Prague. He was acknowledged as more gifted than many professional musicians and composers. He held important positions in the Habsburg administration. His passion for music was limited to private occasions. His interest for opera was limited to the private performance of arrangements of his favourite composers, such as Lully and Fux. As far as we know, it did not influence the public institutional aspect. He did not promote operas or particular theatrical entertainments. On Losy see: Adolf Kocirz, *Österreichische Lautenmusik zwischen 1650 und 1720*, p. 76-83; Emil Vogl, "Johann Anton Losy: Lutenist of Prague", and "The Lute Music of Johann Anton Losy", *Journal of the Lute Society of America*, 13 (1980), p. 58-86, and 14 (1981), p. 5-58 respectively.

⁸⁰ The chapter regarding Losy in Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte*, p. 171-172, is based on testimony from Stölzel. The familial dimension of Losy's entertainments appears clearly: there are references to music instruments (lute, violin, harpsichord), but not to singers.

separate chapter in his output.⁸¹ As another possible venue, the forementioned academy of Hartig suggests itself, although there is doubt as to whether the baron was involved in operatic activity. An unstaged version, without substantial orchestra, could have been a viable performance possibility at an academy such as Hartig's. Considering that the information on the musical evenings at Hartig's house comes, like that on Losy's, from Stölzel himself, and once again does not mention performances of his own operas, it would seem that this hypothesis also should be abandoned.⁸²

Stölzel composed German operas, on his own librettos, for Prague; but his previous stay in Italy and his contacts with important opera composers (Gasparini, Pollarolo, Domenico Scarlatti, Antonio Bononcini, and so on) lead us to suppose that his operas were influenced by the Italian style. Therefore they represent one of the many factors contributing to the great development of Italian opera in Prague.

7. Bohemian-Neapolitan viceregal appendices

We shall only briefly mention the presumed Naples-Prague axis (still an open chapter) which started at the beginning of the eighteenth century. After the Spanish war of succession, the Hapsburgs conquered the kingdom of Naples. Paradoxically, while the Bohemian Crown was left without a court, members of important Bohemian-Moravian noble families held the office of viceroy in Naples, the capital of opera and reference point for the training and education of singers and composers. From 1707 onwards, both politics and theatre link Vienna to Naples: comparing the repertoires, one can, in fact, find texts which were retrieved from the Empire's capital, and then rearranged for Naples. But, is it possible to imagine that the viceroys Daun, Althann, Schrattenbach, and Harrach somehow contributed to the creation of a direct pathway towards their Bohemian or Moravian mother-country? At least one of these families is known to have engaged in musical activities: Althanns cultivated their musical interests also in their Moravian households. They held a musical establishment, had contacts in order to acquire scores, singers, and all the necessities to enliven musical life in their palaces. Michael Johann III d'Althan (1679-1722), for instance, similarly to Count Questenberg,

⁸¹ Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte*, p. 345: Stölzel reports that he spent many hours and days enjoying music with the Count; but he does not relate these to the fully documented performance of his principal operatic works.

⁸² Some information on the performance of the oratorios may be found in Dlabacz, *Allgemeines historisches Künstlerlexikon*, vol. 3, entry "Stöltzel, Gottfried Heinrich", coll. 214-215: presumably they were performed at S. Salvatore, at the Jesuits', and at the Kreuzherren. The hypothesis of an unstaged performance of Stölzel's Prague operas is suggested by Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 20. But I do not agree on the presumed operatic evenings spent at Losy's House.

played the lute and was deeply involved in musical matters.⁸³ The Czech musical panorama of the time clearly assumed a Neapolitan character, especially when the kingdom of Naples passed from Spain to Austria. The enormous amount of sacred music by Neapolitan composers preserved in Czech archives or registered in the historical catalogues confirms this influence.⁸⁴ However, to date we have no trace of a concrete Bohemian-Neapolitan link regarding opera, but this aspect could be worth further investigation.⁸⁵

8. The return of the Hapsburgs

The 'imperial season' of 1723 is generally thought to be a determinant factor for the autonomous production of opera in Prague that began in 1724, and continued from then on without interruption. During the summer of that year, the court went to Prague to celebrate the coronation of Charles VI and his wife Elisabeth Christine as king and queen of Bohemia. The main attraction of the Hapsburg theatrical programme was the performance of Pietro Pariati's *Costanza e fortezza*, music by Johann Josef Fux and sets by Giuseppe Galli Bibiena. A grandiose wooden open theatre was built for the occasion in the castle: it was so large that there was no need to artificially enhance the perspective because of the real distance which separated the audience from the back-drop.⁸⁶ The outstanding professionalism of the Hapsburg theatrical *équipe* guaranteed the artistic quality of the opera, from both the compositional and performing points of view. The best musicians, such as the lute-player Sylvius Leopold Weiss, the flute and oboe-player Johann Joachim

⁸³ See Pavlína Krvínková Janská, "Die Musikkultur auf dem Schloß Frain an der Thaya (Vranov nad Dyjí)", *Sborník praçi filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity*, 22/23 (1988), p. 33-41.

⁸⁴ See Hálová and Mikuláš, "Le fonti musicali italiane". Regarding sacred music, see the present author's "*Una musica grandiosa: La musica sacra italiana tra Sei e Settecento nei fondi boemi*", in: Sante Graciotti and Jitka Křesálková, *Barocco in Italia, Barocco in Boemia. Uomini, idee e forme d'arte a confronto* (Rome, 2003), p. 219-246.

⁸⁵ The Bohemian dedications of Italian opera librettos are part of the Italian-Czech-Austrian project on Italian opera in Bohemia, mentioned at fn 2. Certainly significant results will emerge from this research.

⁸⁶ The theatre was destroyed during the Prussian bombing in 1757. The score, the libretto, and the engravings related to the theatre and the sets still survive, together with several direct reports and documentary traces. See: Johann Josef Fux, *Costanza e fortezza*, ed. Egon Wellesz (Vienna, 1910; *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* 34-35), together with the editor's detailed preface. On the performance, the musicians, the Czech reception of the event, and for further bibliography, see also Teuber, *Geschichte des Prager Theaters*, p. 48-60; Paul Nettl, *Das Prager Quartierbuch des Personals der Kronungsoper 1723* (Vienna, 1954); Jiří Hilmera, "Costanza e fortezza", *Divadlo*, 9 (1958), p. 258-266; id., "Costanza e fortezza, Giuseppe Galli Bibiena und das Barocktheater in Böhmen", *Maske und Kothurn*, 10 (1964), p. 396-407; C. Böhm, *Theatralia anlässlich der Krönungen in der Österreichische Linie der Casa d'Austria (1627-1764)* (Vienna, 1986).

