

‘Die Zauberflöte, eine Operette in zwey Aufzügen’: On the 18th-century Prehistory of a Genre Designation*

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Since the nineteenth century, it has been claimed several times that the term ‘operetta’ was coined by Mozart. In what follows here, I will argue that this claim is surely false, and that it probably originates with the nineteenth-century lexicographer, Henri de Castil-Blaze. However, it is a fact that the term *Operette* was in use during the eighteenth century, even if not in the same sense as it has been used since the European dissemination of Jacques Offenbach’s works. I will also indicate the kind of pieces for which the term was used in Mozart’s letters, in the catalogue of his juvenile works compiled by his father, as well as in contemporary printed librettos and music scores. Last but not least, I will give an overview of the eighteenth-century definitions of the term *Operette*, published in music lexicons from Johann Gottfried Walther (1732) to Johann Christoph Koch (1802), and I will explain in this way what *Operette* meant during these decades, even before Mozart’s birth.

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In Act 2, scene 23 of the *The Magic Flute*, the following dialogue takes place between Papageno and the Speaker:

SPEAKER: Man, you deserve to wander forever in the dark recesses of the earth, but the merciful gods exempt you from this punishment. However, you shall never experience the heavenly pleasures of the ordained.

PAPAGENO: So what, there are many people like me in the world. At the moment, I’d like nothing better than a good glass of wine.¹

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¹ ‘SPRECHER: Mensch! du hättest verdient, auf immer in finstern Klüften der Erde zu wandern; die gütigen Götter aber entlassen der Strafe dich. Dafür aber wirst du das himmlische Vergnügen der Einge-



**Figure 1. Mozart, *The Magic Flute*.
Title page of the vocal score published by Götz (mid-1790s)**

The continuation of the scene hardly needs to be told: everybody knows the scenic action and the musical number following the dialogue above, the song (versed in *couplets*), 'Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen...' sung by Papageno, the comic figure of Mozart's operetta. As the title page of the piano vocal score published in Mannheim by Johann Michael Götz sometime in the middle of the 1790s (see Figure 1), shows, for some of Mozart's contemporaries, *The Magic Flute* was a two-act *Operette*, even if the composer called it a *teutsche Oper* (German opera) in his own catalogue of works,² while on the playbill of the first performance the genre designation *große Oper* (grand opera) can be read.³ Even if it is not (strictly speaking) an example of *couplets*, neither is the number mentioned above a real aria; it is rather something similar to what the French term *couplets* originally meant: a strophic song with refrain in a popular, even

weihten nie fühlen. / PAPAGENO: Je nun, es giebt ja noch mehr Leute meines Gleichen. Mir wäre jetzt ein gut Glas Wein das größte Vergnügen.' *Neue Mozart Ausgabe* [hence: NMA], II/5/19: *Die Zauberflöte*, Gernot Gruber – Alfred Orel (eds.), Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970, 257. English translation by Burton D. Fisher. (Translations from German and French into English in this text are by the author unless specified otherwise.)

² NMA, X/33/1: Mozart: *Eigenhändiges Werkverzeichnis*, Albi Rosenthal – Alan Tyson (eds.), Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1991, 57.

³ For a facsimile of its title page, see NMA, II/5/19, xxvii.

folklike manner, whose simplicity is, however, enhanced in this case by the magic glockenspiel solo, varied strophe by strophe.

Mozart might have been very fond of Papageno's character and this number in particular. As evidenced by a letter written to his wife dated to 8-9 October 1791, it was he himself who played the instrumental solo of this number during one performance. This is an amusing account:

... during Papageno's aria with the glockenspiel I went behind the scenes, as I felt a sort of impulse today to play it myself. Well, just for fun, at the point where Schikaneder has a pause, I played an arpeggio. He was startled, looked into the wings, and saw me. When he had his next pause, I played no arpeggio. This time he stopped and refused to go on. I guessed what he was thinking and again played a chord. He then struck the glockenspiel and said, *Shut up*. Whereupon everyone laughed. I am inclined to think that this joke taught many of the audience for the first time that Papageno does not play the instrument himself.⁴

As is well known, Papageno's number is not the only strophic song in *The Magic Flute*. Two other of his numbers are strophic: No. 2 ('Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja...') and the duet no. 7 ('Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen...'). The former is designated an aria and accompanies Papageno's entrance in Act 1, while the latter is shared with Pamina. Following research by Peter Branscombe⁵ and David J. Buch,⁶ it is quite well known that *The Magic Flute*, whose first performance took place in a suburban theatre, the Freihaustheater auf der Wieden, followed the traditions of Viennese popular theatre. Of course, this is just one stylistic element of a piece whose musical richness extends far beyond such traditions, as exemplified by the contrapuntal setting of the Lutheran chorale 'Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein' sung by the two men in armour, and by the two coloratura arias for the Queen of the Night. Never-

