

TO THE “IMMORTAL COMPOSER”: ON THE RECEPTION OF MOZART’S OPERAS IN 19TH-CENTURY ZAGREB*

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Izvleček: Mozartovi operi Don Giovanni in Die Zauberflöte sta bili v Zagrebu uprizorjeni šele po letu 1830. Članek se ukvarja z njuno recepcijo skozi analizo kritik Mozartovih oper v pomembnejših zagrebških časopisih 19. stoletja v kontekstu zagrebškega glasbenega oziroma operetnega življenja, z analizo domačih interpretativnih in odrskih zmogljivosti, z glasbeno kritiko in poročili o odzivih občinstva.

Ključne besede: Mozart, Don Giovanni, Die Zauberflöte, Zagreb, Croatian National Theatre, 19. stoletje, recepcija

Abstract: Mozart’s operas Don Giovanni and Die Zauberflöte were staged in Zagreb only from the 1830s. The paper deals with their reception through the analysis of critical reviews of Mozart’s operas in major 19th-century Zagreb newspapers within the context of the city’s music/operatic life, local interpretative and stage forces, music criticism and reports on the reactions of the audience.

Keywords: Mozart, Don Giovanni, Die Zauberflöte, Zagreb, Croatian National Theatre, 19th century, reception

Croatian musical archives and collections preserve numerous compositions by W. A. Mozart. Some of them reached Croatia even during the time when the composer was still alive. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century Mozart’s chamber works entered the houses of aristocrats as well as those of well-off, educated members of the middle class, transmitted either through original editions of his compositions published in Vienna or through manuscript copies of various kinds.¹ Compositions

* Sources used for this article were advertisements and articles in Zagreb daily and weekly journals and the newspapers *Agramer politische Zeitung (APZ)*, *Agramer Zeitung (AZ)*, *Agramer Tagblatt (AT)*, *Obzor*, *Vienac*, *Danica* and *Narodne novine (NN)*.

¹ On Mozart’s compositions preserved in Croatian musical collections, see Stanislav Tuksar, *Music by Eighteenth-Century German and Austrian Composers Preserved in Venetian Dalmatia and Dubrovnik. Differences and Similarities, Relazioni musicali tra Italia e Germania nell’età barocca*, Atti del VI Convegno internazionale sulla musica italiana nei secoli XVII–XVIII, Loveno di Menaggio (Como), 1995, ed. Alberto Colzani [...], Como, Centro Recerche dell’AMIS, 1997, pp. 447–461; *Late 18th and Early 19th Century Diffusion of the First Viennese School Music in Croatian Lands: Factography and Some Socio-Cultural Aspects, Music, Words and Images. Festschrift in Honour of Koraljka Kos*, ed. Vjera Katalinić and Zdravko Blažeković, Zagreb, Hrvatsko muzikološko društvo, 1999, pp. 195–209, and Vjera Katalinić (Die Werke W. A. Mozarts und einiger seiner Zeitgenossen in kroatischen Sammlungen bis ca. 1820, *Internationaler*

in larger musical forms cultivated by Mozart – mostly symphonies – reached Croatia and its collections during the first half of the 19th century; thus, for example, musical material for some symphonies was presented by some private persons to the Croatian Music Institute in Zagreb (*Musikverein – Hrvatski glazbeni zavod*) on the occasion of its establishment in 1827. Meanwhile, major church compositions demanding larger performing ensembles were performed for the first time in Zagreb cathedral during the second and third decades of the 19th century. The then Bishop of Bishop, Maksimilijan Vrhovac – a great art and music lover and a generous Maecenas who himself employed a chamber ensemble – mentions in his diary the laudable performances of great sacred compositions such as Mozart's *Requiem* in 1819, though he complains about a technically less than perfect performance. Similar performances of Haydn oratorios occurred before and after the afore-mentioned Mozart performance (*Sieben letzten Worte unseres Erlösers am Kreutze* in 1816; *Die Schöpfung* in 1821), and were greeted by similar complaints. These opinions can be interpreted as clear warnings by Vrhovac that there was no adequate professional performing body in Zagreb at the time – a situation that would endure throughout the first half of the 19th century.

This need for more professional interpreters led finally to the foundation in Zagreb of the *Musikverein*, which in 1829 opened a music school where singers and orchestral musicians were trained. However, as late as 1846, the performance of the “first Croatian national opera”, *Ljubav i zloba (Love and Malice)* by Vatroslav Lisinski, required the participation of both vocal and instrumental amateurs and professionals, as well as teachers and pupils from the *Musikverein* music school, members of the German theatre group and military musicians. Thus it is obvious that with such a lack of professional musicians, combined with inexperienced organizers, the founding of a permanent opera company, headed by Ivan Zajc, in 1870 marked an important turning point in Zagreb operatic life. Nevertheless, the newly founded opera was constantly beset by problems, occasionally even suspending its activities. Some of these difficulties were reflected in the reactions by critics throughout the first period of operatic activities up to the World War I. Data on operatic life in Zagreb before 1870, which was mostly in the hands of Austro-German theatre companies, are unusually scarce. Newspapers, as a regular source of information on public and cultural events, started to be published in Zagreb only in 1826 (the *Luna – Agramer Zeitschrift*, published in German). As it was generally the case, newspapers were initially oriented primarily towards news about politics and social life, so that announcements of operatic performances were given little space during the first half of the