Quantz, joined the orchestra: a large part of the European music world arrived in Prague for the occasion. Overall, the organisation of the political-musical event was very successful, the opera, which was obviously meant to celebrate Charles VI's coronation – “*Costanza e fortezza*” was, in fact, his motto – was performed on 28 August, Elisabeth Christine's birthday. The *licenza* in fact praises the empress and Bohemia on an equal footing. The libretto printed in Vienna mentions only the ‘family’ occasion, thereby avoiding any embarrassing or unpleasant political blunder that could interfere with the coronation. But all went according to plans: *Costanza e fortezza* celebrated the official accession of Charles and Elisabeth Christine to the Bohemian throne with extraordinary magnificence, leaving the audience deeply impressed.

Apart from this grand theatrical spectacle, the sojourn of the Hapsburgs in Prague produced, as usual, many other secondary performances, stimulating curiosity towards Italian opera also in the provinces. Moreover, the interest of the theatrical impresarios in the advantages that could be gained from the organisation of these entertainments considerably increased. This is one of the reasons that, soon after, induced Sporck to welcome Denzio and Peruzzi's company.⁸⁷

As was the Hapsburg custom, all occasions falling in that period (Summer 1723) were celebrated.⁸⁸ Queen Elisabeth Christine's birthday was also celebrated privately with Giuseppe Porsile's *Il giorno felice*, performed by noble amateurs, as mentioned in the score.⁸⁹ On 1st October the “servizio di camera” *La Contesa de' numi*, text by G. Prescimonio and music by Antonio Caldara, was performed at the castle. Francesco Bartolomeo Conti produced *Il trionfo della fama*, a serenata based on a text by Francesco Fozio, for Charles VI's name day. So, as had been the case in 1680, the Hapsburg court was not dissuaded from entertainment even when outside Vienna. Unlike in 1680, however, this time there was a local answer (or better half-local, if we consider the experience of the composer in Vienna, Dresden and Italy) to the

⁸⁷ Sporck openly declares he welcomed Italian opera composers in order to make a positive impression on Princess Schwarzenberg, and thus indirectly the emperor himself. See Freeman, “Italian Operatic Tradition in Prague”, p. 120, and *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 32.

⁸⁸ On the 1723 performances, important details were already given in Paul Nettel, “Opernaufführungen in Znaim anno 1723”, in: id., *Beiträge zur böhmischen und mährischen Musikgeschichte* (Brünn, 1927), p. 14-17 (originally published in *Tagesbote*).

⁸⁹ A-Wn, Mus. Hs. 17630: *Il giorno felice | Componimento per musica allusivo al glorioso giorno | natalizio | della | Sacra Cesarea, e Cattolica Reale Maestà | di | Elisabetta Cristina | L'Imperatrice regnante | l'anno 1723. | Poesia di Pietro Pariati poeta di S. M. C. e C. | Musica di Porsile Ms.tro di Cap.la Giubilato di S. m. C. e C. [c. 1v] Cantano | L'Aurora. La Fraila Stirum Dama di Corte | Il Sole. L'Abbate Leporati | Il Tempo. Conte Logi. Another copy is preserved in A-Wgm. Here, it may be possible to identify “Count Logy” as Philipp Adam, son of the above-mentioned Count Losy. All opera scores mentioned from here onwards are preserved in two copies, in A-Wn and A-Wgm, unless otherwise stated.*

flood of dramatic compositions produced for Prague in a few months: Jan Dismas Zelenka composed *Sub olea pacis et palma virtutis conspicua Orbi regia Bohemia corona*, also called “Melodrama de Sancto Wenceslao” for performance on 12 November at the Clementinum, the Jesuit Institution in Prague.⁹⁰

According to the chronicles of the time, the production of Pariati’s *Concordia dei pianeti* set by Caldara was also of great importance in the Hapsburg festivities: it was performed at Znojmo (Znaim) on 19 November, during the court’s return journey to Vienna, “festeggiandosi il felicissimo nome della Sacra Cesarea e Cattolica Reale Maestà di Elisabetha Cristina [...]”.⁹¹ In the score itself, it is defined as a “componimento teatrale”, whilst the *Wienerisches Diarium*, which records details on the performance, refers to it as a “serenata”. What is of particular relevance for us is, is the description of the reaction of Znojmo’s inhabitants:

[...] weiln die meisten aldortigen Inwohnern dergleichen herrliche Vorstellung niemalen ihr Lebenlang gesehen, ware der Zulauff dermaßen Hauffig, daß die sonst große Stadt ihnen fast zu klein worden und die höchsten Dächer besetzt gewesen, dabay dann die Hamiltonischen Soldaten genug zu tun hatten, um alle Unordnungen zu verhüten. Die Bewunderungswürdige Vorstellung hatte sich mit allerhöchsten *contento* allder Kayserlichen Mayestäten und aller hohen und niederen zusehenden Standespersonen gegen 9 Uhr endigt [...].⁹²

Even supposing the Viennese review overestimated the impact of this opera on the local audience, it seems clear that it was an extraordinary event: the magnificence of the entertainment and especially its absolute novelty attracted the public. Therefore, even though, technically speaking, *La concordia dei pianeti* cannot be considered a real opera, we can say that Italian opera actually arrived in this region of Bohemia in 1723.

⁹⁰ Nettl, “Opernaufführungen in Znaim”, p. 14, reports that the libretto in the Lobkovic collection at Raudnice gives a complete list of the performers’ names. The score is preserved in D-DI, but a modern edition has recently appeared (Editio Bärenreiter Praha).

⁹¹ As reported in the scores.

⁹² “[...] because most inhabitants had never in their lives seen such a splendid spectacle, the crowd was so great that the normally large city became almost too small for it, and the highest rooftops were occupied; as a result, the Hamilton’s soldiers had a major task preventing any disorder. The awe-inspiring spectacle finished around 9 o’clock, and gave the greatest pleasure to his imperial Majesty and all the spectators, both higher and lower [...]”. Mentioned in Nettl, “Opernaufführungen in Znaim”, p. 15-16. The excerpt from the *Wienerisches Diarium* describing the performance is entirely transcribed, with the addition of details on the performers, as annotated in the manuscript score. The event is also reported in *Pražské poštovské noviny*, a Czech newspaper published from 1719 onward, in the issue of 30 November 1723: the news refers to November 19. The excerpt is reported in Jiří Berkovec, *Musicalia v pražském periodickém tisku 18. století* [Musicalia in the eighteenth century Prague periodical press], entry 159, p. 118-119.

