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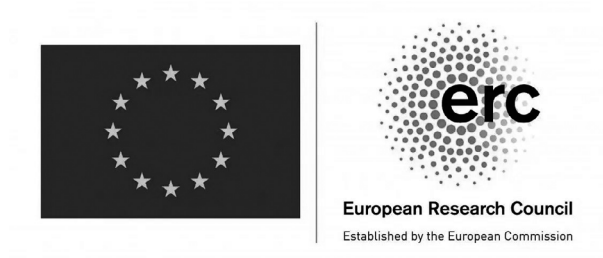
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DONIZETTI IN HABSBURG EUROPE

edited by

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Michael Walter

Donizetti in Vienna, 1836–1843

In the mid-1830s, Donizetti had a concrete goal: to compose *grands opéras* for Paris. He hired an agent in Paris, opened a bank account there, practised French and tried to build up a network that would support him in Paris. He studied Halévy's *La Juive* and composed operas for Naples with *grand opéra* characteristics, such as *L'assedio di Calais* and *Poliuto*. In 1837, *Lucia di Lammermoor* was a sensational success at the Théâtre-Italien, which led to contracts to prepare *Roberto Devereux* and *L'elisir d'amore* at the same theatre, as well as a contract for a new opera at the Académie Royale de Musique. By the time he arrived in Paris in October 1838, Donizetti was well acquainted with the structures of the Parisian theatres, the key figures on the opera scene and business practices.

In Vienna, on the other hand, the conditions in the mid-1830s were neither particularly favourable nor did Donizetti's activities during this period indicate that Vienna was of any great importance to him, and he was certainly not prepared for the circumstances in Vienna, which were essentially unknown to him. It was not until Bartolomeo Merelli and Carlo Balocchino took over the management of the Kärntnertortheater (i.e. the Court Opera) in 1836 that he became interested in Vienna. Like his contemporaries, he probably considered the Kärntnertortheater's Italian season to be part of La Scala in Milan. In 1836, Donizetti attempted to finalise a contract for a new opera to be composed for the Kärntnertortheater, a plan he continued to pursue in 1837, without success.¹ The conventional proof of Donizetti's interest in a contract for Vienna is a letter he wrote to Giovanni Ricordi in August 1837: "Tell Pedroni that I would like to see Vienna, that he should talk to Merelli, as it's not suitable for me to do so".²

1. See CLAUDIO VELLUTINI, *Cultural Engineering: Italian Opera in Vienna, 1816–1848*, Dissertation (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2015), pp. 229–234, see also CLAUDIO VELLUTINI, *Entangled Histories. Opera and Cultural Exchange between Vienna and the Italian States after Napoleon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2025).

2. "Dì a Pedroni che io ho voglia di veder Vienna, che parli lui a Merelli che a me non conviene". Letter to Giovanni Ricordi dated 13 August 1837, in GUIDO ZAVADINI, *Donizetti. Vita - musiche - epistolario* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1948), no. 249, p. 438.

The letter shows that at the time Donizetti already had a strained relationship with Merelli (although we do not know the reason behind their falling out). In this respect, Donizetti's situation differed considerably from that of Rossini, who had celebrated triumphs in Vienna in 1822. The city had been a suitable springboard for Rossini because Domenico Barbaia, the impresario of the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, who had also been impresario of the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna since December 1821, offered him the means of performing his operas and prepared the ground for him institutionally. Rossini's real international goal, however, was Paris. In Paris, Donizetti was already more advanced than Rossini some fifteen years before, but in Vienna he lacked support from either of the two impresarios of the Kärntnertortheater. On the contrary, he was at odds with Merelli, and Balocchino correctly recognised the financial risk that a contract for a new (or reworked) Donizetti opera would entail. Vellutini's suggestion that the passage in the letter quoted shows "that access to the Kärntnertortheater was not an easy matter for an Italian composer of his [Donizetti's] generation"³ is puzzling, as the impresario's intentions seem to have been motivated by business considerations, not nationality or generation.

The complete list of Italian operas performed by Balocchino–Merelli at the Kärntnertortheater suggests that neither of them intended to run the theatre's Italian *stagione* as a quasi-independent Italian theatre. The Italian season of the Kärntnertortheater remained a branch of La Scala, run by Merelli as impresario. This was understood from the outset by both Italian contemporaries and the Viennese. For the Viennese, this dependence on La Scala, and especially on the singers whom Merelli contracted for La Scala and then sent to Vienna for the Italian season, was a considerable advantage in terms of repertoire and quality of singers.