⁴ '... nur gieng ich auf das theater by der Arie des Papageno mit dem GlockenSpiel, weil ich heute so einen trieb fühlte es selbst zu Spielen. – da machte ich nun den Spass, wie Schikaneder einmal eine haltung hat, so machte ich eine Arpeggio – der erschreck – schauete in die Scene und sah mich – als es das 2:te mal kamm – machte ich es nicht – nun hielte er und wollte gar nicht mehr weiter – ich errieth seinen Gedanken und machte wieder einen Accord – dann schlug er auf das Glöckchenspiel und sagte halts Maul – alles lachte dann – ich glaube daß viele durch diesen Spass das erstemal erfuhren daß er das Instrument nicht selbst schlägt'. Mozart: *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen. Gesamtausgabe*, herausgegeben von der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg, Wilhelm A. Bauer – Otto Erich Deutsch (eds.), Vol. 4 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963), 160. English translation: *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, Emily Anderson (ed. and transl.) vol. 3, (London: Macmillan, 1938), 1440-1.

⁵ Peter BRANSCOMBE, W. A. Mozart: *Die Zauberflöte*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991; ID., Music in the Viennese Popular Theatre of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 98 (1971-2), 101-12.

⁶ David J. BUCH, Mozart and the Theater auf der Wieden: New Attributions and Perspectives, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 9/3 (Nov 1997), 195-232; ID., *Die Zauberflöte*, Masonic Opera and Other Fairy Tales, *Acta Musicologica*, 76/2 (2004), 193-219; ID., A Newly-Discovered Manuscript of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* from the Copy Shop of Emanuel Schikaneder's Theater auf der Wieden, *Studia Musicologica*, 45/3-4 (2004), 269-79. The fair copy discussed in the latter study is kept today at the Music Department of the Budapest Széchényi National Library (call number: Ms. mus. 10.868).

theless, a male comic character similar to Papageno, called 'Hanswurst' or 'Kasperl', was an important and permanent comic type of the Viennese popular theatrical tradition, as demonstrated by vocal numbers from an eighteenth-century collection of theatre pieces entitled *Wiener Haupt- und Staatsaktionen*, written by the popular 'Hanswurst', Josef Anton Stranitzky.⁷ These pieces have historical or mythological plots (in several cases German translations of Italian serious opera librettos), interpolated with comic scenes of earthly humour, which resemble Papageno's comments on the action of *The Magic Flute*. A significant difference, however, is that the comic actor of the *Hanswurstiaden* usually had several different masks in the same piece. It is worth mentioning that Hanswurst originated in Salzburg (Mozart's native place), and usually wore a peasant costume, a green pointed hat and short doublet on the stage, while on his waistcoat the letters 'H' and 'W' of his name were to be seen.⁸ Although relatively little is known about the music written for popular theatrical pieces in eighteenth-century Austria, some musical interpolations do survive of Kurz's Viennese popular comic pieces performed during the 1750s.⁹

However, we do not have to go very far back in time to find antecedents for Mozart's opera. Not long before the first performance of *The Magic Flute*, a similar *Zaubersingspiel* was premiered in another Viennese suburban theatre, the Leopoldstädter Theater (also known as the Kasperl-Theater). The text of *Der Fagottist oder die Zauberzither* was written by Joachim Perinet, while the composer was Wenzel Müller. If we compare the characters of the latter piece to those of its literary source, the fairy tale *Lulu oder die Zauberflöte* by August Jacob Liebeskind,¹⁰ which is frequently mentioned in the secondary literature as one of the possible sources of the libretto of *The Magic Flute*,¹¹ a striking difference can be found: the theatrical adaptation was supplemented by a full-blooded comic figure, Kaspar, played by the popular Kasperl, Johann Joseph La Roche (see Table 1).¹² It was in the same Leopoldstädter Theater that in October 1783 a German adaptation of Molière's *Dom Juan ou Le Festin de pierre* by Karl Marinelli, *Dom Juan oder der steinerne Gast*, was premiered, in which the male servant of the protagonist was none other than the autochthonous Viennese comic figure, Kaspar.¹³

⁷ *Wiener Haupt- und Staatsaktionen*, Rudolf Payer von Thurn (ed.), 2 vols., Wien: Verlag des Literarischen Vereins, 1908-10.

⁸ *Wiener Haupt- und Staatsaktionen*, Vol. 1, vii-viii.

⁹ *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich*, Vol. 64: *Deutsche Komödienarien, 1754-1758*, Robert Haas (ed.), Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1960; cf. Robert HAAS, *Die Musik in der Wiener deutschen Stegreifkomödie*, *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft*, 13/12 (1925), 3-64.