There are few differences between the performances of 1723 and the ones of the previous Hapsburg 'season' in Prague in 1679-80, even if the two were motivated by different reasons. Even when travelling, the Hapsburgs never abandoned their own *modus vivendi*, celebrating festivities and employing their own musical staff. But the consequences of this second season are completely different: in 1680 the performances in Prague, for many reasons, had almost no lasting repercussions, despite admitting that one late consequence was the *Erminia pastorella* and the relationship of Černín and Strungk; in 1723, on the other hand, the magnificent performance of *Costanza e fortezza*, and all the theatrical and musical initiatives that followed, catalysed the opening of Sporck Theatre to Peruzzi and Denzio's company.

9. The arrival of Italian opera at Sporck Theatre

Franz Anton von Sporck's true role in Italian opera history in Prague has certainly been played down by Daniel Freeman: "In fact, there would have been opera in Prague in the autumn of 1724 whether or not Count Sporck had sponsored it, since he took no part in bringing to Bohemia the Italian opera company that performed in his theatre".⁹³ As we have seen, the time was ripe for opera, the prince amongst Italian musical genres, to become part of the Bohemian cultural milieu. Peruzzi and Denzio made contact with Count Sporck, who was certainly convinced by reasons beyond musical passion.⁹⁴ As seen before, Count Černín assumed an active role in the attempt to introduce opera in Bohemia, while Sporck, even though in agreement, seems to have been carried along by the Italian company's initiative. In any case, the enterprise was set up: Sporck welcomed the company, first, to his summer residence in Kuks, then (from 23 October, 1724) to his palace theatre in Prague, which had been renovated for ambitious Italian spectacles demanding more space and stage machinery than the comedies staged in his house a few decades before. Between the transfer to Kuks and the beginning of the activities at Sporck's Palace, the company performed successfully at the Manhart house for Prague's aristocracy. This confirms that the count's intuition in employing Italian companies to promote his public image was correct.⁹⁵ Soon after, Denzio got rid of his colleague Peruzzi, taking the management of the enterprise upon himself. Up to 1729, the opera seasons can be considered successful. Furthermore, it is worth noting that, during this time, Prague and Vienna were independent of each other. After 1729, for both musical and non-musical reasons (among them the count's personal life), a period of decline began and culminated in Denzio's misfortune. He even went to

⁹³ Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 23.

⁹⁴ See above and fn 87.

⁹⁵ See Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 36.

prison, a typical operatic experience from many points of view. In 1735 his season in Prague came to an end. Although we do not know exactly when he managed to leave, we find him once again active in Italy in 1737.⁹⁶ For a few years after 1735, Sporck's theatre sporadically set up operas. Prague was used to the new genre and the seed sown by Denzio's company was not wasted. Already in 1737 the idea of building a theatre for the town (later to become the Kotzentheater) emerged and, even if with variable results, for several decades Italian companies were warmly welcomed in the Bohemian capital as well as in other regions of the Czech Crown.

10. Explicit

Musical theatre took root in Bohemia with difficulty, mainly because of economical, political, and social problems after 1620; the few elite events organised for the Hapsburgs in the seventeenth century had little impact on the general development of Italian opera in Prague, which followed the model of impresario's theatre, shared successfully with the comedians.

A comparative study of all theatrical events in the region is useful, and will become even more so when it is possible to bridge the documentary gaps: meanwhile, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct operatic events outside the Hapsburg orbit before Sporck's theatre. It clearly appears that Jesuit scholastic theatre was indirectly responsible for the late establishment of the itinerant companies. It is also likely that the same applies to the circulation of opera: the theatrical omnipresence of the Jesuits, with the aim of enforcing the Catholicism imposed on Bohemia after the war, was an important factor for the delay. Contact, cooperation, and the sharing of repertoires between comedians and opera companies can instead be identified as important factors for the development of opera in Bohemia.

Many questions remain open and still need detailed investigation. The more minor issues include: how did Giovanni Federico Sartorio arrive in Bohemia? Did he stage only three operas, as librettos and historical literature reports? Did Antonio Lotti really visit the Manhart house, as reported in the historiographical tradition without supportive documentation?

The passion for theatre flourished again when the economical, social, and cultural conditions once again made it possible to consolidate musical and non-musical theatrical activities. Important steps are represented by *Erminia pastorella* (which needs further investigation), the opera and theatre flourishing at the Regenhart and Manhart houses and at Count Sporck's, and the public's familiarity with Italian opera. In conclusion, it was at the beginning of the eighteenth century that theatrical passion took root and became a distinguishing character of Czech culture that survives to this day.

⁹⁶ See Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Sporck*, p. 70.

Opera and Ceremonial at the Imperial Court of Vienna

Andrea Sommer-Mathis

During the last decades many scholars of different disciplines have tried to find new approaches to the subject of European court society, in general,¹ and of ceremonial, in particular.² The role of the courts in the early modern period has been studied by historians, sociologists, politologists, social anthropologists, economists, cultural historians, and so on. Among the numerous methodological concepts brought to light by this research, the following three seem to be most appropriate to analyse ceremonial:

1) the civilisation model, which stresses the importance of court society to the process of civilisation and interprets ceremonial as a significant instrument of social control, thus emphasizing the functional aspect of the court;³

2) the social geometrical concept, which defines the court primarily by its distribution of physical space, and ceremonial as a spatial representation of differences in rank;⁴ and

¹ See, among others: Arthur Geoffrey Dickens (ed.), *Europas Fürstenhöfe: Herrscher, Politiker, Mäzene 1400-1800* (Graz-Vienna-Cologne, 1978); August Buck and others (eds), *Europäische Hofkultur im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, 3 vols (Hamburg, 1981); *Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung*, 9; Elger Blühm and others (eds), *Hof, Staat und Gesellschaft in der Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Amsterdam, 1982; *Daphnis* 11/1 and 2); Cesare Mozarelli and Giuseppe Olmi (eds), *La corte nella cultura e nella storiografia: Immagini e posizioni tra Otto e Novecento* (Rome, 1983); Antoni Maczak (ed.), *Klientelsysteme im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich, 1988); Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke (eds), *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age (c. 1450-1650)* (Oxford, 1991).

² Sergio Bertelli and Giuliano Crifo (eds), *Rituale, cerimoniale, etichetta* (Milan, 1985); Sean Wilentz (ed.), *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1985); Jürgen Hartmann, *Staatszeremoniell* (Cologne-Berlin-Bonn-Munich, 1988); Hedda Ragotzky and Horst Wenzel (eds), *Höfische Repräsentation: Das Zeremoniell und die Zeichen* (Tübingen, 1990); Jörg Jochen Berns and Thomas Rahn (eds), *Zeremoniell als höfische Ästhetik in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 1995; *Frühe Neuzeit*, 25).