musikwissenschaftlicher Kongress zum Mozartjahr 1991, Baden - Wien, ed. I. Fuchs, vol. 2, Hans Schneider, Tutzing, 1993, pp. 685–691. On Mozart's compositions in Zagreb, see Artur Schneider, *Mozartiana u Zagrebu* (supplement to the journal *Sv. Cecilija*), Zagreb, 1941, and Nada Bezić, *First and Other Early Editions of Compositions by W. A. Mozart in the Library of the Croatian Music Institute in Zagreb*, in: *OFF-MOZART: Musical Culture and the “Kleinmeister” of Central Europe 1750–1820*, ed. Vjera Katalinić, Zagreb, Hrvatsko muzikološko društvo, 1995, pp. 91–110. On his compositions in the Zagreb concert repertoire, based on data offered by concert programmes and posters, see Snježana Miklaušić-Ćeran, *Skladbe Wolfganga Amadeusa Mozarta u glazbenom životu Zagreba u 19. stoljeću*. Prilog istraživanju primalaštva, *Arti musices* 22 (1991), 2, pp. 153–184.

19th century. More accurately – virtually no place at all. During the first two years, up to 1829, the *Luna* magazine included an almost regular section called “Theater in Agram”, but later this was discontinued – i.e., transformed into a much more modest weekly supplement in the successor newspaper *Agramer politische Zeitung*. This is the reason why we have to rely primarily on secondary sources and only sporadically on primary ones, systematic research into archival documentation being only in its early days.

The above-mentioned data derived from secondary sources, discussed only cursorily in even quite recent musico-historiographical syntheses (by J. Andreis² and L. Županović),³ underline the contemporary character of the Zagreb operatic repertoire of the 1820s and 1830s, when – as in certain other Central European centres – Rossini’s music was the most often performed, and operas by Auber, Bellini and similar composers were attended with interest, whereas Mozart is mentioned only in a brief statement that “Much success was achieved by Mozart’s *Don Juan* (1830, 1832)”, as well as by a notice that in 1832 *Die Zauberflöte* was performed.⁴

Up to 1830, theatrical organization was unstable and insecure: theatre companies often went bankrupt, and their stage properties were sold right up to the moment when, in the spring of 1830, the management was taken over by Karl Mayer, the “ehemals Direktor des Laibacher und Klagenfurter Theaters”. In his time⁵ the theatre enjoyed stability, and operas were performed there frequently. “The number of the theatre staff was quite large for those days: more than 20 people were employed there!”⁶ The sole preserved example of the theatre almanac (*Theaterjournal*), which appeared sporadically in Zagreb, dates from the year 1832; it was published by the resident souffleur, Heinrich Rott. The report on the previous season’s repertoire mentions only the success of Mozart’s operas *Don Juan*⁷ and *Die Zauberflöte* (performed, respectively, on 29 January and 19 February 1832).⁸ The *Agramer politische Zeitung* and its supplement *Intelligenzblatt* did not regularly publish reports of musical stage events. The *Intelligenzblatt* announced twice in March 1830 the auction of the theatre’s stage properties, which was organized by the

² Josip Andreis, *Music in Croatia*, Zagreb, Muzikološki zavod Muzičke akademije, 1982.

³ Lovro Županović, *Centuries of Croatian Music*, vol. 2, Zagreb, Muzički informativni centar, 1989.

⁴ J. Andreis, *Music in Croatia*, op. cit., p. 117. L. Županović, *Centuries of Croatian Music*, op. cit., pp. 12–13; in footnote 8 the author lists operas and the years when they were performed (probably for the first time), such as: “1830 – W. A. Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*; [...] 1832 – W. A. Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*” Both authors cite the operas in their original (mostly Italian) versions or in Croatian translation, although they were advertised and sung in German.

⁵ Karl Mayer led the Zagreb Theatre during the periods 1830–34 and 1838–39. See Blanka Breyer, *Das deutsche Theater in Zagreb, 1780–1840, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des dramatischen Repertoires*, Zagreb, 1938, p. 91; Jože Sivec, *Opera v Stanovskem gledališču v Ljubljani od leta 1790 do 1861*, Ljubljana, Slovenska matica, 1971, p. 74.

⁶ Miroslava Despot, *Operni repertoar zagrebačkog kazališta prije 120 godina*, *Muzičke novine* (15. 7. 1952), p. 4.

⁷ Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* was always given the title of *Don Juan* in German and in Croatian newspapers alike, irrespective of whether it was sung in German or, as later, in a Croatian translation from the German.

⁸ M. Despot, *Operni repertoar zagrebačkog kazališta prije 120 godina*, op. cit., p. 4.

female theatre director Sophie Dunst,⁹ while the *Agramer politische Zeitung* for March 30 published an announcement of the beginning of the new season placed by the entrepreneur Karl Meier (Mayer).¹⁰ Further announcements concerning theatre events followed, but these were almost entirely limited to information about benefit performances for individual actors, singers and directors. Thus one reads that on 11 November 1830 there will be performed in the Zagreb Theatre “Don Juan, oder Der Steinerner Gast, grosse Oper in zwei Aufzügen; Musik von W. A. Mozart”, “zum Vortheile der Marine und Caroline Meyer”.¹¹ The choice of this particular opera to be performed for the benefit of two actors/singers leads one to assume that it had earlier been well received by the audience, and that the organizers were reckoning on a handsome financial profit. It is difficult to ascertain whether its success reached the level achieved by Auber’s *Der Schlosser und der Maurer*,¹² and Boieldieu’s *Die weisse Frau*,¹³ because it appears that Romantic operas and ones on comic subjects were the staple fare of the Amadé theatre.