¹⁰ It was published in Christoph Martin WIELAND's *Dschinnistan oder auserlesene Feen- und Geister-Mährchen, theils neu erfunden, theils neu übersetzt und umgearbeitet*, Vol. 3, Winterthur: Steiner, 1789, 292-351.

¹¹ See for example David J. BUCH, *The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 333.

¹² *Der / Fagottist, / oder / die Zauberzither. / Ein Singspiel in drey Aufzügen / von / Joachim Perinet. / Erster Theil. / Die Musik ist / von Hr. Wenzel Müller, / Kapellmeister dieses Theaters. / Zweyte Auflage*, Wien: Schmidt, 1792.

¹³ Karl von MARINELLI, 'Dom Juan oder der steinerne Gast', in: *Die romantisch-komischen Volksmärchen*, Otto Rommel (ed.), Vol. 2, Leipzig: Reclam, 1936 1st ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964 2nd ed., 53-96.

The significance of Papageno's character in *The Magic Flute* is also attested by the fact that on the occasion of the first performance this role was played by the director of the Wieden theater, Emanuel Schikaneder.

Table 1. Correspondences between the principal characters of Liebeskind's fairy tale, Müller's *Singspiel*, and Mozart's opera

Liebeskind, <i>Lulu</i> (from Wieland's <i>Dschinnistan</i> , 1789)	Perinet-Müller, <i>Der Fagottist</i> (Leopoldstädter Theater, 9 June 1791)	Schikaneder-Mozart, <i>Die Zauberflöte</i> (Theater auf der Wieden, 30 Sept 1791)
Perifirime	Perifirime	Die Königin der Nacht
Dilsenghuin	Bosphoro	Sarastro
Lulu	Armidoro	Tamino
Sidi	Sidi	Pamina
Der Zwerg	Zumio	Monostatos
(no corresponding figure)	Kaspar	Papageno

It is important to emphasize that Papageno is a character who has no female companion of equal dramatic importance. Although he finds his partner at the end of the opera, Papagena has only an episodic role: she first appears in Act 2, scene 15, where she takes part in a short spoken dialogue, just as in scene 24; what is more, she sings only once, in the G-major duet section of the second finale and she has no solo music at all. Papageno, by contrast, is present right from the beginning of Act 1. His entrance is accompanied by a separate solo number (no. 2), and two characteristic instrumental timbres and a motif are associated with him: the pentachord of the panpipe and the glockenspiel. He remains onstage during Tamino's aria (no. 2) and the entrance of the Queen of the Night (no. 4), and in the quintet (no. 5) he takes farewell only from the Three Ladies, not from the audience. We find him in Pamina's room in the trio (no. 6), she and Papageno share a lengthy dialogue (scenes 13-14), then they sing a duet (no. 7). Although Papageno disappears at the beginning of the first finale, he is present again following Tamino's solo through to the end of Act 1. In Act 2, he accompanies Tamino during the first two trials (scenes 2-6 and 13-19) and takes part in the ensuing quintet (no. 12). Immediately before the second finale, he sings his song with the glockenspiel (no. 20), then in the finale, he wants to commit suicide. Fortunately, the Three Boys discourage him from doing so and remind him about the glockenspiel. Papagena appears, and for the comic couple, the piece ends with the G-major duet.

The designation *Operette* on the vocal score published by Götz and the connections of *The Magic Flute* with Viennese popular theatre are even more intriguing when we consider that in 1821 the French music lexicographer, Henri de Castil-Blaze claimed in his *Dictionnaire de musique moderne* that the term operetta was coined by Mozart:

Operetta, a [feminine] s[ubstantive]. This term, as it is said, was created by Mozart, who used it to designate his aborted stage works or miniature compositions, in which there

are only dry songs and vaudeville couplets. *The [Two] Huntsmen and the Milk-Woman, The Secret, The Opéra-Comique, The [Two] Little Savoyards*, etc., etc. are operettas. According to Mozart, a good musician is able to compose two or three works of this stature between breakfast and dinner.¹⁴

The truth, however, is that Mozart never composed 'aborted stage works' of this kind, to say little of the curious fact that the pieces mentioned by Castil-Blaze are not Mozart's compositions at all but French works for the stage (see Table 2). *Les Deux chasseurs et la laitière*, for instance, is a one-act opéra-comique with three characters (plus a bear) composed by the Italian Egidio Duni, and premiered in 1763.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the genre designation of the German adaptation of this piece is *Operette* on the title-page of the 1771 Mannheim libretto.¹⁶ Castil-Blaze's definition of operetta was reprinted at least twice during the 1820s,¹⁷ and was later taken over into the 1854 music dictionary by Léon and Marie Escudier (without mentioning the French titles),¹⁸ and echoed by the Hungarian theater lexicographer, Aladár Schöpflin at the end of the 1920s.¹⁹