³ Norbert Elias, *Die höfische Gesellschaft: Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie mit einer Einleitung: Soziologie und Geschichtswissenschaft* (Neuwied-Berlin, 1969; *Soziologische Texte*, 54; new edition: Frankfurt am Main, 1983); Jürgen Freiherr von Kruedener, *Die Rolle des Hofes im Absolutismus* (Stuttgart, 1973; *Forschungen zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 19); Hubert Ch. Ehalt, *Ausdrucksformen absolutistischer Herrschaft: Der Wiener Hof im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1980; *Sozial- und Wirtschaftshistorische Studien*, 14); Hubert Ch. Ehalt, "Zur Funktion des Zeremoniells im Absolutismus", in: Buck and others (eds), *Europäische Hofkultur*, vol. 2, p. 411-419.

⁴ Hugh Murray Baillie, "Etiquette and the Planning of the State Apartments in Baroque Palaces", *Archaeologia or Miscellaneous Tracts Related to Antiquity*, 101 (1967), p. 169-199; Henning Eichberg, "Geometrie als barocke Verhaltensnorm: Fortifikation und Exerzitien", *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 4 (1977), p. 17-50; Gotthardt Frühsorge, "Vom Hof des Kaisers zum 'Kaiserhof': Über das Ende des Ceremoniells als gesellschaftliches Ord-

3) the semiotic model, which regards ceremonial as a complex system of signs.⁵

All these concepts must not be seen as strictly separated from each other, but as interrelated. For example, if an art historian interested in palace architecture interprets ceremonial through the category of space, the planning and distribution of the royal apartments will also give him important hints to the socio-political structure and function of the court and to the system of signs used by, and available to, the courtiers.

The modern interpretations and theories of ceremonial, however, are not entirely new. On the contrary, similar concepts can already be found at the time when the courtly ceremonial reached its peak – during the age of feudal absolutism in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

By far the shortest definition of ceremonial is given by Johann Christian Lünig in his *Theatrum Ceremoniale Historico-politicum*, a voluminous compendium of court ceremonies published in Leipzig in 1719-20.⁶ Lünig simply says, “Das Ceremoniel ist eine Ordnung” (“ceremonial is an order”).⁷ According to him, ceremonial served as an extremely important tool of absolutist government practice, because it regulated the interrelations among the members of the court’s society and assigned to them not only their relative positions, but also prestige. The Baroque placed the ruler at the top of the social pyramid. As God’s representative on earth, he mediated between the divine and the mundane spheres. The divine will was accomplished through him and emanated downwards in gradations: the shorter the distance to the ruler, the higher the rank of a person. This social or, using the modern terminology, social geometrical concept finds its direct representation in ceremonial, which served to preserve the sacred character of sovereignty through the maintenance of distance:

Grosse Herren sind zwar sterbliche Menschen, wie andre Menschen: weil sie aber GOTT selbst über andre in dieser Zeitlichkeit erhoben, und zu seinen Stadthaltern auf Erden gemacht, also daß sie von der Heil. Schrift in solchem

nungsmuster”, *Euphorion*, 78 (1984), p. 237-265; Gotthardt Frühsorge, “Der Hof, der Raum, die Bewegung. Gedanken zur Neubewertung des europäischen Hofzeremoniells”, *Euphorion*, 82 (1988), p. 424-429; Gotthardt Frühsorge, “Nachwort”, in: Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der Privat-Personen* (Berlin, 1728; reprint Leipzig, 1990), p. 4-54; Christian Benedik, “Zeremonielle Abläufe in habsburgischen Residenzen um 1700: Die Wiener Hofburg und die Favorita auf der Wieden”, *Wiener Geschichtsblätter*, 46 (1991), p. 171-178.

⁵ Hedda Ragotzky and Horst Wenzel (eds), *Höfische Repräsentation: Das Zeremoniell und die Zeichen* (Tübingen, 1990); Monika Schlechte, “Nachwort”, in: Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der großen Herren* (Berlin, 1733; reprint Leipzig, 1990), p. 3-14.

⁶ Johann Christian Lünig, *Theatrum Ceremoniale Historico-politicum, Oder: Historisch-Politischer Schau-Platz Aller Ceremonien*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1719-20).

⁷ Lünig, *Theatrum Ceremoniale*, vol. 1, p. 2.

Verstande gar Götter genennet werden, so haben sie freylich Ursache, sich durch allerhand euserliche Marquen von anderen Menschen zu distinguiren, um sich dadurch bey ihren Unterthanen in desto grössern Respect und Ansehen zu setzen.⁸

Elsewhere in his treatise Lünig lays more stress on the functional side of ceremonial, that is, on the way in which it was used as a means of social control. Similar ideas can be found in the work of a contemporary of Lünig, Julius Bernhard von Rohr who, moreover, seems to be an early devotee of the semiotic concept: he defines the ceremonial as a system of signs representing something else: “Eine *Ceremonie* ist eine gewisse Handlung, dadurch, als ein Zeichen, etwas gewisses angedeutet wird [...]” (“A ceremony is a certain action by which, as through a sign, a certain matter is indicated”).⁹ Both Lünig and Rohr also express critical views in a very modern way when they point to the growing externalisation of ceremonial, and to its transformation into a kind of ‘theatre’ or ‘show’, which may be the consequence of a code system of merely exterior signs:

Bey dem Ursprung mancher alten *Ceremonien* hat man dahin gesehen, daß so wohl die Regenten als Unterthanen durch dieses oder jenes äusserliches Zeichen, so in die Sinnen fällt, sich gewisser Pflichten erinnern sollen. Man hat aber nachgehends das Haupt=Werck vergessen, und bloß das Nebenwerck behalten; man siehet auf das Zeichen, und weiß doch nicht was dadurch angedeutet werden soll. Diese oder jene Handlung ist nun einmah! so Mode, sie ist von alten Zeiten her biß auf die jetzigen so beobachtet worden, und also macht man sie mit, sie mag bedeuten was sie will.¹⁰

Lünig and Rohr are only two of several authors who, in the first half of the eighteenth century, studied ceremonial, thereby creating a new discipline, known as *Zeremonialwissenschaft*.¹¹ Rohr even entitled the two volumes of

⁸ “Great Lords, it is true, are mortals like other human beings, but since God has raised them above others in this temporality, and made them his representatives on earth, which is why Holy Scripture in this sense even calls them ‘gods’, they surely have reason to distinguish themselves from other men through all sorts of external signs, in order to obtain correspondingly more respect and esteem from their subjects” (editor’s translation). Lünig, *Theatrum Ceremoniale*, vol. 1, p. 5.

