

THE EARLY RECEPTION OF MOZART'S OPERAS IN LONDON: BURNEY'S MISSED OPPORTUNITY

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Early in 1789 Charles Burney declined a chance to purchase the score of an unnamed Mozart opera, offered to him by Franz Anton Weber, the composer's uncle-in-law, in an unsolicited letter from Hamburg. For several years Weber had been active in supplying new Viennese repertory to northern cities such as Uppsala, Hanover and Hamburg, but in a career change, he decided to launch an itinerant opera troupe. Among the family members employed in this company was Franz Anton's daughter Jeanette, who, he claimed, had been a pupil of Mozart and Aloysia Lange. In the light of Burney's missed opportunity, my article revisits the well-researched story of Mozart reception at the King's Theatre in the late 1780s.

By the time that Charles Burney was preparing his entry on Mozart for Rees's *Cyclopædia* in 1805, he had become an unqualified admirer of the composer's writing for voice. In a letter to Christian Ignaz Latrobe dated 24 March 1805, he asked about a score of the *Requiem*, as he was reluctant to part with the one on loan to him: 'Have you ever a disposable copy of Mozart's *Requiem*? I have Salomon's copy in my possession now; but hate to part with it till I have another.'¹ Five years after the publication of the full score by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1800, copies were evidently still not plentiful in London, even if the work's stature was increasingly acknowledged by cognoscenti.² When Burney contacted William Crotch to ask if he had any information on Haydn's stage works, he explained why it had taken him so long to appreciate the universality of Mozart's achievement: his 'vocal music is exquisite – but we never knew that he had ever composed a drama, or even a Song till after his death'.³ That the English were 'wholly unacquainted' with Mozart's operas and songs whilst he was alive was untrue, yet it served as a convenient excuse for the historian, neatly absolving him from the accusation that he had been guilty of a serious lapse in judgment. The documentary record of his knowledge of the composer, however, tells a different story.

As an acknowledged expert on musical prodigies, Burney contributed to a 'scientific' evaluation of Mozart, undertaken in 1765 during the final weeks of his stay in London. A coterie of investigators on the fringes of the Royal Society concluded that the boy was a phenomenon worthy of serious testing, rather than being subjected to circus-style party tricks with an obscured keyboard. His ability to extemporize fluently in all the

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- 1 Charles Burney, letter to Christian Latrobe, Chelsea College, 24 March 1805. Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Osborn MSS, Box 4. The *Requiem* received its London premiere on 20 February 1801, but it did not start to become part of the city's regular concert repertory until a large-scale benefit performance was directed by Johann Peter Salomon on 28 May 1812. Even then, its liturgical status as a Roman Catholic mass for the dead impeded full acceptance. See Rachel Cowgill, "'Hence, base intruder, hence": Rejection and Assimilation in the Early English Reception of Mozart's Requiem', in *Europe, Empire, and Spectacle in Nineteenth-Century British Music*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Julian Rushton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 9–27.
- 2 Even that committed apologist for 'ancient' music, William Crotch, had to admit to Burney that Mozart's *Requiem* was a favourite of his, although the masses of Haydn and Mozart in general left him cold: 'sorry to say that I cannot agree with you in liking them – no not even at all'. Cited in Howard Irving, *Ancients and Moderns: William Crotch and the Development of Classical Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 41.
- 3 Burney, letter to William Crotch, 4 November 1805. Osborn MSS, Box 4.



genres of Italian opera was central to their examination. In his musical notebook, dating from around 1771, Burney recalled these efforts:

his fondness for Manzoli – his imitations of the several Styles of Singing of each of the then Opera Singers, as well as of their Songs in an Extemporary opera to nonsense words to which were [added] an overture of 3 Movem^{ts} Recitative – Graziosa, Bravura & Pathetic Airs together with Several accomp^d Recitatives, all full of Taste imagination, with good Harmony, Melody & Modulation . . .⁴

Daines Barrington also focused on tests of Mozart's knowledge of operatic styles in his report to the Royal Society.⁵

Another member of the group engaged in the appraisal of Mozart was David Stuart Erskine, Eleventh Earl of Buchan, by 1765 a committed antiquarian and natural scientist. In the new century, he wrote several times to Burney about child prodigies currently appearing in Edinburgh, using Mozart as a yardstick. On 13 March 1806 he offered his opinion that 'he [Gattie] may perhaps become a British Mozart'.⁶ Of much more interest is what he said in 1812 when recommending another young musician, Mary Ann Paton:

My Dear Dr Burney

When you consider my Nestorian existence [Erskine was almost seventy years old] & that I had Mozart on my knee when he played his little voluntaries at 5 or 6 years old at London while the tears of sensibility glistened in his eyes . . .⁷

By this time, the image of the slight child, sitting on an adult's lap to enable him to perform at a keyboard, had become a familiar trope. Erskine's phraseology, though, owes more to Vicesimus Knox on sensibility than to the myths that were starting to shape accounts of Mozart's childhood. In an essay on old age, Knox wrote: 'The tear of sensibility, said Juvenal, is the most honourable characteristic of the human race'.⁸ Of his chosen example of childhood genius, the poet Thomas Chatterton, who took his own life at the age of seventeen, he noted the 'tremulous sensibility of genius'.⁹ Yet Erskine's reference to 'voluntaries', suggesting extemporization on a given theme, is credible, as it matches the tests that both Burney and Daines Barrington carried out in addition to their operatic challenges.

4 Cliff Eisen, *New Mozart Documents* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 4. Burney himself recalled seeing the Mozart family soon after their arrival, and later at the house of a Mr 'Frank', probably the 'Mr Frenck' listed in Leopold's *Reisenotizen* (travel notes). The position of this name towards the end of his running list of people that he met in London suggests that the family performed there as one of their last private engagements in England. See Hannah Templeton, 'The Mozarts in London: Exploring the Family's Professional, Social and Intellectual Networks in 1764–1765' (PhD dissertation, King's College London, 2016), 75.

5 For some reason, it was several years before Barrington submitted his account to Maty at the Royal Society.

6 David Stuart Erskine, letter to Burney, 13 March 1806. Osborn MSS 3, Box 2. Master Gattie appeared during the 1808 and 1809 Edinburgh concert series. See John Leonard Cranmer, 'Concert Life and the Music Trade in Edinburgh c.1780–c.1830' (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1991), 64. In a similar vein, Erskine wrote to Burney on 22 March 1808 predicting 'another MOZART'. Ever since Samuel Wesley had been called an 'English Mozart', this had become a standard accolade. Philip Olleson, *Samuel Wesley: The Man and His Music* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 10.

7 Erskine, letter to Burney, Edinburgh, 13 March 1812. Osborn MSS 3, Box 2. Paton featured in the Edinburgh concert series in 1811 and 1812. See Cranmer, 'Concert Life', 113. Burney mentioned Erskine's recommendation in a letter to Samuel Wesley dated 29 August 1813. See Michael Kassler and Philip Olleson, *Samuel Wesley (1766–1837): A Source Book* (Farnham: Routledge, 2001), 320.

8 Vicesimus Knox, *Essays, Moral and Literary*, two volumes (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1779), volume 1, 228.