Table 2. The 'operettas' mentioned by Castil-Blaze

Composer	Title	Libretto	First performance
E. Duni	<i>Les Deux chasseurs et la laitière</i>	L. Anseaume	Paris, Comédie-Italienne, 1763
N.-M. Dalayrac	<i>Les Deux petits savoyards</i>	M. des Vivetières	Paris, Comédie-Italienne, 1789
J.-P. Solié	<i>Le Secret</i>	F.-B. Hoffmann	Paris, Opéra-Comique, 1796
D. Della-Maria	<i>L'Opéra-Comique</i>	J. Ségur, E. Dupaty	Paris, Opéra-Comique, 1798

¹⁴ 'Opérette, s[ubstantif] f[éminin]. Mot, qui dit-on, a été forgé par Mozart, pour désigner ces avortons dramatiques, ces compositions en miniature, dans lesquelles on ne trouve que des froides chansons et des couplets de vaudeville. Les Chasseurs et la Laitière, le Secret, l'Opéra comique, les Petits Savoyards, etc., etc., etc., etc., sont des opérettes. Mozart disait qu'un musicien bien constitué pouvait composer deux ou trois ouvrages de cette force entre son déjeuné et son diner'. Henri de CASTIL-BLAZE, *Dictionnaire de musique modern*, Paris: Magasin de Musique de la Lyre Moderne, 1821 1st ed., 102-3.

¹⁵ *LES DEUX CHASSEURS, / ET LA LAITIÈRE; / COMEDIE / EN UN ACTE, / MÉLÉE D'ARIETTES; / PAR M. Anseaume: / Représentée pour la première fois sur le Théâtre des / Comédiens Italiens Ordinaires du Roi, le 21 / Juillet 1763, / La Musique est de M. Duni / ...*, Paris: Duchesne, 1763.

¹⁶ *Das / Milchmädgen / und / die beiden Jäger / eine Operette*, Mannheim: Schwann, 1771.

¹⁷ Paris: Magasin de Musique de la Lyre Moderne, 1825 2nd ed.; Bruxelles: Académie de Musique, 1828 3rd ed.

¹⁸ [Léon et Marie Escudier] *Dictionnaire de Musique théorique et historique par les Frères Escudier*, Vol. 2, Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1854, 99.

¹⁹ *Magyar színművészeti lexicon* [Lexicon of Hungarian Theatrical Art], Aladár Schöpflin (ed.), Vol. 3, Budapest: Országos Színészegyesület, 1929-31, 409.

The myth surrounding the origin of the term operetta formulated by Castil-Blaze is, however, no more than that. In her entry on 'operetta' for the *Handwörterbuch der musikalischen Terminologie*, Sabine Ehrmann-Herfort mentions several historical definitions of the term, written and published well before Mozart's birth.²⁰ I do not deal extensively here with the Latin and Italian antecedents of the term to be found in German-language sources, as in the short definition published in Johann Gottfried Walther's music lexicon of 1732. Walther uses the word in its Italian form (operetta), which was taken over into English. According to him, this is a diminutive form of the term 'opera' and means a short musical stage work: 'Operetta (italian): a short musical stage work, a small opera.' (*Operetta [ital.] ein kurzes musikalisches Schauspiel, Operetgen.*)²¹ It was likewise before Mozart's birth, in 1748, that the second edition of Johann Theodor Jablonski's lexicon of music and arts was published. According to Jablonski's short definition (which is lacking in the 1721 first edition), the term means the following: 'Operetta: a small opera, a short play with songs.' (*Operette, eine kleine Oper, ein kurzes Singspiel.*)²²

The German philosopher and dramaturge, Johann Christoph Gottsched provides a definition of the term *Operette* only in the fourth edition (1751) of his aesthetic essay *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst vor die Deutschen*. This definition is as follows:

Since it is already known what opera is, so, it will be not difficult to understand what operetta is. It is none other than a small play with songs, which is made, set to music and performed in the same way as longer pieces. Its length is almost the same as that of one act of a full-length opera, that is, one-third as long as a full-length opera; consequently, the plot should be developed accordingly, and the number of characters should be limited. This happens automatically: operettas are generally performed at such courts where there are not sufficient singers to mount a full-length opera, and where, beyond staging something rapidly, neither the poet nor the musician is able to create something of greater substance.²³

Around the same time as the third edition of Jablonski's lexicon was published (1767), the child Mozart composed a short musical stage work which fits into the category of a short play with interpolated musical numbers described by Jablonski

²⁰ Sabine EHRMANN-HERFORT, *Operette*, in: *Handwörterbuch der musikalischen Terminologie*, Albrecht Riethmüller (ed.), Vol. 4, Stuttgart: Steiner, 1972-2006, 1-20.