The repertory of the Zagreb Theatre consisted of both serious and light musical stage works of Italian, French of Austro-German origin, and these were consistently performed in German. When the idea of “Illyricism” started to win favour, German actors and singers became conscious of the potential profitability of performing also in Croatian. At first, they merely inserted songs in Croatian during the entr’actes,¹⁴ but subsequently, on 2 October 1832, the actress Christina Schweigert organized for her own benefit a “Lustspiel in kroatischer Sprache”, *Stari mladoženja i košarice (Der alte Bräutigam und die Körbe)* by A. Kotzebue.¹⁵ Fragments sung in Croatian on the musical stage could also be heard by Zagreb audiences also in the heroic singspiel *Juran i Sofija ili Turci kod Siska (Juran and Sofija or the Turks at Sisak, 1840)* by I. Kukuljević, where melodies by Ferdo Wiesner Livadić were sung in arrangements by a member of the orchestra, Wilhelm Weiss.¹⁶

It was precisely because of their passionate attachment to the national “idea” that audiences searched for identification with historical subjects via Romantic operas,¹⁷ with

⁹ *Intelligenzblatt* 22 (20 March 1830) and No. 23 (23 March 1830).

¹⁰ *APZ* 26 (30 March 1830), p. 120.

¹¹ *APZ* 93 (11 November 1830), p. 372.

¹² The advertisement in *APZ* for the first performance on 9 September 1830.

¹³ The performance for the benefit of the singer Nannette Kubitschek was announced in *APZ* No. 55 (10 July 1830). The success of the performance was forecast in the advertising blurb: “Da wie bei der am 8. dieses Statt gehaltenen Aufführung dieser Oper von dem trefflichen Zusammenwirken aller Mitspielenden und von der schönen Ausstattung derselben, sowohl durch den lebhaften Beifall als durch das Hervorrufen des rastlosen Directors Herrn Karl Mayer während – und Aller Mitwirkenden nach der Vorstellung, uns genügsam überzeugten: so ist hievon, und der gerechten Anerkennung der Leistungen der Benefiziantin, mit Zuversicht auf einen zahlreichen Besuch dieser Benefiz-Vorstellung zu schliessen”.

¹⁴ As, for example, was the case with the well-known rousing song by F. Livadić *Još Horvatska ni propala*, which was performed in its orchestral version on 7 February 1835 between the acts of Schweigert’s singspiel *Die Magdalenen Grotte bei Ogulin*.

¹⁵ Advertisement in *APZ* No. 78 (29 September 1832).

¹⁶ Cf. Nada Bezić, Popis skladbi Ferde Wiesnera Livadića-Samoborskog, in: *Ferdo Wiesner Livadić. Život i djelo*, ed. Vjera Katalinić, Zagreb, Hrvatsko muzikološko društvo, 2003, p. 258.

¹⁷ Zagreb audiences had the opportunity to see many operas by Verdi, Bellini and Donizetti, even before the Zajc era. When, in 1852, the City bought the opera house from K. Stanković, it was

the result that works exhibiting musical classicism were not performed in Zagreb until Ivan Zajc became director there in 1870. The two cited stage works by Mozart were the only ones representing the earlier stylistic period to be performed on any Zagreb stage during the 19th century.

In 1875 the place of honour as the first opera performed in the new year in the National Theatre – which was at that time situated on St Mark’s Square in Zagreb’s Old Upper Town (Gradec), in a purpose-built edifice erected in 1846 by the merchant Kristofor Stanković and later, in 1852, purchased by the City and State – was taken by Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*. After successful staged performances of the standard Romantic repertoire – which returned season after season and included Verdi’s *Il Trovatore* and *Ernani* (both given in 1871) and *Rigoletto* (1873), Gounod’s *Faust et Marguerite* (1873), Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride* (1873–74), Donizetti’s *Lucrezia Borgia*, Rossini’s *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (December 1874) and Lisinski’s *Ljubav i zloba* (1871), among which director Zajc skilfully interspersed stage works of his own, such as *Mislav*, *Otmica Sabinjankah*, *Bračni vražićak*, *Ban Leget* and *Amelia* – the first masterpiece of Viennese Classicism – “die Königin aller Opern”¹⁸ – was awaited with interest and enthusiasm. The libretto was translated into Croatian by the writer Josip Eugen Tomić, who until 1874 was the resident *Dramaturg*, while the stage-director was the well-known actor Josip Freudenreich. In addition to publishing advertisements, the Zagreb newspapers *Obzor* (in Croatian) and *Agramer Zeitung* (in German) produced feuilletons that explained in detail the content of the opera and the background of its subject, as well as providing information on its first performance.