9 Knox, *Essays*, volume 2, 116.



Erskine's meeting with Mozart probably took place towards the end of the family's stay in London. Until the death of his father, he was known as Lord Cardross, and it was under this title that his election to the Royal Society was widely reported in late June 1765.¹⁰ Around this time he also visited the British Museum. On 19 July, the minutes of the Standing Committee of the Trustees recorded the following gifts:

Lord Cardross having presented a portrait of Queen Elizabeth, Mr. Mozart a copy of the printed music of his son, and Dr. de Or a copy of his Theological Inaugural Dissertation printed at Leyden 1765 / Ordered / that thanks be returned for the same.¹¹

It is quite possible that Erskine's gift was a gesture of thanks to Dr Matthew Maty, who by 1765 was active in both institutions, as Foreign Secretary of the Royal Society and as an under-librarian in the British Museum. On the same day as the entry in the minutes, Maty completed the *pro forma* letter of acknowledgement, a copy of which it was the custom to supply to each donor. In the document prepared for Leopold Mozart, he described his gift as the 'present of the musical performances of your very ingenious son'.¹² Leopold valued this proof of his son's success sufficiently that he took it back with him to Salzburg. The fact that Erskine's name appears next to Leopold Mozart's in the minute book does not prove that the two met in the British Museum, nor that Erskine heard Mozart play there. Maty's reference to 'musical performances', though, leaves open the possibility that a demonstration did take place, perhaps involving one of the sonatas K10–K15. If so, Leopold perhaps returned to add a copy to the four items that he had already presented.¹³

Having assisted in the testing of Mozart's extraordinarily precocious understanding of Italian opera, Burney quite naturally followed the start of his career as a composer for the stage. When he met Leopold and his son in Bologna on 30 August 1770, he recorded his impression of Mozart's still slight physique: 'The little man is grown considerably but is still a little man'. At the age of twelve, he was already 'engaged to compose an Opera for Milan'.¹⁴ In due course Burney became aware of the contract for *Lucio Silla*, as shown by a sentence added to the description cited above: 'He's engaged to compose a 2nd opera for Milan next Carnaval'. It is very likely indeed that he learnt further details from the castrato Venanzio Rauzzini, who sang in the first performance run of *Lucio Silla* and for whom an admiring Mozart composed 'Exsultate jubilate' (K165). The singer greatly impressed Burney during his second continental tour. In the published account of 1773 he wrote:

The first singer in the serious opera here, is Signor Rauzzini, a young Roman performer, of singular merit, who has been six years in the service of this court [Munich]; but is engaged to sing in an opera composed by young Mozart, at the next carnival at Milan.¹⁵

10 *St James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (29 June 1765): 'Lord Cardross, eldest Son of the Earl of Buchan, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.'

11 Minutes of the Standing Committee of the Trustees of the British Museum, London, 19 July 1765. Eisen, *New Mozart Documents*, 8.

12 Reproduced in Alex Hyatt King, *The Mozart Legacy: Aspects of the British Library Collections* (London: British Library, 1984), 25. This was not the first musical gift received by the Museum. In the summer of 1763 Thomas Hollis agreed to distribute Francesco Algarotti's *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica*. One copy went to the British Museum and an acknowledgement was duly received, with Hollis noting that it was '[a] dry one, according to the more usual mode of this Country, from the Trustees of the Musaeum'. British Library, Add MS 26889, 9 August 1763.

13 These four items were two sets of sonatas (K6–7 and K8–9), 'God is our refuge' (K20) and a copy of the Carmontelle print of the Mozart family. Eisen, *New Mozart Documents*, 8, notes an entry in the Book of Presents of the Trustees, also dated 19 July: 'A copy of the Printed Music of his son: from Mr. Mozart. Omitted in the Donation Book.'

14 Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1965), 125.

15 Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, two volumes (London: T. Becket & Co., 1773), volume 1, 126.



After his return to England, Burney may have recommended Rauzzini to Frances Brooke, manager of the King's Theatre in London.¹⁶ When Rauzzini arrived in London on 19 September 1774, well before the start of the new season, he quickly became part of Burney's social circle. There is no record of any discussion of *Lucio Silla*, but it would be surprising if Burney had not taken the opportunity to ask about the reception of this work.

Burney next encountered Mozart's vocal writing in 1779, when the castrato Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci showed him a scena composed by Mozart in Paris the previous year. The evidence for this lost piece comes in an appendix to one of Daines Barrington's *Miscellanies*, which takes the form of an update to his original report to the Royal Society. Under the date 21 January 1780, Barrington himself notes that Mozart 'hath composed operas in several parts of Italy'. He then cites verbatim Burney's assessment of Tenducci's scena, one of his 'latest compositions':

It is a very elaborate and masterly composition, discovering a great practice and facility of writing in many parts. The modulation is likewise learned and recherchée; however, though it is a composition which none but a great master of harmony, and possessed of a consummate knowledge of the genius of different instruments, could produce; yet neither the melody of the voice part, nor any one of the instruments, discovers much invention, though the effects of the whole, if well executed, would, doubtless, be masterly and pleasing.¹⁷

After this favourable if slightly ambivalent evaluation, Burney finally lost contact with Mozart's progress altogether. He appears to have known nothing of *Idomeneo* or the success of *Die Entführung*.

The first opportunity Burney had to hear music from the Da Ponte operas came during the 1788–1789 and 1789–1790 seasons at the King's Theatre and the Little Theatre in the Haymarket. In 1789 'Crudel! perchè finora' (*Le nozze di Figaro*, Act 3 Scene 2) was inserted into *La vendemmia* (9 May 1789) and 'Non più andrai' (*Figaro*, Act 1 Scene 8) into *Il barbiere* (11 June 1789), albeit for the character of Bartolo.¹⁸ The London *I due castellani burlati* (2 February 1790) included 'Voi che sapete' (*Figaro*, Act 2 Scene 1) transposed for tenor and perhaps one other unidentified Mozart aria, while *La villanella rapita* (27 February 1790) featured not only the two insertion ensembles Mozart had written for Vienna ('Dite almeno', K479, and 'Mandina amabile', K480) but also 'Batti, batti' (*Don Giovanni*, Act 1 Scene 16) and 'Deh vieni' (*Figaro*, Act 4 Scene 10).¹⁹ In all, this amounted to a significant display of enthusiasm for the composer's dramatic music which did not pass unnoticed in the public press. For the *Morning Herald* reviewer, Mozart's music was the highlight of the opera.²⁰

A fashion for Italian opera originating in Vienna marked the final turbulent years of John Gallini's management of the King's Theatre. As impresario, he established active lines of communication with at least one source close to the Burgtheater. When Joseph II decided to close his opera buffa troupe in the summer of 1788, Gallini was quick to sign up its star singer Francesco Benucci, making use of the brief window of opportunity before the emperor had a characteristic change of mind. As one commentator jubilantly put it:

16 See Ian Woodfield, *Opera and Drama in Eighteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 57–59.

17 *Miscellanies by the Honourable Daines Barrington* (London: J. Nichols, 1781), 288.

18 See Curtis Price, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London*, volume 1: *The King's Theatre, Haymarket, 1778–1791* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 415–416, and Dorothea Link, 'Mozart's "Batti, batti, o bel Masetto" Performed in London in 1789', *Newsletter of the Mozart Society of America* 20/2 (2016), 5–7.

19 The *London Chronicle* (2–4 February 1790), reviewing *I due castellani burlati*, noted that the opera was 'enlivened by several arias by other masters, particularly one or two by Mozart'. See Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*, 429. Their suggestion that the second 'aria' was an arrangement for trio of 'Batti, batti, o bel Masetto' ('Pace, pace, bel mostaccio') was questioned by Link in 'Mozart's "Batti, batti"', 5–7.