Between 1836 and 1848 there were only six premieres of Italian operas at the Kärntnertortheater. The series began with Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix* in 1842, followed by five other Italian operas newly composed for the Kärntnertortheater, including Donizetti's *Maria di Rohan* (1843). The other Italian composers of new operas were Matteo Salvi, Vincenzo Fioravanti and Lauro Rossi, i.e. composers of second or third rank at best (and therefore, it should be added, cheaply available). It is clear that Balocchino–Merelli had two considerations front of mind: 1. The Italian *stagione* in Vienna had to be inexpensive, which was achieved by importing operas to the Kärntnertortheater that had been reasonably successful in Italy. This meant that there was no need to invest in new operas, and rehearsal costs were kept to a minimum. The financial risk of performing an old opera was much lower for the impresario

3. VELLUTINI, *Cultural Engineering*, p. 230.

than for the contract of a new opera. 2. The Viennese public was much more interested in the singers than in the works and composers. Consequently, success above all depended on the skilful selection of singers. For this the two impresarios in Vienna were repeatedly praised.

The continued critical economic outlook in Vienna in 1837 was illustrated by the fact that the Kärntnertortheater was “on average often sparsely attended”.⁴ Investing in a new opera by Donizetti in this situation would have been associated with considerable risk. Moreover, Donizetti’s operas did not become popular in Vienna until 1839–1840 and even in 1841 his operas (e.g. *Fausta* and *La figlia del reggimento*) were still being criticised, sometimes severely, in Vienna’s newspapers, including the *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*. However, an important differentiation should be noted, in the early 1840s the public’s attitude to Donizetti’s works was generally enthusiastic and therefore different from the tepid critics’ opinion. It was a difficult task for an Italian impresario like Merelli, who was not on the ground, to gauge the situation accurately.⁵ Even in 1840, the economically risk-minimising decision would have been not to sign a contract with Donizetti for an opera composed specifically for Vienna.⁶

Donizetti’s operas were quite expensive. In a letter to Paolo Branca from 1840 Donizetti rejected an offer from Merelli and argued, that he normally got 10,000 francs for a new opera in Venice, Naples or Rome.⁷ One problem that was not unique to Donizetti in Vienna, and which can only be touched upon here, was currency. In the letter, Donizetti did not reduce his request to 10,000 *lire austriache*, as Vellutini believed: “I will convert my ten thousand French lire [= *lire italiane*] into Austrian [lire] — it makes little difference to me — but in Vienna I would like decent accomodation. [...] For Milan as well, I will make the same sacrifice into Austrian currency”.⁸ At the official exchange rate 10,000 *lire austriache* was worth only 8,700 francs. Donizetti’s remark refers to the fact that he offered Merelli to pay him the full 10,000 francs in *lire austriache*, i.e. in another currency. He would also be prepared to accept the same for Milan, since, it should be added, Merelli did not conclude the

4. “[...] im Durchschnitt oft spärlich besucht”. *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 33 (16 August 1837), col. 545.

5. See Donizetti’s ironic remark about Merelli in the letter dated 14 June 1840 to Pietro Cominazzi, in *Studi donizettiani*, 1 (1962), p. 61.

6. And not only “at the beginning of their [Merelli–Balocchino’s] enterprise” (VELLUTINI, *Cultural Engineering*, p. 236).

7. See VELLUTINI, *Cultural Engineering*, p. 234.

8. “Investirò le mie diecimila lire francesi in [lire] austriache che ciò poco mi fa, ma vorrei in Vienna l’alloggio e decente. [...] Per Milano pure farò lo stesso sacrificio in austriache”. Letter to Paolo Branca dated 26 September 1840, in ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 348, p. 523.

contracts for Milan in *lire italiane*, which were identical to francs, but in *lire austriache*, whose ratio to the *lire austriache* was theoretically fixed (namely 1 *lira austriaca* = 0.87 francs). In practice, however, there could be considerable, if forbidden, currency fluctuations, which Donizetti had already taken into account three years earlier when he asked for 12,000 “franchi effettivi” (i.e. “real French francs”, as opposed to an equivalent value in other currencies or bills of exchange) instead of just *franchi* in Vienna⁹ (the higher amount is explained by the fact that Donizetti would have paid for the libretto himself).