⁹ Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der Privat-Personen*, p. 7.

¹⁰ “In the creation of certain ancient ceremonies, it was intended that both the rulers and the subjects should be reminded of certain duties by one or another external sign which was perceived through the senses. In later times, however, the main function was forgotten, whilst only the lesser function was kept; we look at the sign, and yet we do not know what it is intended to signify. This or that action is simply part of the convention and has been observed from ancient times until today, which is why we participate in it, whatever it may signify” (editor’s translation). Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der großen Herren*, p. 2-3.

¹¹ In addition to Lünig and Rohr, the following must be mentioned: Friedrich Wilhelm von Winterfeld, *Teutsche und Ceremonial-Politica*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main-Leipzig, 1700-

his treatise on private and court ceremonial, published respectively in 1728 and 1729, as *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft*. Presuming to develop such a specialized field of academic knowledge illustrates the great importance attributed to the ceremonial of the European courts at that time. Its growing complexity called for a greater compatibility among the different court traditions. It was necessary to find a supra-regional standard that was derived from a careful study of the various ceremonials in use at the different courts. Starting from individual cases, the scholars of the eighteenth century developed a whole theory or – to use their term – ‘science’ of ceremonial, passing from casuistic collections with descriptions of individual ceremonies to general reflections on the definition, classification, function and legitimation of ceremonial.

It is important to point out that the term ‘ceremonial’ is not synonymous with ‘etiquette’, although one all too often sees the terms used in this way. Etiquette – the rules of behaviour that regulated court life – is only a part of a larger ceremonial frame, which included all the representative forms at court, that is, festivities, theatre, music and clothing as well as the organisation and administration of the household. This wider interpretation of the term ‘ceremonial’ explains why, in the early documents of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one finds more information about the household and the functions of the different court officials than about problems of etiquette.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the imperial court of Vienna developed into the political and cultural centre of the Holy Roman Empire. In his typology of the German court society during the era of the feudal absolutism, the German historian Volker Braun described it as the ideal type of a ceremonial court.¹² Unfortunately, even Braun has no answer to the problem of how court ceremonial was transferred from its origins in Burgundy and/or Spain to Austria; instead he repeats the commonly-held opinion that the imperial household was organized according to the Spanish model and therefore also characterized by a ‘typical’ Spanish atmosphere of rigidity. This comment is rather trivial and superficial, but it would require a long-desired detailed study of the Austrian sources to get a realistic picture of the introduction and development of the ceremonial at the imperial court.¹³

1702); Gottfried Stieve, *Europäisches Hoff=Ceremoniel* (Leipzig, 1715); Friedrich Carl Moser, *Teutsches Hof=Recht*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main-Leipzig, 1754-1755); Johann Jakob Moser, *Versuch des neuesten Europäischen Ceremoniels* (Frankfurt am Main, 1778); Johann Jakob Moser, *Vom Ceremoniel* (1778).

¹² Volker Braun, *Die höfische Gesellschaft in Deutschland von der Mitte des 17. bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts: Versuch einer Typologie* (Tübingen, 1993; *Frühe Neuzeit*, 12), p. 62-66.

¹³ Unfortunately the studies of Christina Hofmann(-Randall) are also disappointing in this respect: Christina Hofmann, *Das spanische Hofzeremoniell von 1500-1700* (Frankfurt am Main-Bern-New York, 1985; *Erlanger historische Studien*, 8); Christina Hofmann-Randall, “Die Herkunft und Tradierung des Burgundischen Hofzeremoniels”, in: Berns and Rahn (eds), *Zeremoniell als höfische Ästhetik*, p. 150-156; see also Ludwig Pfandl, “Philipp II. und

In any case, by means of ceremonial, the Austrian Habsburgs pursued the same aims as their Burgundian and Spanish relatives: by means of the ceremonial they affirmed their territorial power and dynastic prestige to the other European courts and palpably represented the hierarchical order of court society. Audible symbols of their sovereignty were the court chapel as a religious institution, on the one hand, and the growing number of theatrical employees (singers as well as composers, librettists, and stage and costume designers) as secular representatives, on the other. The activities of the court musicians thus became important social events within a strictly regulated ceremonial order.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the cultural orientation of the Habsburgs towards the South also had profound consequences for the development of imperial music: Archduke Ferdinand of Inner Austria (Styria) brought his Italian-dominated court chapel from Graz to Vienna when he was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1619. From that point onwards, the majority of the musicians and almost all the chapel masters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were Italians.¹⁴

The Thirty Years War forced his successor Ferdinand III to reduce his chapel, but as soon as conditions improved, it was reconstructed on a broad basis by engaging good, mainly Italian, musicians. The imperial chapel was increasingly involved in secular festivities, especially after the introduction of Italian opera. It is well known that the Austrian Baroque emperors not only had personal interests in music, but also were gifted in composition. Therefore the period of the reigns of Leopold I, Joseph I and Charles VI can be called, without any exaggeration, the 'golden age' of court theatre and music in Vienna.

More than ever, music and theatre, festivities and ceremonies were used as important instruments of political representation, especially in the growing struggle with France for hegemony in Europe. It is symptomatic that at the time when the development of Baroque absolutism reached its climax and demanded more visible forms of representation, the final adaptation of Burgundian-Spanish-Austrian ceremonial to its Viennese context took place.¹⁵

The increasing share of ceremonial activities in imperial court life is reflected in the archival sources. From the period before the mid-seventeenth

die Einführung des burgundischen Hofzeremoniells in Spanien", *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 58 (1938), p. 1-33; Franz Dimberger, "Das Wiener Hofzeremoniell bis in die Zeit Franz Josephs: Überlegungen über Probleme, Entstehung und Bedeutung", in: *Das Zeitalter Kaiser Franz Josephs I.* (exhibition catalogue; Vienna, 1984), p. 42-48.

¹⁴ See Rudolf Flotzinger and Gernot Gruber (eds), *Musikgeschichte Österreichs*, 3 vols (Vienna, 1995), vols 1 and 2; Steven Saunders, *Cross, Sword, and Lyre: Sacred Music at the Imperial Court of Ferdinand II of Habsburg (1619-1637)* (Oxford, 1995).

¹⁵ The following part of this study is based on an earlier article of the author, published in German under the title "Theatrum und Ceremoniale: Rang- und Sitzordnungen bei theatralischen Veranstaltungen am Wiener Kaiserhof im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert", in: Berns and Rahn (eds), *Zeremoniell als höfische Ästhetik*, p. 511-533.

century, only a handful of documents chronicling the ceremonial are extant. Starting in 1652, however, all significant ceremonies were meticulously recorded in the Minutes of the Court. These records, the so-called *Ältere Zeremonialakten*, form part of the records belonging to the office of the *Obersthofmeister*, who was the highest administrative authority at the Viennese court and responsible for all aspects of ceremonial, including music and theatre.¹⁶ He had to ensure the frictionless running of court life and the observance of the prescribed rules of etiquette. During the second half of the seventeenth century questions of precedence became more and more important and were discussed extensively in voluminous documents, citing long series of precedents from earlier centuries.