20 Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*, 431–432.



'BINUCCI[,] like everybody else, has left the emperor'.²¹ The centrality of this much-studied Vienna connection is obvious, yet it has obscured the fact that there were secondary conduits. The career paths of other singers, active in Prague or in German cities in which Mozart's operas were starting to become popular, also facilitated the transfer of this repertory.

A case in point is Gioacchino Costa. According to the *Indice de teatrali spettacoli*, he was a member of Pasquale Bondini's Italian company in Prague during the 1786–1787 season when *Le nozze di Figaro* caused a sensation, and he was still employed there as a tenor in 1789. His main claim to fame is that he took over the title role of *Don Giovanni* from Luigi Bassi at the opera's Leipzig premiere on 15 June 1788.²² Costa arrived in London in time for the delayed start of the season, which was announced by the *World* on 2 January 1790.²³ The cast of the opening work, Domenico Cimarosa's *Ninetta*, was to include 'Signor GIACCHINO COSTA' as the *mezzo carattere*. Early notices were favourable, if anodyne. A review in the *Diary or Woodfall's Register* (5 January 1790) expressed approval: 'Some very pleasing melodies are allotted to Sig. Costa, the Mezzo-Carattere, and they are executed with science and ability'. But the *World* (8 January 1790) was more circumspect: 'The new tenor, *Costa* is his name – is rather well, both in voice and manner; for as far as he goes, it is with feeling'. Almost immediately, an eighteenth-century troll weighed in. Squire Morgan, in the *English Chronicle or Universal Evening Post* (7 January 1790), ridiculed the singer: 'a Mr. *Costa*, was encored and obliged to repeat his song, after it had been laughed at by the whole audience'. A formal review on the same page was hardly more encouraging: Costa was an 'insipid' tenor.

In his next role, Valerio in Vincenzo Fabrizi's *I due castellani burlati*, Costa introduced a version of Cherubino's 'Voi che sapete'. The piece is tailored to its new situation, just before the Act 2 finale. Valerio knows that his problem is an age-old dilemma. As the English translation puts it: 'to love is wrong, and not to love impossible'. His anguish (as opposed to the page's confusion) is expressed in a revised second line: 'Donne vedete il mio dolor' (Women, see my sorrow!). With or without this Mozart substitution, *I due castellani burlati* made little impression. One critic thought that the music had 'neither variety nor spirit' and that the opera was 'incompetent to produce a single laugh'.²⁴ The *Times* (8 February 1790) was even harsher: 'tho' considerably curtailed, [the opera] is yet most insufferably tedious, flat, and uninteresting'.

How Costa came to sing 'Voi che sapete' in London is unclear. Owing to his years in the Bondini-Guardasoni troupe, he must have known *Le nozze di Figaro* well. He may, indeed, have played the Count both in Prague and Leipzig.²⁵ The most straightforward explanation is that he simply liked this aria, and that he acquired a copy for his personal portfolio for use in concert programmes. When selecting their repertory, singers did not usually feel restricted by the gender of the original stage characters. In the months following the Leipzig premiere of *Don Giovanni*, 'Il mio tesoro' was performed at the Tomäisches Haus on 4 January 1789; the same aria (transposed) was given by Madame Schicht in the rival Gewandhaus on 5 February.²⁶ A singer could also legitimately request to have a favourite piece incorporated through substitution in the production of a different opera, as perhaps Costa did in *I due castellani burlati*. Early in 1789

21 *The World* (11 May 1789).

22 On Luigi Bassi see Magnus Tensing Schneider, 'Acting Don Giovanni' (Routledge, forthcoming).

23 London newspapers, whether using the four- or the eight-sided format, were usually unpaginated. The volume number, seen in the header, equated to the calendar year. Issues were sometimes numbered in an unending sequence. By the late 1780s several well-established newspapers had passed the ten-thousand mark. In modern databases, such as the Burney Newspapers in the British Library, date is by far the most efficient way of locating an issue.

24 *English Chronicle or Universal Evening Post* (2 February 1790).

25 No poster survives to clarify whether Costa took part in the festive first performance in Leipzig on 3 August 1788. See Ian Woodfield, *Performing Operas for Mozart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 48–49, 57, 60–61.

26 Woodfield, *Performing Operas for Mozart*, 113 and 134. The immediate impact on Leipzig concert programmes of the aria 'Il mio tesoro' as sung by Antonio Baglioni adds weight to John Rice's characterization of this singer's strengths in *Mozart on the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 119–128.



'Voi che sapete' was advertised in Vienna as a tenor aria, suggesting the possibility that a male singer participating in the benefit pasticcio *L'ape musicale* had performed it.²⁷

A more intriguing explanation for the appearance of 'Voi che sapete' in London in a transposed version is the presence in the city of the composer Angelo Tarchi. Recruited by Gallini as a 'house' composer for serious opera, he arrived in London in March 1788, although not much is known about his first season.²⁸ Little attention has been paid to the possibility that he influenced the early reception of Mozart's operatic music in England. In view of the re-formation of the celebrated partnership between Anna Storace and Francesco Benucci at the King's Theatre in May 1789, Price, Milhous and Hume wondered why 'something more substantial and up-to-date than Gazzaniga's *dramma giocoso* of 1778' was not chosen for their debut; or, to be blunt about it, why did Gallini not select *Le nozze di Figaro*?²⁹ An answer may be found in Tarchi's controversial prior engagement with the work. A few months before his London appointment, he had prepared a remarkable 'arrangement' of *Le nozze di Figaro* for its prestigious Monza premiere on 18 November 1787. This was given in the presence of Ferdinand, who thereby became the first of the Habsburg brothers to hear the opera as a festive work, a status it achieved not in 1786, but when it was selected to replace *Don Giovanni* in Prague in 1787.

For whatever reason, Tarchi saw fit to replace the second half of the opera with his own music.³⁰ This drastic action, seemingly unique in the late eighteenth century, resulted *ex post facto* in a jointly authored version. It facilitated additional censorship. The transfer of 'Voi che sapete' to the Count as an Act 1 entrance aria had the effect of muting somewhat Cherubino's expression of his awakening sexuality. Through the expedient of removing or adding the word 'non' in lines four and ten, a worldly-wise aristocrat emerges to replace the uncertain page: the feeling is *not* new for him ('Ei non m'è nova'); he *does* understand it ('Capir lo so'). The complete excision of the role of Barbarina, a controversial figure as an inappropriately young recipient of the Count's attentions, may also have been an official requirement, yet the interventions necessary to effect these changes were relatively straightforward.³¹ It is unclear whether the suggestion for a more extensive rewrite came from the composer or was at the behest of the management. Writing in 1935 in the spirit of the times, Alfred Einstein castigated Tarchi's action; whatever its motivation, it demonstrated a 'supreme ability for not recognizing genius'.³² News that the second half of Mozart's opera had been replaced was not confined to the title-page of the libretto, it was trumpeted across Europe: 'LE NOZZE DI FIGARO, avec des choeurs, le premier et le deuxième acte, musique del Signor Wolfgango Mozart; le troisième et le quatrième, musique nouvelle del Sig. Ang. Tarchi'.³³ In the absence of any clue to Tarchi's attitude towards the revision he chose or was obliged to execute, it is impossible to infer what his advice to Gallini might have

27 The libretto for Da Ponte's *L'ape musicale* (1789) places a version of Cimarosa's 'Parlar le cause' from *Il falgname* at the start of Act 2, to be sung by the character played by Francesco Albertarelli. But in two ensuing advertisements in the *Wiener Zeitung* this position was usurped by 'Voi che sapete', listed as an aria for 'T[enor]'. The reason remains unclear, but it is certainly possible that Francesco Morella, that season's unsuccessful tenor, was being given a chance to participate in a benefit before he left.