The critic of the *Agramer Zeitung* thought that in this work by Mozart there would be abundant material “für jeden musikalischen Geschmack”: the devotees of dramatic effects and the sublime would take pleasure in the arias of Donna Anna; those who preferred the “lieblich Heiteres” would find nothing more convincing than the aria and well-known duetto “Zerlinchen”; “das Derb-Komische” would best be realized in the appearances of Leporello and Masetto; in writing for lyrical and romantical roles Mozart was a real genius; the “sprudelnde Lustigkeit” of Don Juan was imbued by a refined manner “mit einem Grundzug der Ironie”; and the final scene was a masterpiece of psychology regarding the main character.¹⁹

The cast for this production was the following:

Don Juan: [Josip] Kašman

Leporello: [?] Novak

Donna Elvira: [Matilda] Lesić

Don Ottavio: [Fran] Grbić

not possible immediately to establish a national theatre because of the lack of trained actors. Thus during the first season of the National Theatre an Italian company gave guest performances under the impresario Scalari. Between 31 January 1851 and 14 June 1851, this company performed around 15 operas, some of them quite recent – such as, for example, Verdi’s *Attila*, first performed in 1846. See M.T.S., *Opera u Zagrebu prije sto godina*, *Narodni list* (15. 6. 1952).

¹⁸ AZ 14 (19 January 1875).

¹⁹ AZ 14 (19 January 1875).

Donna Anna: [Antonija] Neugebauer
 Gouverneur (Commendatore): [Antun] Chlostik
 Zerlina: [Hermina] Culifaj
 Masetto: [Vjekoslav] Anton Sr.

The opera was performed on 19 January 1875 “vor überfülltem Hause”.²⁰ According to the advertisement in *Obzor*, the performance enlisted some already famous singers: Don Juan was sung by Josip Kašman (1850–1925), a singer who, after departing for Italy in 1875, sang in all important theatres there, and later, in 1883, interpreted Don Giovanni in the opera’s first local performance at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. After the Zagreb première, when Kašman was at the beginning of his career, he sang that same role ten times, always with great success.²¹ Donna Elvira was sung by Matilda Lesić (1845–1909). This “young lady with a fresh voice”,²² who came from a Polish family in Lviv, arrived in Zagreb via Graz and Varaždin; she was a pillar of the Zagreb opera company from 1865 until 1898. After a short engagement in Prague, the Slovenian singer Fran Gerbič (1840–1917) was engaged at the Zagreb Opera from 1869 until 1878. “He was esteemed because of his thorough musical training, his clear and full voice, a distinct pronunciation, and seemingly a good character”.²³

Despite all the great expectations, the première failed to come up to the mark. Both Zagreb newspapers agreed on this outcome, and their critical remarks concerned both the orchestra (“the orchestra was terribly scratchy”)²⁴ and the performance of individual singers: the register of the role of Don Juan was too low for the baritone voice of Mr. Kašman, so that several arias had to be transposed; in addition, the reviewer of the *Agramer Zeitung*, H. Hirschl,²⁵ criticized Kašman’s pale interpretation, which displayed only occasional sparks of temperament; for the critic of *Narodne novine*, his interpretation reminded one more of Figaro – while Novak’s interpretation of Leporello recalled Krišpin.²⁶ It seems that the best impression was left by Matilda Lesić, although the role of Donna Elvira was occasionally too high for her voice,²⁷ and she moved too stiffly on the stage.²⁸ All in all, in spite of the general admiration of director Ivan Zajc for his courageous undertaking and of the interpreters for their “Eifer und Hingebung”, the performance was judged unsatisfactory, almost resembling a dress rehearsal, but the critics optimistically concurred that the further performances would be considerably improved.

²⁰ *AZ* 15 (20 January 1875).

²¹ Marija Barbieri, *Hrvatski operni pjevači 1846.-1918.*, Zagreb, Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1996, p. 73.

²² According to M. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 85.

²³ M. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 92.

²⁴ *Obzor* (20 January 1875).

²⁵ Snježana Miklaušić-Ćeran published an article on Heinrich Hirschl in the journal *Arti musices* 27 (1996), 2, pp. 135–160.

²⁶ The title role from the opera *Krispino e la comare* (*Krišpino i kuma*) by Francesco and Luigi Ricci, which was staged in Zagreb in spring 1874). *NN* (20 January 1875).

²⁷ *Obzor* (20 January 1875).

²⁸ *NN* (20 January 1875).

This actually happened in a comprehensive way: later performances received excellent critical comment, and singers learned a lot from the criticism, so that even beginners, such as Fräulein Neugebauer and Culifaj,²⁹ gave a good account of themselves. The critic of *Narodne novine* came to the conclusion that “‘Don Juan’ was liked by the audience more and more, and there is no doubt that the house will be full also for a long time into the future”.³⁰ However, since certain singers left the production, later performances had to introduce new singers, a step that sometimes – according to a review published on 25 October 1875 – turned out not to be successful.³¹ Nevertheless, a total of 17 performances in a single season, with a full theatre, attests to a solid success, even if the applause was sometimes directed more at the “magnificence of the music itself”.³²

However, the critics’ remarks (and in this, the most thorough and consistent was Heinrich Hirschl in the *Agramer Zeitung*) concerning the unsuitability of certain singers were not aimed specifically at the management of the Opera or its director, but refer, rather, to the general state of the Zagreb Opera as an institution that still lacked sufficient musicians of calibre. In the weekly magazine *Vienac* (No. 15, of April 1875) attention was drawn to the fact that “our opera has hundreds of problems and ailments”, and that “several singers intend to leave the Zagreb stage”,³³ for which situation the management of the theatre was held accountable. And indeed: various recurrent problems led to a temporary suspension of the Opera following Zajc’s departure in 1889; after five more years, in 1894, a new intendant was named: Stjepan Miletić. Like the first professional director, he had not previously been an actor.