It is interesting to note that in these documents, especially those of the seventeenth century, one does not find many titles of the numerous operas staged at the imperial court,¹⁷ but predominantly references to the performance venues, occasions, and to the seating arrangement.

Operas were performed both indoors and in outdoor gardens. The chief performance venues of the imperial court were the halls and gardens of the imperial palace in Vienna and the summer residences in the city's outskirts. Courtly theatre performances also took place, however, in other cities, such as Linz, Preßburg, Regensburg and Augsburg, whenever the emperor and his court resided there. The various performance sites determined the criteria for admittance, the composition and hierarchical positioning of the audience, as well as the physical layout of the viewing area.

The occasions for which musical theatre was produced were as diverse as the performance venues themselves. Before Leopold I ascended to the throne in 1657, comparatively few operatic events were performed at court, but from then on they became permanent fixtures. Aside from one-time dynastic events such as births, marriages, or coronations, birthdays and namedays of members of the imperial family were now regularly celebrated in a yearly cycle of events that culminated in carnival. The musical interests and talents of the Habsburgs soon made the musical drama the most important entertainment at court. The type and extent of the works were determined by the occasion. Birthdays and namedays of the emperor, and sometimes also of the empress, were celebrated with multi-act operas; family members of lower rank, including the children, had to be content with smaller musical works. Common to all court operas was their purpose of paying homage to the impe-

¹⁶ See Herwig Knaus, *Die Musiker im Archivbestand des kaiserlichen Obersthofmeisteramtes (1637-1705)*, 3 vols (Vienna, 1967-1969; *Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Musikforschung*, 7, 8 and 10).

¹⁷ See Herbert Seifert, *Die Oper am Wiener Kaiserhof im 17. Jahrhundert* (Tutzing, 1985; *Wiener Veröffentlichungen zur Musikgeschichte*, 25). The first title of an opera to appear in the records of the ceremonial department is that of *Gordiano Pio* in 1700: cf. Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), *Ältere Zeremonialakten* (Ält. ZA) 19, fol. 52r and *Zeremonialprotokoll* (Zer.Prot.) 6, fol. 76v.

rial house and underlining the ideality of the reigning sovereign. Public displays of majesty – and court festivities numbered among the most important – were intended to convey to the monarch's subjects a vivid impression of the social order in which they lived.

There were two types of court festivities. The first consisted of large public performances attended by the entire household of the court, the higher and lower nobility, the clerics, ambassadors and ministers, as well as significant foreign guests. The second, the *Kammerfeste*, were restricted to a smaller, often exclusive, circle of spectators. This limitation was not always dependent on the dimensions of the performance venue or the nature of the occasion. It also served as a means of avoiding awkward situations that could arise from the visit of a distinguished foreign guest or during periods of court mourning, to give only two examples.

Admission to the festivities was as strictly controlled as was the observance of the seating etiquette. Time and again, disputes arose over questions of precedence, which were often settled by ingenious means. Recourse was frequently had to the device of the *incognito*, which for the members of the court had the same function in the theatre as in daily court life: by laying aside his rank, a person could be considered not to be present. In such a situation the person was seated in a box, sometimes even furnished with curtains, apart from the other spectators.

The rules of court etiquette controlled not only the seating arrangement, but also the nature of the seats themselves. They regulated who sat on chairs with armrests, who sat on chairs without armrests, and who had to make do with a place on a bench. The fabric and colour of the upholstery also were indicative of the status of the chairs' occupants. Similarly, a chair could be positioned on a platform, a rug could be laid beneath it, or a canopy could be erected above it.

A few examples from the archives may illustrate some of this. During the carnival of 1653 the imperial court resided in Regensburg, where it was taking part in the Imperial Diet and where Ferdinand IV, the son of Emperor Ferdinand III, was being crowned King of the Romans. The carnival opera and other seasonal entertainments of the Viennese court were not to be forgone in Regensburg either. On 24 February the opera *L'inganno d'amore* was performed, for which the court architect Giovanni Burnacini had expressly constructed a wooden theatre.¹⁸ The design of the seating area was recorded in the minutes of the court¹⁹ and became a model for similar events in the following decades. The emperor sat with his wife in the parterre in arm-chairs that stood on a platform covered with red velvet and facing front and centre of the stage. The central perspective, characteristic of the stage decor of

¹⁸ Libretto by Benedetto Ferrari, music by Antonio Bertali, ballets by Santo Ventura, stage design by Giovanni Burnacini.

¹⁹ HHStA, *Alt. ZA* 4, without page or folio number, and *Zer.Prot.* 1, p. 130-134.

the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries, allowed the sovereign in his seat directly opposite the vanishing point to become the 'ideal' or, at least, the most privileged spectator of the events on stage. All the other spectators, according to their lower rank, had to put up with a distorted perspective.

The newly crowned King Ferdinand IV sat below and to the right of the platform occupied by the emperor and empress, in a row with the Elector of Trier and the Count Palatine and his wife; to the left of the platform sat the Electors of Mainz and Cologne. Benches to the left and right behind the platform were reserved for the remaining ecclesiastics and the secular dignitaries; there were further benches for the ladies-in-waiting, the two *Obersthofmeister* of the emperor and the newly crowned king, as well as the ministers and cavaliers serving the aforementioned gentlemen. Two boxes were built, on either side of the entrance to the auditorium, in which the female relatives of the Count Palatine and the Duke of Württemberg could watch the performance *incognito*, thereby circumventing disputes over precedence.

No resolution, however, could be found for the question of precedence between the papal nuncio and the Spanish ambassador. It was therefore decided right from the start not to give them the usual formal invitations. Instead, they went *incognito* to the dress rehearsal, and the Spaniard even managed to attend the unexpected repetition of the opera. The diplomats, accordingly, were given no opportunity to represent their social rank which, at court operas in the presence of the emperor, often had greater importance than the opera itself.

As previously mentioned, the colour and upholstery of the chairs indicated hierarchical position and rank within the courtly social pyramid. On this occasion, the chairs of the emperor and empress were covered with brocade in a yellow-gold, that of the heir to the throne was in a red-gold. The secular and ecclesiastic electors, like all the others seated on the benches, had to make do with red velvet.