28 *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (12 March 1788): 'Signora GIULIANI . . . actually arrived in this country . . . accompanied by Tarchi the composer'. Tarchi had made his name in England (in his absence) on 4 May 1786, when the role he composed for the castrato Giovanni Maria Rubinelli in the pasticcio *Virginia* was very well received. Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, four volumes, volume 4 (London: Payne and Son, 1789), 525, accurately described him as 'a young Neapolitan, who is advancing into eminence with great rapidity'.

29 Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*, 414–415.

30 The only piece by Tarchi that survives is his setting of 'Che soave zeffiretto'. See Claudio Sartori, 'Lo "Zeffiretto" di Angelo Tarchi', *Rivista Musicale Italiana* 56 (1954), 223–230.

31 An early Viennese copy of *Figaro* was annotated with the necessary changes in Monza before being transferred to the library of Maximilian Franz. See *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe, Kritische Berichte*, series 2, group 5, volume 16, *Le nozze di Figaro*, ed. Ulrich Leisinger (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007), 72–74, 91–92, 79–80.

32 Alfred Einstein, 'Mozart and Tarchi', *Monthly Musical Record* 65 (1935), 127.

33 *Calendrier musical universal* 10 (1789), 168.



been, had he been consulted about the feasibility of a production. All that can be said with certainty is that the English impresario had access to a musician with a recent and very detailed knowledge of what it would take to stage this work.

In his second London season,³⁴ Tarchi scored a notable success writing for the great castrato Marchesi. A month before this triumph, a piece of Mozart's operatic music, the duet 'Crudel! perchè finora' from the start of Act 3 of *Figaro*, was heard in a King's Theatre production for the first time. Although Benucci was not originally cast as the Count, his performance with Storce of this 'delicious' duet in Giuseppe Gazzaniga's *La vendemmia* was received with great enthusiasm.³⁵ That it was the first piece to have been jettisoned by Tarchi may be no more than coincidence, yet the possibility that someone was making a point cannot be discounted altogether.³⁶

There is no conclusive evidence that Burney attended any of these operas, yet it is highly likely that he did so. For years he had been an assiduous member of the King's Theatre audience. That he was by now aware of the existence of recent operas by Mozart is demonstrated by other evidence. As a subscriber to Heinrich Philipp Bossler's *Bibliothek der Grazien* (1789),³⁷ he received two 'songs' by Mozart, published in early issues of this serial. The following year, he selected one of them as a sightreading test for the child prodigy Johann Nepomuk Hummel. This occasion reawakened memories of his first encounter with Mozart in 1764. In a letter to Fanny Burney dated [13] December [1790], he described Hummel's performance thus:

I then brought him some Music I have just rec^d from Germany – ill printed, but good composition. He first played a song by Mozart, w^{ch} he entered into the Spirit of very well. (It is in a periodical work to w^{ch} I have subscribed, printed at Speier, called *Bibliothek der Grazien*, Library of the Graces. The Title is affected, but the music often excellent.)³⁸

This 'song' was either 'Vedrai carino', the first piece in the inaugural January issue, or 'Mi tradi, quell'alma ingrata' from the May issue, entitled 'Recitativo dell'Opera IL DON GIOVANNI del Sigre MOZART'. The latter piece, incidentally, would have posed a far sterner test of sightreading than 'Vedrai carino'. Bossler regularly promoted music from Vienna, as, for example, in the February issue, which was dominated by Salieri's *Axur* ('Soave luce', 'S'io ti salvai' and 'V'andrò tutto'). The choice of a piece by Mozart for the test was

34 His arrival was reported by the *General Evening Post* (20 January 1789): 'Tarchi, the great composer, who is now in London'

35 *Diary or Woodfall's Register* (12 May 1789): 'Mozart's delicious duet was encored also, and Benucci and Storce sang it very well'. *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (18 May 1789): 'The charming duet of MOZART was encored'. Harder to understand is a curious comment in the *Morning Star* (11 May 1789): 'The most remarkable was the Duet by STORACE and BENUCCI, admirably composed of thirds and fifths – the world are tired of extraneous chords!!'.

36 A self-confessed supporter of this duet was Kelly, who in his memoirs recalled trying it out informally with the composer and being 'delighted' with it. Michael Kelly, *Reminiscences* (London: Colburn, 1826), 258–259. Tarchi himself contributed an unidentified piece to *La vendemmia*, but he is not likely to have been responsible for arranging the score; that duty would have fallen to the general company factotum, Joseph Mazzingi. A report in the *World* (11 May 1789) identified Tarchi's contribution as Benucci's Act 2 aria. It could have been his opening aria on gluttony ('Son vari degli uomini'), which ends in a manner much favoured by this singer (a good physical comedian with dancing skills): 'Io caccia, cavalco / Ho musica, e danza' (I hunt and ride, I have music and dance). But just as likely, given that Tarchi was making his mark in opera seria, is the mock suicide scene: 'In questo istante ingrata'.

37 The *Bibliothek der Grazien* was a monthly periodical issued by Bossler in Speyer between 1789 and 1791. If he had continued with his subscription, Burney would also have received Mozart's contredanse *La Bataille* (K535) in February 1790 and an arrangement of the overture to *Le nozze di Figaro* in June 1790.

38 Burney, letter to Fanny Burney, [13] December [1790], in Kerry S. Grant, *Dr Burney as Critic and Historian of Music* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1983), 202, and Eisen, *New Mozart Documents*, 5. At the start of 1789 Christian Friedrich Tröttscher in Graz offered 'Vedrai carino' as well as 'Madamina, il catalogo' in a lengthy list of named Italian arias. A few months later, a still larger selection included 'Deh! vieni alla finestra', 'Fin ch'han dal vino' and 'Là ci darem la mano', all from *Don Giovanni*.



obvious, given that the young Hummel had been the composer's pupil. In describing this occasion, Burney was struck by the coincidence that '30 years after his Master Mozart had been recommended to me, & played on my knee, on subjects I gave him . . . this little Man sh^d also claim and merit my kindness'.³⁹

In the early months of 1789 Burney received an unsolicited offer of a score of a complete Mozart opera (and/or one by Haydn), which for reasons unknown he rejected, a very significant missed opportunity:

To the Rev^d Christian La Trobe

Monday Night, March 8th 1789

My dear Friend

I forgot to tell you when I had the Pleasure of meeting you in Hanover Square, & of listening & *comparing* notes with you, that I had rec^d the inclosed letter from Herr Weber, with an offer of an opera by Haydn, & another by Mozart for £15 each. You will see the true reason of my declining the purchase in the foul copy of an answer to the proposition, w^{ch} I likewise inclose. Now as my new correspondent writes to me in German, w^{ch} I cannot read, I sh^d serve him right to answer him in English, of which I suppose he knows full as little; but lest he sh^d find a difficulty in meeting with an interpreter, you w^d do him a great kindness, & confer a great obligation on me, if you w^d have the goodn[ess] to translate it into German, & direct it according to m[y] instructions. I can hardly hope that there will be time for it soon enough for to night's post, but as he says he shall quit Hambro' [Hamburg] after Lent, I sh^d be extremely thankful if you c^d make it ready for Friday's post & forward it, paying for me the *outpost*, whatever it may be, for w^{ch} I will thankfully reimburse you whenever I shall know what it is. I hope your Brother & all of your worthy Family that I have ever heard of are well, & that you will continue to number among your most hearty & cordial friends,

Cha^s Burney

I shall be obliged to you for Mr Weber's letter, & the answer to it, when we next meet.⁴⁰

The translation and Burney's reply in a 'foul copy' (rough draft), either of which would have disclosed the reason why this offer was rejected, seem not to have survived. Without knowing it, Burney had turned down a chance to establish contact with a source close both to Mozart's family circle and to Haydn in Eszterháza.