The next domestic staging of a Mozart opera – this was again *Don Juan* – came about in Zagreb only in 1898, during Miletić’s intendancy. In the meantime, the 100th anniversary of the opera’s première in Prague was marked by a concert performance in the manner in which, in earlier times, some Mozart works, or fragments from them, had been performed.³⁴

“On Thursday 13 January – after a pause of 20 years – the most beautiful opera by

²⁹ Snježana Miklaušić-Ćeran, *Glazbeni život Zagreba u XIX. stoljeću u svjetlu koncertnih programa sačuvanih u arhivu Hrvatskoga glazbenog zavoda*, Zagreb, Hrvatsko muzikološko društvo, 2001, p. 54, claims incorrectly that Zerlina was sung at the première in 1875 by Marija (Micika) Freudenreich. Actually, Freudenreich took the role on 13 January 1898.

³⁰ *NN* (25 January 1875).

³¹ *AZ* 244 (25 October 1875). The changes of interpreters included: Don Juan – [Josip] Nolli (a beginner with a nice voice, Grbić’s pupil), Donna Anna – Irma Ferenci von Vranović (an experienced singer, but she was not fit for the role); Zerlina – Fräulein Daneš (an excellent performer, she was, among others, often a star attraction on stage); Don Ottavio – Mr. Dalfi (on account of his qualities, he sang the aria “Ein Band der Freundschaft”, which obviously was not singable in earlier performances).

³² *NN* (20 January 1875).

³³ *Vienac* VII/15 (15 April 1875), p. 247.

³⁴ Thus the first concert given by the newly established orchestra of the Zagreb *Musikverein* (on 18 April 1827) started with Mozart’s overture to the opera *Don Giovanni*. On concert performances of Mozart’s works on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth in 1856 and the 100th anniversary of the first performance of *Don Giovanni* in 1887, see: S. Miklaušić-Ćeran, *Glazbeni život Zagreba u XIX. stoljeću*, op. cit., 2001, pp. 53–54.

immortal Mozart was sung again”, reported the weekly magazine *Vienac*.³⁵ The same translation of the libretto by Josip Eugen Tomić was used, and the conductor was the opera director Nikola Faller.

The cast was as follows:

Don Juan: [Maurizio] Bensaude
 Donna Elvira: [Anka] Matoušek
 Donna Anna: [Leonie] Brückl
 Zerline: [Marija] Freudenreich
 Don Ottavio: [Rikard] Hofer
 Leporello: [Eduard] Aschenbrenner
 Komthur (Commendatore): [Tošo] Lesić
 Masetto: [Václav] Anton Jr.

In this completely new cast³⁶ we recognize family names of the members of some “dynasties” of actors/singers, such as the Commendatore of Tošo Lesić (1866–1949), Matilda Lesić’s son, who practically grew up on the stage, which he left only in 1938. Further, the Czech baritone Václav Anton (Anton Jr.; 1850–1917) “inherited” the role of Masetto from his elder brother Vjekoslav, a member of the opera chorus.³⁷ Finally, Marija Freudenreich (1863–1944) was the daughter of Josip Freudenreich (1827–1881), one of the founders of the national theatre, an actor and the stage-director of *Don Juan* from 1875. Her mother, the singer and actor Karolina Norveg-Freudenreich (1834–1903), was from the Viennese artistic family Blumenfeld, and she gave her “little Micika” (or “kleine Mizzi”) her first lessons in singing. Except for three years spent in Graz (1892–95), Marija was one of the leading female singers of the Zagreb Opera. The ease of her coloratura singing certainly measured up to the role of Zerlina. The main role was sung by the Portuguese baritone Maurizio Bensaude, who gave guest performances in Zagreb for a short time, and “der sehr günstig aussehend, den leichtsinnigen Wüstling gut andeutend, stimmlich nur stellenweise ganz befriedigen konnte”, an observation that cast shadows on the “Leistung des sonst ganz vortrefflichen Künstlers”.³⁸ Donna Anna was interpreted by Leonie Brückel (1857–1927) from Karlovac, otherwise trained in Vienna. Her illness caused the première of *Don Juan* to be postponed from 4 January to 13 January. Her indisposition was still showing during the first performance. In general, with some high and low points, the event was solid, but “unable to warm up”.³⁹ However – in the words of the *AZ* critic – “Mozart singt man zum ersten Male nicht leicht gut!”, and he concluded:

³⁵ *Vienac* XXX/4 (22 January 1898).

³⁶ Information on the singers is compiled from the article by Krešimir Kovačević on *Don Juan*, in: *Hrvatsko narodno kazalište 1894–1869*, ed. Pavao Cindrić, Zagreb, IP Naprijed – HNK, 1969, p. 250.

³⁷ M. Barbieri, *Hrvatski operni pjevači 1846.–1918.*, op. cit., pp. 188–189, 198. In addition, Václav Anton was a good actor, especially in comic roles, and he also performed in operettas. From the 1880s he often acted as the stage-director.

³⁸ Ernst Schulz, Feuilleton, *AZ* (14 January 1898).

³⁹ *NN* (14 January 1895).