²¹ Johann Gottfried WALTHER, *Musikalisches Lexicon*, Leipzig: Deer, 1732, 451.

²² Johann Theodor JABLONSKI, *Allgemeines Lexicon der Künste und Wissenschaften*, Vol. 2, Königsberg-Leipzig: Hartung, 1748 2nd ed., 1767 3rd ed., 987.

²³ 'Nun man weiß, was Opern sind, so wird es nicht schwer fallen, zu begreifen, was Operetten seyn sollen. Es sind nichts anders, als kleine Singspiele, die nach Art jener großen Stücke gemacht, in Musik gebracht, und singend aufgeführt werden. Sie werden kaum so lang, als ein Aufzug einer großen Oper, das ist drey mal kürzer, als dieselbe gemachet: folglich muß theils die Fabel darnach eingerichtet, theils die Zahl der Personen eingeschränket seyn. Und dieß giebt sich von sich selber wohl: denn insgemein werden Operetten an solchen Höfen aufgeführt, wo man nicht Sänger genug hat, eine große vorstellen zu lassen: es wäre denn, daß man einmal in der Geschwindigkeit etwas auf die Bühne bringen sollte, wo weder der Poet noch Musikus was Großes fertig schaffen könnten'. Johann Christoph GOTTSCHED, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1751 4th ed., 754.

and Gottsched. The one-act *Bastien und Bastienne* has only three characters and, according to Nissen's Mozart biography, it was premiered in the Viennese house of Dr Franz Anton Mesmer, the father of animal magnetism.²⁴ The libretto goes back to *Les Amours de Bastien et Bastienne* (first performed at the Comédie-Italienne, Paris, on 26 September 1753) by Justine Favart and Harny de Guerville, a parody of the *intermède Le devin du village* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (first performed at Fontainebleau on 18 October 1752). According to Linda Tyler (and in contrast to Nissen's claim), Johann Andreas Schachtner, a Salzburg acquaintance of the Mozart family, was not the translator of the French text but only revised the German translation by Friedrich Wilhelm Weiskern and Johann Heinrich Friedrich Müller, in all likelihood *after* Mozart had set it to music.²⁵ In any case, Mozart's piece was mentioned as an *Operette* not only by Nissen,²⁶ but also by Leopold Mozart in his catalog of his son's works: 'The operetta *Bastien and Bastienne*, in German, ~~was set to music here by him~~ [later interpolation: '1768']. And now the opera buffa entitled *La finta semplice ...*' (*Die Operetta Bastien und Bastienne, im Teutsch, hat er kürzlich hier / in die Musik gesetzt. ['1768'] / und nun die opera buffa La Finta Semplice ...*).²⁷ The editor of the corresponding volume of the Neue Mozart Ausgabe [NMA], Rudolph Angermüller, assumes that the year 1768, which was inserted later in the manuscript, was entered by the composer's sister. Angermüller, however, has no idea who crossed out the words »hat er kürzlich hier in die Musik gesetzt.«

Some years after the composition of *Bastien und Bastienne*, in 1774, a volume entitled *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (General Theory of the Fine Arts) was published in Leipzig under Johann Georg Sulzer's name. The definition of the term *Operette* in this volume – which was in all likelihood written by Johann Philipp Kirnberger – is strikingly verbose, but affords some new aspects. According to Kirnberger, *Operette* functions as a synonym for comic opera:

Operettas: comic operas. Just as the opera proper ... came into existence through uniting tragedy with music, so music united with comedy created operetta, which came into existence only 40-50 years ago, but for some time past has come to dominate the German stage to the extent that it threatens to replace the comedy proper. At first it was merely slide-splitting farce, which idea was taken by the Germans from the Italian intermezzos and comic operas. ... Recently, attempts have been made to ennoble operetta somewhat, which though clearly comic in origin, now gradually promises a new kind of music drama, which will be valuable, if it comes to fruition through the agency of skilled poets and composers.²⁸

²⁴ Georg Nikolaus von NISSEN, *Biographie W. A. Mozart's*, Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1828, 127.

²⁵ Linda TYLER, *Bastien und Bastienne*. The Libretto, Its Derivation, and Mozart's Text-Setting, *Journal of Musicology*, 8/4 (1990), 520-52.

²⁶ G.N. von NISSEN, *Biographie W. A. Mozart's*, 127.