The author of this unsolicited letter was almost certainly Franz Anton Weber, who was on the point of leaving Hamburg to try his luck as an independent opera impresario. Burney (or more likely a translator) gathered enough of this to know that a reply was urgent. Franz Anton, brother of Fridolin – the father of Mozart's wife Constanze and her sister Aloysia Lange – had enjoyed a six-month sojourn in Vienna and Eszterháza in 1785, towards the end of which, on 20 August, he married his second wife in the Schottenkirche. Joseph Lange (his nephew by marriage) and Vincenzo Righini were present as witnesses.⁴¹ After he returned to northern Germany, he arranged for Edmund and Fridolin, two sons from his previous marriage, to become students of Haydn. Edmund travelled south in September 1786, hoping for instruction to prepare him for a career as a music director.⁴² During the following year, he became acquainted with Mozart, his cousin by marriage, who entered an aphorism about hard work in his album on 8 January

39 Eisen, *New Mozart Documents*, 5.

40 Burney, letter to Christian La Trobe, 8 March 1789: Osborn MSS, Box 4, Folder 274.

41 Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, 248.

42 Franz Anton Weber, letter to Daniel Itzig, Eutin, 18 September 1786: 'und soll bey unserm größten KapellMeister jeziger Zeit, dH von Haydn in Esterhaz zum KapellMeister gebildet worden' (shall be trained as a Kapellmeister by the greatest Kapellmeister of the present time, Haydn in Eszterháza). Franz Anton intended this letter of introduction to assist his son while he waited in Berlin for the Dresden post, to continue his journey south to Vienna and Eszterháza. See *Carl-Maria-von-Weber-Gesamtausgabe: Digitale Edition*, <https://weber-gesamtausgabe.de/de/Aoo2074/Korrespondenz/>



1787.⁴³ When the time approached for Edmund to return to his family, others made entries. Maximilian Stadler wrote on 3 April 1788: 'May you soon rival your master Haydn and your friend Mozart'.⁴⁴ Haydn himself offered parting advice on 22 May. A photograph of this page of the album was later supplied to his biographer Carl Ferdinand Pohl by none other than Johannes Brahms.⁴⁵ The other brother Fridolin served briefly in the Eszterháza orchestra between April and September 1788.

The ongoing digitization of the Weber family correspondence in the *Carl-Maria-von-Weber-Gesamtausgabe: Digitale Edition* sheds fascinating light on the precarious existence of Franz Anton's troupe in the weeks and months after he left Hamburg, first for Kassel and Marburg, and then Meiningen in Thuringia.⁴⁶ At least 'old' Weber's family was numerous, as noted by Vincent Weyrauch, his future son-in-law. The company which was in the process of being formed by Franz Anton included his second wife Genovefa, née Brenner, as well as three children from his first marriage: Fridolin, Edmund and his wife Josepha, and Jeanette with 'yours truly', her future husband Vincent.⁴⁷ In a letter to the impresario Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grossmann about his daughter early in 1789, Weber stated in her favour that Jeanette had been a pupil both of Mozart and Aloysia Lange.⁴⁸ Given her age and employment history, the period of tuition may be dated to the spring of 1785. It is thus probable that she travelled to Vienna with her father. Aged sixteen at the oldest, Jeanette – she adopted this identity in preference to her cumbersome collection of given names, Maria Anna Theresia Magdalena Antonetta – was offered a

[A040021.html](#) (30 June 2019). Like other documents in the Weber correspondence, it shows how significant masonic contacts were to musicians, especially when embarking upon long-distance travel.

- 43 Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, 283. On Edmund's album see Ryuichi Higuchi and Frank Ziegler, 'Fürchte Gott! Und wandle den Weg der Tugend': Das Stammbuch Edmund von Webers als biographische Quelle', *Weberiana* 18 (2008), 1–32.
- 44 Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, 283.
- 45 Carl Ferdinand Pohl, *Joseph Haydn*, two volumes, volume 2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1882), 204. An accompanying footnote gives the credit: 'Dr Johannes Brahms hatte die Güte, mir eine Photographie obigen Blattes während seines Aufenthaltes in Ziegelhausen bei Heidelberg zuzusenden' (Dr Johannes Brahms was kind enough to send me a photograph of the above leaf during his stay at Ziegelhausen near Heidelberg).
- 46 I am most grateful to Professor Joachim Veit for providing me with access to the full text of some of the letters prior to online release, and for bibliographical references that I would otherwise have missed.
- 47 Vincent Weyrauch, letter to Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grossmann, Meiningen, 1 October 1789: 'Der alte Weber hat, da er zahlreiche Familie hat, sich entschloßen selbst ein kleines Operchen zu ent[r]epreniren . . . des Alten seine Frau – singt nicht ganz schlecht, zur dritten Sängerin vortreflich – Jeanette Weber 1^e Sängerin – Mad: Josepha Weber = 2^e Sängerin: Hl Edmund Weber 1^{er} Tenor, wird wenn Hl Hiller ankömmt 2^{en} Tenor übernehmen – Fritz Weber 3^e Bassrollen . . . meine wenigkeit 1^e Bassrollen' (As old Weber has a numerous family, he has decided to form a small opera troupe . . . the wife of the old man does not sing badly, excellently as third singer . . . Jeanette Weber [as] first singer . . . Madame Josepha Weber [as] second singer . . . Herr Edmund Weber [as] first tenor, will take second tenor if Herr Hiller comes . . . Fritz Weber third-bass roles . . . yours truly first-bass roles). *Carl-Maria-von-Weber-Gesamtausgabe: Digitale Edition*, <https://weber-gesamtausgabe.de/de/A002129/Korrespondenz/A044931.html> (30 June 2019).
- 48 Franz Anton Weber, letter to Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grossmann, 20 January 1789: 'Meine Tochter [Jeanette] ein Frauenzimmer von 18 Jahren bereits im 3^{er} Jahr bey hiesiger Bühne als Sängerin bey der Oper sey . . . sie ist eine Schülerin von Mozardt und Mad: [Aloysia] Lange in Wien. Nachdeme sie vorher bey mir das nöthige studirt hatte' (My daughter, a young lady aged eighteen, is already in her third year as an opera singer on the stage here. She is a pupil of Mozart and Madame Lange in Vienna, having previously studied the necessary [basics] with me). *Carl-Maria-von-Weber-Gesamtausgabe: Digitale Edition*, <https://weber-gesamtausgabe.de/de/A002074/Korrespondenz/A040030.html> (30 June 2019). Nothing is known of Mozart as Jeanette Weber's teacher. He had previously instructed Aloysia Weber in the performance of Italian arias and composed a piece for her to demonstrate what she had learned. He asked her to study and perform it without his assistance and was impressed by the result. As Jeanette is most likely to have been in Vienna for a period in the spring months of 1785, it is interesting to speculate on the possibility that one or more of a group of German songs dating from that period – K472–474 (7 May) and K476 ('Das Veilchen') (8 June) – were written for her.