The hierarchical arrangement of seats, with their distinctions in colour and type of seat, was observed right into the eighteenth century, the last known occasion being in 1744 the wedding opera of Archduchess Maria Anna, the sister of Maria Theresia.²⁰ The seating arrangement reflected the fine distinctions of status: Maria Theresia, Maria Anna, Maria Theresia's husband Francis of Lorraine, and Prince Charles Alexander of Lorraine, the bridegroom, sat in a row on a platform covered with a Turkish carpet. All the chairs had backs and armrests, except that of Prince Charles, whose chair had only a back.²¹ For the second performance of the opera, again attended by the entire court, Francis of Lorraine no longer wished to sit in the traditional manner in

²⁰ *Ipermestra*, libretto by Pietro Metastasio, music by Johann Adolph Hasse and Luca Antonio Predieri, ballet music by Ignaz Holzbauer, ballets by Franz Hilverding, stage design by Giuseppe Galli Bibiena; first performance on 8 January 1744, repetitions on 18 and 25 January 1744.

²¹ See HHStA, *Zer.Prot.* 19, p. 374f.

the parterre, but in a box in the gallery, which Maria Theresia had promptly adapted for him.²²

With this the move from the parterre into a raised box came about at the Viennese court. By comparison with other European courts, this move was astonishingly late – also considering that already in 1704, during the renovations of the great court theatre, the architect Francesco Galli Bibiena had built two large boxes for the court opposite the stage, over the entrance to the auditorium.²³ In the course of the eighteenth century such princely boxes became the most characteristic feature of European court theatres.²⁴ This occurred in tandem with the abandonment of the central perspective in stage design in favour of angular perspectives, which were first introduced at the Habsburg court and elsewhere by the Galli Bibiena family of stage architects.²⁵ Diagonal axes and sightlines simulated new depths of space, which were viewed substantially better from an elevation than from the parterre. Nonetheless, the imperial family continued to occupy their traditional thrones in the parterre for forty more years, until Francis took the decisive step of requesting a seat in a box. This meant that he was no longer primarily concerned with courtly self-representation and consciously cut himself off from his subjects, but also that he gained greater freedom of movement for himself. This move initiated a loosening up of Viennese court etiquette at the theatre, a relaxation which had in any case been inevitable since 1741. In that year, Maria Theresia had given over the management of the court opera to a lessee, in consequence of which the theatre was now open to a paying public.

The third performance of the wedding opera of 1744 was, as it turned out, the last court festivity in the great theatre situated in the imperial palace. Four years later the theatre was converted into a ballroom, the *Großer Redoutensaal*.²⁶ Opera was henceforth given in the former tennis court, now converted

²² See the note in the diary of the *Obersthofmeister* Johann Joseph Fürst von Khevenhüller-Metsch on 18 January 1744, quoted in: Elisabeth Großegger, *Theater, Feste und Feiern zur Zeit Maria Theresias 1742-1776. Nach den Tagebucheinträgen des Fürsten Johann Joseph Khevenhüller-Metsch, Obersthofmeister der Kaiserin* (Vienna, 1987; *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 476), p. 24-25: “[...] weilten dem Herzog ungelegen war, so lang im Parterre – wo nach alter Gewohnheit der Hoff zuzusehen pflegt – zu sitzen, so befahle die Königin, daß mann auf der einen Gallerie vorwärts eine Logi zurichten solle, zu welcher der Herzog nach Belieben zu und abgehen kunte.” (“since the duke found it inconvenient to sit in the stalls for so long, where according to ancient custom the court was seated, the queen ordered that a box was to be constructed at the front of one of the galleries, where the duke could enter and leave at his pleasure” (editor’s translation).

²³ See Seifert, *Die Oper am Wiener Kaiserhof*, p. 397 and illustration 14.

²⁴ See Susanne Schrader, *Architektur der barocken Hoftheater in Deutschland* (Munich, 1988; *Beiträge zur Kunstwissenschaft*, 21).

²⁵ See, among others, the latest publication on the Bibiena family: Deanna Lenzi and Jadranka Bentini (eds), *I Bibiena: una famiglia europea* (exhibition catalogue; Bologna, 2000).

²⁶ See Christian Benedik, *Die Redoutensäle: Kontinuität und Vergänglichkeit* (Vienna, 1993).

into a theatre, the *Altes Burgtheater*. This theatre was intended for the paying public right from the start. Gone were the days when the theatre was reserved for the exclusive use of the court.

The changes that came about with respect to public festive performances did not carry over to the chamber festivities. The imperial family, even in Maria Theresa's day, retained their seats at the front of the parterre. Needless to say, because of their exclusive nature, these events repeatedly gave rise to conflicts among the spectators which accounted for much of the voluminous correspondence conducted by the office of the *Obersthofmeister*. The ambassadors defended their legitimate or presumed rights and the responsible court officials attempted to steer a course between enforcing the prescriptions of court etiquette and not vexing the diplomats. As direct representatives of their princes, the diplomats were entitled to the same respect and honours as their princes. Conversely, they, too, were bound to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to their office and rank, which, just as with their sovereigns, was tied to public display and attendance at court functions.

It was usually the Spanish diplomats who initiated the conflicts and wearisome discussions, because they presumed upon their special status as *embajadores de familia*. Through the numerous family connections between the two branches of the *Casa de Austria* they enjoyed certain privileges, even at a time when the Viennese Habsburgs were looking more and more to other courts for marriage candidates for their children. The special privileges of the Spaniards included admission to all the festive functions of the imperial family, including the private chamber performances. This could lead to difficulties when the imperial family wanted to invite princes who were lower in rank than the Spanish king.

That was the case in January 1684 with the performance of a small one-act opera for the birthday of the empress in her private chambers.²⁷ The Duke of Lorraine wished to be invited, but he could only appear in his official capacity if the representative of the Spanish crown did not appear. However, since it was neither desirable nor possible to withdraw the invitation to the latter, recourse was made to the following solution: the opera was given on two consecutive days, both times with the imperial couple present, and the Spanish ambassador was invited to one and the Duke of Lorraine to the other.²⁸

This much can be read in the imperial court archives, but the rest of the story can be found in a letter the Venetian ambassador wrote to the Doge of Venice.²⁹ In it he reports that he and the papal nuncio were also invited to this opera, but only *incognito*. In light of the fact that their Spanish colleague was

²⁷ *Gli elogi*, libretto by Nicolò Minato, music by Antonio Draghi and Emperor Leopold I, ballet music by Anton Andreas Schmelzer; first performed in Linz on 16 January 1684.

²⁸ See the official correspondence between 14 January 1684 and 11 July 1685 in: HHStA, *Alt.ZA* 14, without page or folio number.