²⁷ For a facsimile, see: NMA, II/5/3: *Bastien und Bastienne*, Rudolph Angermüller (ed.), Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1974, xviii.

²⁸ 'Operetten. Comische Opern. Wie die eigentliche Oper ... aus Vereinigung des Trauerspiels mit der Musik entstanden, so hat die Musik mit der Comödie vereinigt, die Operette hervorgebracht, die erst vor vierzig oder fünfzig Jahren aufgekomen ist, aber seit kurzem sich der deutschen comischen

»... to ennoble operetta somewhat« – Kirnberger's description fits well with *The Magic Flute*, but it was published more than a decade before Mozart composed his opera. It should be noted, however, that 'serious operettas' had already appeared in the 1770s, for example, *Walder* by Georg Benda, which was premiered in 1776 in Gotha, and whose contemporary edition bears the genre designation *ernsthafte Operette*.²⁹ Its libretto, by Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter, is in fact an adaptation of a French opéra-comique, *Syloain* by Jean-François Marmontel and André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry.

Two years after the premiere of *Walder*, in 1778, Emperor Joseph II transformed the Vienna Burgtheater into a *Deutsches Nationalsingspiel* (German National Opera).³⁰ As is well known, Mozart's Singspiel *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was first performed at this institution in July 1782. Its libretto by Gottlieb Stephanie Jr is an adaptation of Christoph Friedrich Bretzner's *Operette*, which was premiered in Berlin with music by Johann André one year before.³¹ For the sake of the *Entführung*, Mozart laid aside another Turkish Singspiel, as we see in a letter written to his father from Vienna on 18 April 1781:

<As for Schachtner's operetta>³² there is nothing to be done – for the same reason which I have often mentioned. Stephanie junior is going to give me a new libretto, a good one, as he says; and, if in the meantime I have left Vienna, he is to send it to me.³³

The unfinished piece is known today as *Zaide* – following the first edition published by Johann André in 1838 or 1839.³⁴ It is quite likely that Mozart referred to the same piece in a letter written to his father from Munich on 18 January 1781:

Schaubühne so bemächtigt hat, daß sie die eigentliche Comödie davon zu verdrängen droht. Anfänglich war sie ein bloßes Possenspiehl [sic] zum Lachen, wozu die Deutschen von dem italienischen Intermezzo und der Opera buffa, den Einfall geborgt haben. ... Seit kurzem hat man versucht, die Operette, die anfänglich bloß comisch war, etwas zu veredeln, und daraus entsteht izt allmählig ein ganz neues musicalisches Drama, welches von gutem Werth seyn wird, wenn es von geschickten Dichtern und Tonsetzern einmal seine völlige Form wird bekommen haben'. Johann Georg SULZER, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, Vol. 2, Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1774 1st ed., 851-2.

²⁹ *Walder, / eine ernsthafte Operette in einem Acte, / des Herrn Gotters. / In Musik gesetzt / von / Georg Benda, / Herzoglich Sachsen-Gothaischen Capell[|]director. / Clavierauszug, nebst Begleitung einiger Instrumente*, Gotha: Ettinger, 1777.

³⁰ For the history and repertoire of this institution, see Otto MICHTNER, *Das alte Burgtheater als Opernbühne von der Einführung des deutschen Singspiels (1778) bis zum Tod Kaiser Leopolds II (1792)*, Wien: Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1969.

³¹ *Belmont und Konstanze, / oder / Die Entführung aus dem / Serail. / Eine Operette / in drey Akten / von / C. F. Bretzner / Komponirt vom Herrn Kapellmeister Andre / in Berlin, München: Thuille, 1781.*

³² The text between <> was originally ciphered by Mozart, and decoded by Nissen.

³³ <Wegen dem schachtner seiner operette>ist es nichts. denn – aus der nemlichen ursache, die ich so oft gesagt habe. – der Junge Stephanie wird mir ein neues stück, und wie er sagt, gutes stück, geben, und wenn ich nicht mehr hier bin, schicken'. Mozart: *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, Vol. 3, 107-8. English translation: *The Letters of Mozart*, vol. 3, 1078.

³⁴ NMA, II/5/10: *Zaide (Das Serail)*, Friedrich-Heinrich Neumann (ed.), Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1957, vii.