“dass Herr Faller es sich zur Aufgabe machen wird, durch immerwährendes Feilen an der Ausführung den ‘Don Juan’ zu einer Glanzaufführung der Agramer Oper zu gestalten.”⁴⁰

The newspaper reports inform us that the Zagreb performance ended with the downfall of the main character, and that the ending with the moral message (the “second” finale) – in accordance with a common practice of the time – was omitted. The critic Schulz pronounced this to be a justifiable procedure from a dramaturgical standpoint, although “vom musikalischen Standpunkte wäre dieses Zurückgreifen auf den Originalschluss vielleicht interessant gewesen.”⁴¹ In addition, several ensemble scenes were made simpler “nach der Münchener Muster ...[was]... erwies sich als sehr wirkungsvoll”.⁴² Besides making some remarks concerning the scenery and movements on stage, critics pointed out the need for a clearer articulation of the sung text; but they also displayed satisfaction that this extraordinary opera was staged at all and – similarly to 1875 – expressed optimism that the singers would gradually improve their performances. However, the production was removed from the repertoire after only one month and three performances. Ernst Schulz identified possible reasons. He thought that Wagner’s insistence on large auditoria for opera impaired the sensitivity of listeners towards the fine nuances that characterized Mozart’s music and were so important for Classical pieces.⁴³ Moreover, the singers had forgotten to interpret Mozart’s music according to the art and manner of his period, and – probably the main reason – the taste of the audience had changed.⁴⁴

The fact that the theatre closed the day after the première because of over-exertions was news that no Zagreb newspaper failed to report. In place of the opera, a dress rehearsal for the first Croatian ballet, the *Jela* of Bela Adamović-Čepinski, was held.

The second opera by Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, fared no better. It was staged on 5 February 1899 under the opera director Nikola Faller. The libretto was translated into Croatian by the poet August Harambašić. The stage-director was Herr Schwalbe, “who earlier staged the same opera successfully at the Kroll Theatre in Vienna”.⁴⁵ Almost all the advertisements pointed out that in this opera “mit wenigen Ausnahmen nahezu säm-

⁴⁰ *AZ* (14 January 1898).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *AT* (14 January 1898). The theatre intendant Miletić commented in his *Memoirs* (entitled *Hrvatsko glumište*, Zagreb, 1904, p. 353) that Zagreb Theatre was the first to follow Munich in staging *Don Giovanni* according to Mozart’s source, without any changes and cuts, made so often during the 19th century.

⁴³ “Einer der schädlichen Einflüsse, die der einzig dastehende Eroberungszug der Werke Richard Wagners mit sich brachte, ist die ganz außerordentliche räumliche Vergrößerung der Theatergebäude überhaupt und besonders der Bühnen- und Orchesterräume der Opernhäuser. Dieses Factum hat es auch mit sich gebracht, daß das musikalische Ohr die Empfindung für Feinheiten verloren hat, die zu erzielen nur in kleineren Räumlichkeiten möglich ist.” E. Schulz, *Feuilleton*, *AZ*, op. cit.

⁴⁴ “Abgesehen von der uns ganz abhanden gekommenen wirklichen Gesangskunst, die zu Mozarts Zeiten condition sine qua non war, von der Unfähigkeit der meisten modernen Sänger, die Verzierungen der Mozart’schen Partituren stylgerecht auszuführen, ist auch unser Geschmack ein anderer geworden.” *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Obzor* (4 February 1899).

mtliche männliche und weibliche Opernkkräfte beschäftigt sind.⁴⁶ As usual, extensive reports were published about the content of the opera and the context of its creation; in this instance, reference was made to the topical allusions to historical persons associated with some characters of the opera (Tamino: Joseph II; the Queen of the Night: Maria Theresa, etc.).⁴⁷

The cast was as follows:⁴⁸

Tamino: [Rikard] Hofer

Pamina: [Alvina] Eisenhuth

Sarastro: [Eduard] Aschenbrenner

Queen of the Night: [Marina/Marija von Gvozdanović] Grabarska

Monostatos: [Karl/Dragutin] Foller

Papageno: [Václav] Anton

Papagena: [Marija] Freudenreich

Three Ladies: [Leonie] Brückl, [Herma] Neumann, [Josipa] Kodulin

Three Boys: [Katica] Sontag, [Miroslava] Housa, [Marija] Glivarec

Two Men in Armour: [Oskar] Strgar, [Slavoljub] Grgošević.

Everyone agreed that this opera was extremely demanding, requiring numerous excellent singers with good voices and musical reliability. The habitually severe critic of the *Agramer Zeitung*, E. Schulz, was enthusiastic about the high standards of the performance, the casting, the choir and the orchestra: “Herr Director Faller hat gestern gezeigt, was er zu leisten im Stande ist, wenn ihm genügend Zeit gelassen wird, ein Werk gründlich vorzubereiten”.⁴⁹ Only on rare occasions were the critics so unanimous as in this case – a mark of the excellence of the performance. It is true that the critic in *Vienac* observed ironically that the opera was set “in prehistoric Egypt” and was played “in costumes from Vasantasena,⁵⁰ with scenery from *Aida*”,⁵¹ but this was certainly not the reason why the opera was withdrawn from the repertory after a little over two months.

⁴⁶ *AZ* (6 February 1899).