position in Friedrich Ludwig Schröder's German company in Hamburg. It is possible that she was recommended by Aloysia Lange, reputedly the actor's favourite singer.⁴⁹ According to the *Theater Kalendar* for 1788, Mademoiselle Weber specialized in soubrette roles and in 'mothers' in singspiel.⁵⁰ But reviews were not in general favourable, one noting that her gestures were 'wooden'.⁵¹ When she attempted a career move to Grossmann's company early in 1789, any chance she may have had was effectively scuppered by a letter from Schröder himself, who observed that she had skill but was the ugliest creature on stage, acted wretchedly and could not captivate with her voice. She would never fulfil her wish to attain the status of a prima donna, and he was thus happy to relinquish her.⁵² For the time being, Jeanette had no option but to join her father's troupe. The value of his children's past as pupils of Haydn and Mozart, especially after the death of the latter, was well understood by Franz Anton, and he continued to trade on these connections.⁵³

Before he decided to form a travelling opera company, Franz Anton had been very active as a supplier of musical scores. In this capacity, he probably acted both as an agent and as a copyist himself if the need arose. The scale of his operation as well as his proactive approach is clear from a letter he wrote on 3 November 1785, eight days after returning from Vienna. He offered the businessman and music-lover Patrick Alströmer in Uppsala 'a true treasure of the most beautiful musical scores in every conceivable genre'. The list of genres that follows is indeed substantial, and it is accompanied by an equally long roster of composers, ending with Mozart and Wranitzky.⁵⁴ He remained in touch with Artaria, a fellow Freemason, expressing interest in new repertory.⁵⁵ His commercial strategy was to act as a conduit for recent Viennese successes into

49 Aloysia Lange sang in Hamburg during the summer of 1784, but it cannot be assumed that she was yet featuring the music of her brother-in-law as a matter of course. A programme for a concert in the Leipzig Gewandhaus dated 13 May 1784 shows that she performed arias by Johann André, Trajetta, Sarti and Hiller. Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig.

50 Heinrich August Ottokar Reichard, *Theater Kalendar auf das Jahr 1788* (Gotha: Ettinger, 1788), 185.

51 A review of her performance as Queen Isabella in *Una cosa rara* noted, 'nur Schade, daß ihr Anstand und ihre Gesten gar zu hölzern sind' (only a pity that her manner and gestures are much too wooden). *Annalen des Theaters*, volume 1 (1788), 70. No more encouraging was the following appraisal: 'Mlle. Weber spielte die zanksüchtige Betschwester zu kalt und wurde dadurch langweilig' (Mademoiselle Weber played the quarrelsome nurse too coldly and so was boring). *Annalen des Theaters*, volume 3 (1789), 125, accessed via *Mozart im Spiegel des frühen Musikjournalismus*, <http://dme.mozarteum.at/mozart-rezeption/edition/sessions.php> (30 June 2019).

52 Friedrich Ludwig Schröder, letter to Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grossmann, 27 January 1789: 'Mdlle Weber ist das hässlichste Geschöpf das man je auf der Bühne sah. Sie hat viel Fertigkeit, aber sie nimmt keinen Menschen mit ihrer Stimme ein. Sie spielt elend. Und bei allen diesen Tugenden möchte sie gern irgendwo prima Donna seyn . . . Ich laße Dem: Weber herzlich gern gehn' (Mademoiselle Weber is the ugliest creature you ever saw on stage. She has plenty of skill, but she engages no one with her voice. She acts wretchedly. And with all these virtues, she would very much like to be a prima donna somewhere. I will gladly let Demoiselle Weber go). *Carl-Maria-von-Weber-Gesamtausgabe: Digitale Edition*, <https://weber-gesamtausgabe.de/de/A001744/Korrespondenz/A046157.html> (30 June 2019).

53 Frank Ziegler, 'Die Webers – eine Familie macht Theater', 136, in *Musiker auf Reisen: Beiträge zum Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Christoph-Hellmut Mahling (Augsburg: Wißner, 2011). The request for an engagement in Baden is dated 19 July 1792: 'meine Oper ist ganz Musicalisch, und was meine Familie betrifft, lauter Zöglinge von Mozart und Haydn in Wien gebildet' (my opera [company] is very musical, and as far as my family is concerned, none but pupils of Mozart and Haydn trained in Vienna). General-Landesarchiv Karlsruhe, 206/2636.

54 Franz Anton Weber, letter to Patrick Alströmer, Eutin, 3 November 1785: 'wie ich vor 8 Tagen von meiner 6 Monatlichen Reise von Wien und ungarn von dem lieben Vater Hayden retourniret bin, und einen wahren Schatz der schönsten *Musicalien* aller nur zu erdenkenden Gattungen . . .' (as I returned eight days ago from my journey to Vienna and Hungary from the beloved father Haydn, [with] a true treasure of the most beautiful scores in every conceivable genre . . .). Although no individual pieces are named, he singled out an opera for four characters by Haydn, probably *L'isola disabitata*. This had received its Vienna premiere in a concert performance given by the Willmann family on 19 March 1785, probably a month or so before Franz Anton Weber's arrival.

55 Franz Anton Weber, letter to Artaria & Co., Eutin, 6 March 1786. In this communication, Weber remembers with pleasure their acquaintance the previous summer (1785) and asks to be sent 'alle *Sinfonien*, *Quartetten* und *Clavirsachen*



northern Europe. There was certainly money to be made in this market provided that a supplier could act quickly and price reasonably. He wrote to Artaria again on 23 October 1788, enquiring about Haydn's quartets 'Sopra Le Sette Parole di Jesu Xto' and quartet versions of music from Salieri's *La grotta di Trofonio*. He expressed interest in new material that had emerged since his visit, especially Mozart's string quintets. These were advertised for sale by subscription in the *Wiener Zeitung* (2 April 1788), but the offer had to be withdrawn (25 June 1788) owing to the lack of demand. Weber also asked about the most recent quartets of Haydn. It is very interesting that he should associate the name Tost with them, as a formal dedication to the violinist did not appear until the publication of the subsequent set composed during 1790 (Op. 64).⁵⁶