I should like you to bring Schachtner's operetta, too. There are some people who come to the Cannabichs, who might just as well hear a thing of this kind.³⁵

Four years after the premiere of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, a music lexicon by Johann Georg Lebrecht Wilke was published. According to Wilke's definition, the relationship between opera and *Operette* is as follows:

Opera [Italian, pronunciation: öhpera]. That is, an opera. The difference between operetta [French, pronunciation: öhperette, translation: small opera] and opera is that in an opera everything is sung, however, in an operetta many things are spoken by the actors in prose, and only the interpolated arias as well as the closing and ensemble songs are sung.³⁶

In 1786, the same year in which Wilke's music dictionary was published, and some months before the first performance of *Le nozze di Figaro*, Mozart and Stephanie Jr wrote a German-language *Gelegenheitsstück* (occasional piece) entitled *Der Schauspieldirektor*. This was premiered in the orangery of the Schönbrunn castle along with *Prima la musica e poi le parole* ('First the music and then the words') by Casti and Salieri. Though *Der Schauspieldirektor* is listed in Mozart's own catalogue of his works as a *Komödie mit Musik*, the first edition of its vocal score was published later, in 1792 or 1793, by the Leipzig publishing house Breitkopf, with the genre designation *komische Operette*.³⁷ This is not surprising because the piece consists of a single act, has only four singing characters, contains much spoken dialogue, and includes no more than five musical numbers (including the overture).

In the year following the first performance of *Der Schauspieldirektor*, Georg Friedrich Wolf published a music lexicon entry, in which he even included certain prescriptions for the music of operettas:

Operetta came into existence through the union of music and comedy. The aim of both the poet and the composer is to be comic. However, the composer must adhere to good taste, and he is not allowed to stray into nonsense; in this case the comic music will always conserve its value. – A short time ago operetta became somewhat ennobled, whereas originally it had been merely comic, and from this the musical drama came into existence. The music of the latter must mediate between the elevation of the cothurn and

³⁵ '... ich wünsche auch daß sie die operette von schachtner mitnehmen – ins Cannabichsche haus kommen leute, wo es nicht Mal à propos ist wenn sie so was hören'. Mozart: *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, Vol. 3, 90-1. English translation: *The Letters of Mozart*, vol. 2, 1052.

³⁶ 'Oper. I[italienisch]. A[ussprache] öhpera. Eine Oper. Sie unterscheidet sich von der Operette (F[ranzösisch]. Aussprache öhperette U[ebersetzung] kleine Oper) dadurch, daß in der Oper alles gesungen wird, im Singspiele oder Operette aber hingegen, wird von den Schauspiele[r]n vieles gesprochen, und bloß eingemischte einzelne Arien, ingleichen Schluß- und Rundgesänge gesungen'. Johann Georg Lebrecht WILKE, *Musikalisches Handwörterbuch*, Weimar: Hoffmanns Witwe und Erben, 1786 1st ed., 77.

³⁷ *Der / Schauspieldirektor / eine komische Operette in einem Aufzuge, / von / W. A. Mozart. / Im Klavierauszuge / von / Siegfried Schmiedt*, Leipzig: Breitkopf, s.d.

the vulgarity of the comic mask. Its arias must not be as intricate and elaborate, nor as harmonically complex and richly accompanied as in full-scale operatic arias.³⁸

In 1802, just over a decade after the first performance of *The Magic Flute* and Mozart's death, Heinrich Christoph Koch's musical lexicon privileged brevity and the dual role of music and spoken dialogue as the main characteristics of operetta. Koch even drew the reader's attention to the fact that the meaning of the term had changed over time:

Operetta. In past times, until approximately the middle of the last century, this term was used to designate such serious operas as were sung throughout, but whose subject was not, however, elaborated by the poet as fully as in the case of a normal opera.^{*} Then the name passed over unnoticed to such comic operas in which only small arias and songs were interpolated between the spoken dialogues, and which were cultivated from circa 1768 until 1773 by [Johann Adam] Hiller to general satisfaction. When later composers began to elaborate more extensively the arias between the dialogues, and to add finales, in which the plot proceeded amidst continuous singing, such works received the designation comic opera.

^{*} At that time, operettas like this were performed on special occasions at courts where a choir of court singers was added to the court orchestra.³⁹

Given these various definitions from about seven decades of German musical lexicography together with an overview of Mozart's German Singspiele, it becomes obvious that Castil-Blaze's claim concerning the origin of the term operetta is untenable. But it also becomes more comprehensible. Although the genre of short German opera alternating spoken dialogues with interpolated musical numbers was not Mozart's invention, it is true that he was the most brilliant composer to have cultivated

³⁸ 'Operette hat die Musik, vereinigt mit der Comödie, hervorgebracht. Die Absicht des Dichters sowohl als des Tonsetzers ist, possierlich zu seyn. Nur muß sich der Componist durch guten Geschmack leiten lassen, und nicht ganz in Ungereimtheiten verfallen; geschieht dies so wird die komische Musik immer ihren Werth behalten. – Nicht vor lange Zeit hat man angefangen die Operette, die anfänglich blos komisch war, etwas zu veredeln, und daraus ist das musikalische Drama entstanden. Die Musik desselben muß die Mittelstraße zwischen der Hoheit der Cothurns und der Niedrigkeit der komischen Maske wählen. Die Arien müssen weder so ausführlich und ausgearbeitet, noch von so mannigfaltiger Modulation, noch so reich an begleitenden Stimmen seyn, als die grossen Opernarien'. Georg Friedrich WOLF, *Kurzgefasstes musikalisches Lexikon*, Halle: Hendel, 1787 1st ed., 114-5. [2/1792: 135-36.]