²⁹ Letter of Domenico Contarini to Marcantonio Giustinian from Linz on 23 January 1684, quoted in: Seifert, *Die Oper am Wiener Kaiserhof*, p. 795-796.

seated prominently among the ladies-in-waiting, they found this condition unworthy of their station. Both chose, therefore, not to appear at all, giving as an excuse that they had correspondence to attend to – correspondence in which they hurriedly detailed this event.

The following year, in 1685, the etiquette problem between the Spanish ambassador and the Duke of Lorraine arose again. The emperor had ordered that, on account of the economic hardship caused by the Turkish war, the usual large-scale festivities for carnival would not be given. However, as the court was not prepared to forgo everything, the gentlemen-in-waiting arranged for the performance of a little opera.³⁰ The Spanish ambassador once again found himself in an intolerable situation vis-à-vis the Duke of Lorraine, whose presence hindered him from making an official appearance. He insisted on attending this, as all other performances, not as a private person, but as the representative of the King of Spain, who, it goes without saying, ranked far above a mere duke. The *Obersthofmeister* proposed a solution: The ambassador would receive an official invitation, but he would decline it, pleading indisposition. However, as the Spanish ambassador had of late frequently resorted to that expedience, he was loathe to do so yet again. If he could not represent his sovereign at the very least at a private court function, he would lose all credibility and risk having to forfeit the privileges that distinguished him from all the other ambassadors.³¹ The problem was again solved through diplomacy: the Duke of Lorraine promised not to attend this performance, in return for which the Spanish ambassador would not attend any of the other carnival festivities, although he could, as usual, consider himself officially invited to them.

By the time of the conflicts between the Duke of Lorraine and the Spanish ambassador, such etiquette problems were not new. Already in 1671, the seating arrangements on the front benches had occasioned a ticklish dispute between the French *envoyé* Count Gremonville and the *Obersthofmeister* Prince Lobkowitz. At one particular opera performance³² the Frenchman was about to seat himself on the second bench with the chief court officials, when the *Obersthofmeister* chased him away with rude words, and, according to some eyewitnesses, even a slap in the face.³³ Gremonville, however, was able to prove that he had been summoned to this bench for a conversation with one of the princes, and the *Obersthofmeister* had to formally apologize both to him and to the King of France, whom he had insulted through his repre-

³⁰ *L'Anfitrione* with the prologue *Le nozze di Mercurio*, libretto by Nicolò Minato, music by Antonio Draghi, ballet music by Anton Andreas Schmelzer; performance on 1 March 1685.

³¹ See letter of the Spanish ambassador to the *Obersthofmeister* on 28 February 1685, in: HHStA, *Alt.ZA* 14, without page or folio number.

³² *La prosperità di Elio Sejano*, libretto by Nicolò Minato, music by Antonio Draghi and Emperor Leopold I, ballet music by Johann Heinrich Schmelzer, ballets by Santo Ventura, stage design by Lodovico Ottavio Burnacini; performance on 9 June 1671.

³³ See Lünig, *Theatrum Ceremoniale*, vol. 1, p. 458.

sentative.³⁴ The *Obersthofmeister*'s behaviour was not entirely out of line, however.

Up to the beginning of the Spanish War of Succession (1701), the French court sent *envoyés* instead of ambassadors to the Viennese court, because the *envoyés* were inferior in status to ambassadors.³⁵ The French were keen to avoid disputes of precedence with the ambassadors of Spain, disputes which could be reasonably feared on the basis of the rivalry between the Habsburgs and the Bourbons. Consequently, the *envoyés* had fewer privileges than their ambassadorial colleagues, including, of course, rights of admission to, and seating at, theatrical performances.³⁶

The diplomatic demands of the French were generally scrupulously heeded by the imperial court, but never more than in 1699, when a crisis concerning admission to a chamber festivity threatened to bring about renewed war. This dispute, which took place in the highly explosive period between the Peace of Rijswijk of 1697 and the beginning of the Spanish War of Succession in 1701, raised serious concerns at the Viennese court that negotiations with France would be set back or, even worse, that they would take a turn towards renewed militarism. Thus everyone breathed a sigh of relief when the French *envoyé* returned to the imperial court in Vienna to pass on his king's congratulations to Joseph I on his marriage. His audience with Archduke Charles, however, was delayed until March of the next year, because here, too, no agreement could be reached on a certain point of etiquette. But the imperial court won the day: the French *envoyé* Marquis de Villars had to make his audience with a bared head, although he had insisted on being allowed to don his hat simultaneously with the archduke. This privilege, however, was granted only to ambassadors and not to *envoyés*.³⁷

Today's reader of such anecdotes in the archives may find the concerns portrayed therein exaggerated, petty and insignificant, but to the Baroque subject, issues affecting his status in the courtly social order were of utmost importance, since his definition of self was dependent on them. A change in this mentality came about only gradually, through the ideas of the Enlightenment. Maria Theresia was still convinced of her family's unquestionable, god-given right to rule, and was extremely sensitive and unforgiving with respect to injuries of rank. Her son Joseph II, by comparison, legitimized his absolute power by pointing to his role as 'first servant of the nation'. Rulers were only human and their exceptional positions could no longer be justified by divine commission, but only by their tireless activity for the well-being of

³⁴ See the letter of Marino Zorzi to Domenico Contarini on 13 June 1671, quoted in: Seifert, *Die Oper am Wiener Kaiserhof*, p. 738f.

³⁵ Lünig, *Theatrum Ceremoniale*, vol. 1, p. 368-370.

³⁶ Lünig, *Theatrum Ceremoniale*, vol. 1, p. 450-452.

³⁷ See HHStA, *Ält. ZA* 19, without page or folio number, and *Zer.Prot.* 5, fol. 546v-548v; Lünig, *Theatrum Ceremoniale*, vol. 1, p. 433f.; Stieve, *Europäisches Hof=Ceremoniel*, p. 276n; Moser, *Teutsches Hof=Recht*, p. 486-491.

their subjects. With the secularization of the image of the ruler, the concomitant social pyramid inevitably collapsed.

The process of social reordering which Joseph II initiated manifested itself first in changes in court etiquette. The courtier's dress, the so-called 'Spanish cloak', was abolished. All the dynastic birthdays and namedays, which until then had been celebrated with public processions to churches and festive theatrical performances, were consolidated into a single gala day, New Year's Day. The great festive representations of the court were discontinued, and the prescriptions of etiquette were relaxed. In a theatre that no longer served for courtly self-representation, but increasingly came to be understood as a place where civic virtues were instilled into the citizenry, and which was open to an ever-growing paying public, rank and seating etiquette lost their meaning.