⁴⁷ “Mit Tamino soll Kaiser Josef II. gemeint sein, der seine Geliebte Austria (Pamina) der Macht der Finsterniß (die durch die drei schwarzen Damen und durch Monostatos) repräsentiert wird, entreißen will.” [...] “Mit der ‘Königin der Nacht’ soll Kaiserin Maria Theresia gemeint sein, die dem bösen Einfluß der Repräsentanten der Finsterniß nachgebend, ihre Tochter Pamina (Austria) mit aller Gewalt den Händen Sarastro’s (Repräsentant der Aufklärung), der sie bereits gefangen hält entreißen will. Papageno und Papagena stellen das lustige, leichtlebige Wiener Völkchen vor, das sich gerne leiten läßt, wenn es nur nicht selbst sich dabei anzustrengen braucht und dabei nachdenken muß.” *AZ*, Kunst-Chronik (4 February 1899), and similarly in *Obzor* (6 February 1899).

⁴⁸ Information on the singers is compiled from the article by Krešimir Kovačević on *Die Zauberflöte*, in *Hrvatsko narodno kazalište 1894–1869*, op. cit., p. 229.

⁴⁹ *AZ* (6 February 1899).

⁵⁰ The author is probably alluding to a character from the Indian drama *Sakuntala*, which was staged in the same theatre on 11 March 1897, with the implication that the costumes for the Mozart opera were Indian in appearance.

⁵¹ *Vienac* 8 (1899), p. 128.

From this review of the performance of Mozart’s works on the Zagreb stage over almost 70 years of the 19th century, several facts emerge:

- 1) Mozart’s operas were staged in Zagreb at three distinct points in time: during the 1830s, in 1875, and at the end of the 1890s;
- 2) They were performed in three historic Zagreb theatres: first, in the so-called Amadé theatre, the specially adapted stage in the aristocratic palace Pejačević-Kulmer-Amadé; second, in 1875, in the professionally built so-called Stanković theatre, which suffered some damage in the 1880 earthquake; third, in 1895, in the Hellmer-Felner building, today’s official Croatian National Theatre.
- 3) The earliest performances were given by foreign theatre companies with their own actors and in German; on two further occasions, performances were given by domestic ensembles of the permanent Opera (mostly) in Croatian, despite the generally international casting.⁵² In addition to our knowledge concerning some excellent Croatian male and female singers, schooled in Zagreb, who gained international fame (such as Ilma Murska, Milka Trnina, etc.), the circulation and guest appearances of foreign singers, who brought their rich international experience, further testifies to the tolerance and internationalism of the cultural milieu in 19th-century Zagreb, where quality was esteemed over ethnic origins. Unfortunately, native-born singing talents were sometimes recognized too late, or Zagreb was not able to offer them adequate professional training at the right moment. Be this as it may, the establishment of Zagreb as a significant cultural centre at the end of the 19th century was achieved both by attracting musicians from outside and by creating local “musical dynasties”.
- 4) Newspapers covered those operatic events with variable intensity, but this was the case also with other kinds of theatrical production. The *Agramer politische Zeitung* was the only newspaper in the 1830s, and it did not publish regular theatre advertisements (unless, obviously, someone was prepared to pay for them). Being above all a political and administrative newspaper, it only later began to publish advertisements and reports more regularly.
- 5) It is very interesting to note a change of attitude by critics towards Mozart’s stage works: it is likely that in the 1830s operatic performances were viewed as mere entertainment without a strong intellectual engagement, thus unworthy of a newspaper report (which was not the case with some concerts, which were obviously recognized as artistically worthy of a review); but as early as 1875 critics were thoughtfully reviewing theatrical events, where three types of reaction could be seen: serious comments in the *Agramer Zeitung*, respectful reporting in *Narodne novine*, and only casual remarks in *Obzor* – all dependent on the attitude of the respective editorial office and the specific education of the reporter. In this process, the shifts occurring

⁵² Foreign singers who stayed in Croatia only for a short period were often unable to rehearse and perform their role in Croatian, so it might happen that in a single performance the characters sang in two, three or even more languages. See *Hrvatsko narodno kazalište 1894–1869*, ed. Pavao Cindrić, Zagreb, IP Naprijed - HNK, 1969, p. 103.

- between 1830s and 1875, and between 1875 and 1898, mark a great positive gain in understanding and seriousness when approaching works intended for the musical stage.
- 6) In this respect, the political background played an almost decisive role. In the 1830s the so-called national awakening had just started, resulting in the appearance of numerous documents and means of public information during the 1840s and 1850s. The German language started gradually to be replaced by Croatian in the theatre, and part of the population, at least, stayed away from performances in German. Indeed, in 1870 there was established a national Opera where the language was Croatian and the ensemble was, in the main, domestic; consequently, the choice of repertoire and the quality of performance became the main issue in all press reports. However, still in 1875, the *Vienac* reporter warned that foreign products should be respected, but that the home-grown repertoire, so close to the heart, had to stand at the core of the repertoire and determine the course of theatrical policy, shortcomings in both aspects leading to frequent condemnation.⁵³
 - 7) Whereas critics of the 1875 *Don Juan* production dealt focused on individual interpretations, some twenty years later a few reporters started to deal with other issues: for example, questions relating to historically informed performance (*Agramer Zeitung* and *Agramer Tagblatt*, and hints also in *Narodne novine*); hence the lengthy introductory texts dealing with the 18th-century premières, the number of musicians in the orchestra, and specific melodic embellishments evoked a response from the critics.⁵⁴ On this count, the critics demonstrated their high level of knowledge, comparing the Zagreb performances and domestic tendencies with those of other, especially German-speaking, centres such as Vienna, Munich and Berlin.
 - 8) Reports on Mozart's operas can be found in Zagreb newspapers only from 1875 onwards. Critics admired his music unreservedly: they thought of him as a genius, "an immortal composer",⁵⁵ and his opera *Don Giovanni* was characterized as magnificent and wonderful. In their view, Mozart's music was marked by "Liebenswürdigkeit und Anmuth",⁵⁶ "schöne Grazie und tiefe Empfindung":⁵⁷ it was placed – like *Die Zauberflöte* in 1899 – among the immortal works of Classical composers, and its staging in Zagreb was described as an important event. By the end of the 19th century, when a feeling for the older music had grown stronger – at least in the writings of more educated journalists such as E. Schulz – remarks on the stylistic purity of the performance in both its musical and scenic aspects increasingly found a place in reviews. Even in the advertisement, both forms of the title were noted: the translation *Don Juan* and the original *Don Giovanni*!⁵⁸
 - 9) In the 1870s audiences greeted all the performances of Mozart operas favourably. According to newspapers reports, the theatre was always full, and ovations during