On 20 January 1789 Franz Anton wrote to offer Grossmann a score of Salieri's *La grotta di Trofonio*, perhaps the one published by Artaria.⁵⁷ Like others, he had identified Grossmann, based in Hanover, as a key figure in the transfer of Viennese operatic repertory to the lucrative northern market, but the competition to supply him was intense. Two recent studies of Grossmann's contacts have focused on Anton Grams in Prague and the firm of Simrock in Bonn, with its associate Christian Gottlob Neeffe.⁵⁸ On 31 December 1787 Grossmann informed Neeffe that he had established a 'wohlfeilern Kanal' (a cheaper conduit) with Prague than was on offer from Simrock. It seems that this refers to a proposal made by Grams in a letter written on 5 September 1787. (It is dated 1786, but this is almost certainly a mistake, as otherwise it would refer to *L'arbore di Diana* a full year before its likely date of commission.) After his troupe started performing, Franz Anton Weber continued to supply scores. When he moved on to Meiningen later in 1789, he was paid for music, including some scores by Mozart.⁵⁹ There is no evidence, though, that his itinerant troupe performed a German version of *Le nozze di Figaro* or *Don Giovanni* in its first seasons in Kassel or Marburg. Neither work had been given in Hamburg yet, although the premiere of the latter was to take place on 27 October. But *Die Entführung* was in Weber's repertory, and the Meiningen subscription season ended with a performance starring Franz Anton's second wife, Genovefa.⁶⁰

Weber's offer to Burney in London was clearly part of his wider strategy of supplying Viennese repertory to willing buyers in northern cities such as Uppsala, Hamburg and Hanover, but it is not clear why he chose this

von Mozart' (all the symphonies, quartets and keyboard pieces by Mozart) as soon as possible, as well as the newest three symphonies 'von unserm unsterblichen Vater Haydn' (by our immortal father Haydn). Payment will be prompt. He signs off as 'Kapellmeister oncle des dortigen Hofschauspielers H v Lange [Joseph Lange]', from whom he is waiting for a reply. *Carl-Maria-von-Weber-Gesamtausgabe: Digitale Edition*, <https://weber-gesamtausgabe.de/de/A002074/Korrespondenz/A040020.html> (30 June 2019).

56 Franz Anton Weber, letter to Artaria & Co., Hamburg, 22 October 1788: 'in sonderheit die neuen Quintetten von Mozart auf 2 VV. 2 *Viole e Violoncello*. Nicht minder die neuesten 6 *Quartetten* von Haydn, so wie auch 3 Lief: von demselben, so er für den Esterhazyschen *Violinisten* Tost componirt hat' (especially the new quintets by Mozart for two violins, two violas and cello, no less the newest six quartets by Haydn, as well as three pieces by the same, composed for the Eszterháza violinist Tost). *Carl-Maria-von-Weber-Gesamtausgabe: Digitale Edition*, <https://weber-gesamtausgabe.de/de/A002074/Korrespondenz/A040029.html> (30 June 2019).

57 Franz Anton Weber, letter to Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grossmann, 20 January 1789: 'auch habe die oper *Die Höhle des Trofonio* vorrätthig liegen, die für 4 Louisdor zu Dero Befehle steht' ([I] also have in stock the opera *Die Höhle des Trofonio*, at your command for four louis d'or). *Carl-Maria-von-Weber-Gesamtausgabe: Digitale Edition*, <https://weber-gesamtausgabe.de/de/A002074/Korrespondenz/A040030.html> (30 June 2019).

58 Milada Jonášová, 'Anton Grams berichtet an Gustav Großmann, Mozart schreibe eine neue Oper', *Hudební věda* 53/1 (2016), 29–54, and Ian Woodfield, 'Christian Gottlob Neeffe and the Early Reception of *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*', *Newsletter of the Mozart Society of America* 20/1 (2016), 4–6.

59 Frank Ziegler, 'Die Familie von Weber in Südthuringien', *Weberiana* 26 (2016), 20: 'dem Schauspieler Herrn von Weber bezalt, für verschiedene Stücke von Pleyel, Girovez, Mozart laut Zettel den 20^{ten} Januar 1790' (paid to the actor Herr von Weber for various pieces by Pleyel, Gyrowetz and Mozart according to the schedule for 20 January 1790).

60 Vincent Weyrauch, letter to Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grossmann, Meiningen, 7 April 1790: 'Diese Woche wird mit der Entführung das *Abbonement* geschlossen' (This week my subscription will close with *Die Entführung*). *Carl-Maria-von-Weber-Gesamtausgabe: Digitale Edition*, <https://weber-gesamtausgabe.de/de/A002129/Korrespondenz/A046129.html> (30 June 2019).



moment to make contact, nor which operas were on offer. Like other musicians in the city, he was no doubt aware that Hamburg was an essential source of information for the music historian as he struggled with the German chapter in the final volume of his *General History*. Yet the offer could equally have been made with performance in mind, as the powerful influence Burney exerted on repertory selection at the King's Theatre was well known everywhere. Altogether more intriguing, if inevitably speculative, is the idea that he had his nephew-in-law Mozart's interests in mind, with or without his direct sanction. Mozart's plan to travel to England in 1787 had quickly foundered on the fact that his friend Stephen Storace already had an engagement to compose opera at the King's Theatre, but Storace had now left, his one original Italian opera for London, *La cameriera astuta* (4 March 1788), having achieved at best a modest success. In the early months of 1789, an unprecedented gathering of Weber family members, including five of Mozart's relations by marriage, were in Hamburg preparing for their new operatic venture. In view of their close family ties to Vienna, news that Mozart was considering his options, even that he was about to travel north to Leipzig and Berlin, could have arrived very quickly, well before any public announcements. The same is true of reports that Benucci was soon to re-form his partnership with Storace at the King's Theatre, an equally plausible reason for Weber to have thought that his offer might be taken up.

In the first half of 1789 Burney clearly had access to a range of sources pointing unequivocally to Mozart's growing reputation as an opera composer, yet none of them left a lasting impression. The most likely explanation, a very human one, is the fact that he had just completed *A General History of Music*. Sheer mental exhaustion at the end of his monumental project and exhilaration at no longer being bound by its demands would have been entirely understandable reactions. The third and fourth volumes were with the printers by the end of 1788, and the publication 'this day' was announced on 5 May 1789.⁶¹ Liberated from the ever-present burden of having to come up with a judicious evaluation of whatever repertory came his way, Burney, quite simply, appears to have taken time out from his self-appointed role as interpreter of the musical world.

It is also reasonable to consider whether, in the rush to complete his *magnum opus*, Burney had developed a distorted view of the contemporary scene that itself contributed to his failure to 'notice' Mozart. A lack of intelligence concerning the most recent operatic developments in Vienna is the most obvious lacuna in the chapter on German music. Burney is unaware of *Figaro*, he fails to mention Martín y Soler, and Salieri receives praise only for his Parisian triumphs. He was of course cognizant of the political division in the German-speaking world, yet his interpretative focus, curiously, alighted upon religion. Acknowledging the present 'tranquillity', he nevertheless laid great stress on the confessional divide, going so far as to assert that Catholics were still 'unwilling to listen to the musical strains of the Protestants' and vice versa. This was a seriously dated view. By 1789, it was flying in the face of all the facts to claim that works from Vienna were going unappreciated in northern cities like Hamburg, where Schröder's theatre company regularly featured operas by Dittersdorf and Martín y Soler in its schedules.⁶² Burney obviously knew virtually nothing of the context in which *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro* were making their belated impact in Germany. Late in the day, an informant with up-to-date knowledge might still have been able to rebalance the picture, but, by chance, the man he relied upon as his de facto assistant throughout 1788 was the Moravian pastor Christian Ignaz Latrobe. The latter's journal provides useful insights into the wide-ranging musical intelligence that he was able to offer Burney, yet his distaste for opera was obvious, and when offered a ticket, he would usually find an excuse not to attend.⁶³

61 *London Chronicle* (5 May 1789).