³⁹ 'Operette. Dieses Wort wurde ehemals bis ohngefähr gegen die Mitte des verwichenen Jahrhunderts zur Bezeichnung solcher ernsthaften Opern gebraucht, die zwar durchaus gesungen wurden, bey welchen aber der Dichter den gewählten Stoff nicht so weitläufig [sic] ausführte, wie bey einer gewöhnlichen Oper.' In der Folge ging dieser Name unvermerkt auf die komische Oper über, in welcher bloß kleine Arien und Lieder enthalten waren, die zwischen den Dialog eingestreuet wurden, und die Hiller ohngefähr vom Jahre 1768 bis gegen das Jahr 1773 mit allgemeinem Beyfalle bearbeitete. Als man nachher anfang, die Arien zwischen dem Dialoge weiter auszuführen, und die Finale damit zu verbinden, in welchen die Handlung unter fortdauerndem Gesange fortrückt, bekamen sie den Namen komische Oper. / ' Dergleichen Operetten wurden in jenem Zeitraume an solchen Höfen bey besondern Feyerlichkeiten aufgeführt, bey welchen die Hofkapelle mit einem Chore Hofsängern verbunden war'. Johann Christoph KOCH, *Musikalisches Lexikon*, Frankfurt a. M.: Hermann d. j., 1802 1st ed., 1098.

Operette; what is more, he was able to ennoble the genre in an unequalled way. Nevertheless, the history of musical theatre in the nineteenth century (and right through to Castil-Blaze's own time) would result in significant changes of meaning for the term operetta. Due to these changes, people today do not usually designate Mozart's *The Magic Flute* an operetta.

It should be noted, however, that Jacques Offenbach, whose name is most often associated with the birth of operetta in the modern sense, also premiered one of Mozart's 'operettas' in his theatre. The opérette-bouffe entitled *L'impresario* was first performed at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens in 1856, that is, in the centenary year of Mozart's birth. The piece in question is none other than a French adaptation of *Der Schauspieldirektor*, and this was its premiere in France. Mark Everist, who wrote an intriguing study about this French production, rightly assumes that Offenbach wanted to increase the aesthetic prestige of his new musical theatre by programming this work.⁴⁰ Although both the libretto and music of *L'impresario* differ significantly from Mozart's original piece, the fact that it was played in the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens testifies that there were enduring connections even between eighteenth-century Viennese music practice and Offenbach's nineteenth-century Parisian operetta.

Sažetak

'Die Zauberflöte, eine Operette in zwey Aufzügen': O pretpovijesti određenja jednoga žanra iz 18. stoljeća

Još se od 19. stoljeća uvijek iznova tvrdilo da je Mozart skovao izraz *Operette*. Ta je tvrdnja sasvim sigurno pogrešna, a čini se sasvim izvjesnim da je taj mit potekao iz rječničkog unosa u *Dictionnaire de musique moderne* Henria de Castil-Blazea iz 1821. godine. Pa ipak, ostaje činjenica da je izraz *Operette* već bio u upotrebi tijekom 18. stoljeća, čak i ako nije bio korišten u posve identičnom smislu kao nakon diseminacije djela Jacquesa Offenbacha diljem Europe. U ovom eseju predstavljam Mozartova djela za koja je taj izraz upotrijebljen u skladateljevoj korespondenciji, u katalogu njegovih mladenačkih djela kojeg je sastavio njegov otac, kao i u suvremenim izdanjima libreta i partitura. Također donosim i kratak pregled definicije pojma *Operette* kakav se nalazi u glazbenim rječnicima iz 18. stoljeća, od Johanna Gottfrieda Walthera (1732) do Johanna Christopha Kocha (1802), te na taj način pokušavam objasniti što je izraz *Operette* značio u 18. stoljeću, čak i prije Mozartova rođenja.

⁴⁰ Mark EVERIST, Mozart and *L'impresario*, in *L'esprit français und die Musik Europas. Entstehung, Einfluss und Grenzen einer ästhetischen Doktrin*, Festschrift für Herbert Schneider, Michelle Biget-Mainfroy – Rainer Schmusch (eds.), Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2007, 420-33.