⁵³ Especially by the writer August Šenoa in *Vienac* (see, for example, No. 15 in 1875, p. 247).

⁵⁴ Thus some extreme solutions were decried as "Antiquitätsmanie": *AZ* (14 January 1898).

⁵⁵ "Unsterblicher Tondichter", *AZ* (2 February 1898).

⁵⁶ *AT* (14 January 1898).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *NN* and *AT* (13 January 1898).

the performances occurred often. However, although the performance of *Die Zauberflöte* in 1899 earned the best review, it was soon removed from the repertory; the same happened to *Don Giovanni* in 1898. It seems that in the intervening years the taste of Zagreb audiences had moved away from Mozart's music, which it found antiquated. Some indication of this new *Zeitgeist* appears in one report in *Vienac* on Méhul's opera *Joseph*, staged in 1899: "A small act of palaeontology was performed in our theatre. [...] Today, after the great revolution in the 19th-century music, there are only a few people left who can be inspired by 'honoris causa'".⁵⁹ The production was removed from the repertoire after only two performances. Everybody was, indeed, full of admiration for Mozart, but – again in *Vienac* – one reads: "Mozart's music is, in the light of today's ideas of the orchestra, somewhat antiquated".⁶⁰ Quite naturally, the repertoire included operas by Wagner, Verdi, Tchaikovsky, Zajc, and others – i. e., the standard repertoire of the time – which estranged the average Zagreb opera-goer from the 18th-century sound. Only the performance of some operas by Richard Strauss in 1915 and 1916 provoked a new turn (E. Schulz saw Richard Strauss and his music as a warning sign not to pursue modernism too far and, instead, to turn back to the past),⁶¹ so it was perhaps not unexpected that an opera by Mozart – *Le nozze di Figaro* – was again staged in 1917.

»NESMRTNEMU SKLADATELJU«:
O RECEPCIJI MOZARTOVIH OPER V ZAGREBU V 19. STOLETJU

Povzetek

V hrvaških glasbenih arhivih in zbirkah so ohranjene številne skladbe W. A. Mozarta, med njimi so bile nekatere pridobljene morda še v času skladateljevega življenja ali kmalu po njegovi smrti. Vendar pa se njegova glasbeno-scenska dela izvajajo – po današnjih raziskavah – šele od tridesetih let 19. stoletja. Na osnovi raziskovanja zapisov, objav, kritik in podlistkov v najpomembnejših zagrebških dnevnikih časopisih in tednikih v hrvaškem (*Narodne novine*, *Obzor*, *Vienac*, *Danica*) in nemškem jeziku (*Agramer [politische] Zeitung*, *Agramer Tagblatt*) ter obstoječe, pretežno teatrološke literature in virov je bilo ugotovljeno, da so Mozartovi operi *Don Giovanni* in *Die Zauberflöte* uprizarjali na zagrebškem odru trikrat – v tridesetih letih 19. stoletja, leta 1875 in konec devetdesetih let 19. stoletja v treh zgodovinskih zagrebških gledališčih: na priložnostnem odru v plemiški palači Pejačević-Kulmer-Amadé, v namensko grajenem t. i. Stankovičevem gledališču iz

⁵⁹ *Vienac* 15 (1899), p. 247.

⁶⁰ *Vienac* 8 (1899), p. 128.

⁶¹ "[...] und so sind wir nach und nach zu einer hypermodernen musikalischen Anschauung gelangt, deren letzter Vertreter: Richard Strauß, als ein Warnungszeichen dasteht zum Einhalt und zur Umkehr." *AZ* (14 January 1898).

leta 1834 ter leta 1895 na odprtem odru Hellmer & Fellner, ki je še danes v uporabi. Prve predstave so izvajali tuji igralci – pevci, po ustanovitvi Hrvaškega narodnega gledališča (Hrvatskog narodnog kazališta) leta 1861 in njegove stalne opere 1870, so izvajali predstave pretežno v hrvaškem jeziku s stalnim domačim ansamblom in gostujočimi pevci. Zagrebški časopisi so v obdobjih teh treh postavitvev spremljali te kulturne dogodke na različne načine, tako da je mogoče spremljati tudi preobrate v časopisni (kulturni) politiki, pa tudi nazor in intelektualni angažma kritikov. Glede na to se kaže sprememba odnosa občinstva do Mozartovih del in sprememba njihove dojemljivosti v kontekstu pretežno romantičnega repertoarja.