62 Schröder was a key link between Hamburg and Vienna, where he had worked for several years: Dexter Edge, 'A Memorial Concert for Hamburg (19 February 1792)', with credit to Josef Sittard, in *Mozart: New Documents*, ed. Dexter Edge and David Black, first published 21 December 2016, updated 4 January 2017 <https://sites.google.com/site/mozartdocuments/documents/1792-02-19-correspondent> (25 July 2019).

63 I am grateful to Rachel Cowgill for her generosity many years ago in supplying me with a copy of her transcription of the musical portions of this journal, prior to the publication of her study of Latrobe and, indeed, the submission of her own



A keen amateur musician, Latrobe was a reasonably proficient keyboard player, and, at a rather lower level, he also participated in string quartets on the viola and in wind bands on the clarinet. He attended concerts regularly, had no problem with 'operatic' church music and was a committed collector of repertory. With a good command of German and long-standing connections in Saxony, he was, in many ways, an ideal informant. Unable to read or write 'Charman', Burney relied heavily on Latrobe's linguistic competence. Eventually, and with some reluctance, he took on the role of unpaid assistant, agreeing to peruse complete draft chapters. Following a long session on 14 January ('contrary to my intention'), an exhausted Latrobe described Burney as an 'indefatigable' man, while on 5 September he accepted an invitation ('against my inclination') and ended up putting in a five-hour stint.⁶⁴ He was, nevertheless, a great admirer of Burney's project, and the work of rivals was given short shrift: Joel Collier's satirical *Musical Travels through England* was a 'nasty pamphlet' (10 June); Forkel's *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* was 'a sad impudent imitation' (20 August); Wendeborn's *State of music in England* 'a most wooden and stiff piece of business' (13 January 1789).⁶⁵ The most intriguing aspect of Latrobe's role was the opportunity it afforded him to shape Burney's perceptions, through summarizing content and drawing his attention to particular passages.⁶⁶ On 26 August 1788 he undertook an extended literature review: 'spent the day till 6 o'clock with D^r Burney looking over old German Music Books & Music to assist in his History of Music'. Burney's admission that he needed Latrobe to explain 'bits and scraps' before, as he put it, he 'fretted himself to sauerkraut', says it all.⁶⁷

On 16 October 1788 Latrobe left England for a short tour of Saxony. Up-to-date musical news was the elixir on which Burney thrived, and upon his informant's return he seized the chance to 'compare notes'. The most interesting entry in Latrobe's journal from his period away came on 8 January 1789, as he passed through Leipzig on his way back to London. In the morning, he called into Breitkopf to purchase 'Bach's choral[e] tunes', but he then went on to a concert in the Gewandhaus, recording interesting observations on dress and etiquette:

I proceeded to the Great Concert in the *Gewand* house or *Cloth hall*. – The band is pretty good & they play with great precision. The Leipzig people are very stiff, & dress in a very pompous but I think tasteless manner esp. the ladies. They sat in gen^l altogether & the men separate – tho' here and there was a small mixed party. Between the acts was a most stunning noise of prating, which I easily pardoned for the sake of Silence during the performance so much wanted in English Auditories. The Concert consisted of 2 Acts and the band was led by M.^r Schicht. His wife is

PhD. Rachel Cowgill, 'The Papers of C. I. Latrobe: New Light on Musicians, Music and the Christian Family in Late Eighteenth-Century England', in *Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. David Wyn Jones (Farnham: Routledge, 2000), 234–260.

64 Cowgill, 'The Papers of C. I. Latrobe', 245.

65 *Musical Travels through England by the late Joel Collier* (London: G. Kearsley, 1775); Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, volume 1 (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1788); Gebhard Friedrich August Wendeborn, *Der Zustand des Staats, der Religion, der Gelehrsamkeit und der Kunst in Großbritannien gegen das Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, four volumes (Berlin: Spener, 1785–1788).

66 A case in point is perhaps Burney's celebrated comment on J. S. Bach's Credo from the B minor Mass, a copy of which he possessed. His evaluation ('clear, correct and masterly') evinces high esteem. See *A General History of Music*, volume 4, 592. The language is entirely his own, although it is cliché-ridden. The adjectives 'clear', 'correct' and (especially) 'masterly' occur numerous times throughout his writings, singly and in different combinations; Pepusch's counterpoint, for example, is 'clear and masterly' (637). Burney derived the substance of his remarks on the sacred oeuvre of J. S. Bach from a Breitkopf catalogue provided with incipits. Other fragments of commentary may also derive from German sources, as suggested by Yo Tomita, 'Bach's Credo in England: An Early History', in *Irish Musical Studies* 8, ed. Anne Leahy and Yo Tomita (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004), 224. They are not direct translations of the passages identified as possible sources, but they could easily have resulted from Burney's reliance on an intermediary summarizer like Latrobe.

67 Burney, letter to Latrobe, undated [1788]. See Cowgill, 'The Papers of C. I. Latrobe', 244.



the principal Singer, but no Mara or Billington. However it was in this very place where Mara rec.^d her instructions under *Hiller*. The latter is gone to Breslau. The hall is middlesized & not very high. The singers stand too low & the performers seemed meanly dressed. The pieces performed were. *Sinf. Pichl*, a scene of the *Arbore di Diana* by Martin, a very fav^e Composer, a *Swede* by birth.⁶⁸ M^{rs} Schicht. Concert on the Tenor Viol. Hertel. Terzetto by Martin – excellent. Act II. *Sinf. Kozeluch*. *Aria/Air* Flauto & Oboe oblig. Schicht. Chorus by Sarti. *Sinf. Vanhall*. All was over at 8.

Arias from recent Viennese operas were the height of fashion in the 1788–1789 Leipzig concert season. As chance would have it, the performance he attended featured music by Martín y Soler, a scena from *L'arbore di Diana* and an unidentified terzetto. Had he passed through the city in one of the weeks before or after this, he might well have encountered arias and ensembles from *Le nozze di Figaro* or *Don Giovanni*, but it was now too late for new intelligence to have any influence on Burney's history; its final volumes were already in press.

One of the ironies of Burney's missed opportunity is that Latrobe, having translated the letter of rejection in 1789, found himself a decade and a half later actively engaged in attempting to purchase a score of *Don Giovanni*. He wrote to Burney on 15 July 1803: 'You gave me directions to get Don Giovanni for You, when I was last with You. It is a comic Opera & reported to be his best work of that kind'.⁶⁹ But even this did not presage an early public performance in London. So belated, indeed, was the appearance of this opera at the King's Theatre – not until 1817 was there a full production – that a group of amateurs took matters into their own hands by organizing private performances.⁷⁰ Burney, meanwhile, though on distinctly shaky ground, shaped the historiography of Mozart's purported disappearance as a composer of vocal music from the English radar to his own ends. Had he accepted the offer of a full score of *Le nozze di Figaro* or *Don Giovanni* in 1789, recognized its merits and advocated a production in the King's Theatre, Mozart's relationship with England might well have taken a strikingly different course.

68 Perhaps Latrobe confused the identity of Martín y Soler with that of Joseph Martin Kraus.

69 Cowgill, 'The Papers of C. I. Latrobe', 249.

70 Rachel Cowgill, "'Wise Men from the East": Mozart's Operas and Their Advocates in Early Nineteenth-Century London', in *Music and British Culture 1785–1914: Essays in Honour of Cyril Ehrlich*, ed. Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 52.