Given the business background of the Impresa outlined above, it is all the more surprising that in the autumn of 1840 Merelli actually concluded a contract with Donizetti for a new opera for the Kärntnertortheater, namely *Linda di Chamounix* (and at the same time a contract for *Maria Padilla* for La Scala¹⁰). The reasons for Merelli–Balocchino’s decision to sign a contract with Donizetti are unknown. It seems that Balocchino (as with any impresario) was occasionally subjected to political pressure in Vienna. Whether it played a role in this instance, however, is difficult to prove. From Merelli–Balocchino’s point of view, the signing of two librettos with Donizetti for expensive operas remained the exception. In other instances, they continued to look for cheaper solutions.

The circumstances under which Donizetti came to Vienna, albeit a year and a half later, are striking. He arrived on 29 March 1842 with a letter of recommendation from Rossini for Prince Metternich. As early as 26 June 1842, Donizetti took part in a great soiree at Metternich’s house. Donizetti’s stay in Vienna was prepared by a “biographical sketch” by Leo Herz, published in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* on 11 May 1842. By the time Herz had begun to play a significant role in the construction of Donizetti’s public image, many contemporaries must have realised that there was a political, if elusive, background to Donizetti’s role in Vienna.

LEO HERZ

Leo Herz is one of the best and least known music critics of the 1840s. He regularly appears in the notes of biographies or editions of letters, as he corresponded not only with Donizetti but also with Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Verdi, the impresario Merelli and many others. Additionally, Herz’s reviews are often quoted or at least mentioned in passing. That he was mentioned more frequently than any other Viennese critic might have raised the

9. See VELLUTINI, *Cultural Engineering*, p. 231. However, the date of the document in which the sum is mentioned is uncertain. Vellutini himself translates “franchi effettivi” only as “francs”, which does not correspond to the meaning of the term.

10. This was solely the decision of Merelli in his capacity of being impresario of La Scala.

question, who was Leo Herz really. But he has largely been neglected by Donizetti scholarship. If it is mentioned at all, it is noted that Donizetti and Herz were friends. However, Herz's role went much further than that.

Leo Herz was born in Lviv in 1808, the eldest son of a prominent Jewish merchant family. He received last rites when he died in 1869, a clear indication that he had converted to Catholicism at some point in his life. Herz is sometimes confused with his brother Johann Jacob Herz (since 1865 von Rodenau, died 1873), who was a year younger and made a career as a civil servant in the Austrian Empire, eventually becoming a ministerial secretary in the Austrian Ministry of Trade.¹¹ Both brothers had studied law in Lviv, but unlike his brother, Leo Herz is said to have obtained a doctorate in philosophy rather than law. When he wrote reviews under the pseudonym Leone, he sometimes extended this to Dr. Leone.

Herz, who performed as a violin virtuoso in Lviv at the age of twelve, undertook extensive concert tours in the 1830s under the name Ferdinand Leo Herz. His first tour probably took him to Vienna, Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań and Berlin in 1831. By the mid-1830s he was also giving concerts in Italy (e.g. 1835 in Florence and Trieste, 1837 in Milan and Bologna, 1838 again in Trieste). In the 1830s Herz also accompanied the violin virtuoso Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, who was six years his junior, on his concert tours. Probably serving in a kind of secretarial role he would also write the first (if short twenty-two-page) biography of his younger friend.¹²

This prehistory to Herz's activity as a music critic should not be underestimated, for it was the basis of Herz's enormous international network, the details of which have not yet been recorded. What remains unclear is when his personal acquaintance with Donizetti began. According to Angelo Eisner von Eisenhof, Donizetti accompanied Herz on the piano at an academy in Bologna on 3 December 1837, but at least on that specific date, this would have been impossible.¹³ It is likely, however, that Donizetti and Herz met around

11. Another object of confusion is the later "Ministerialrat" in the Ministry of Agriculture in Vienna, Dr. Leo Herz (later Dr. Leo Ritter von Herz), who was probably a nephew of Leo/Leone Herz. Leo Ritter von Herz was a member of the committee of the Vienna Donizetti Exhibition of 1897, to which he himself contributed letters from the estate of Leo/Leone Herz. As Ministerial Concipient of the Ministry of Trade in 1849, Leo Herz was appointed "k.k. Börsen-Commissär" (see *Oesterreichischer Courier*, 277 of 21 November 1849, p. 1006). This appointment was followed by some confusion between the two persons Leo Herz.

12. LEONE, H. W. Ernst. *Eine biographische Skizze* (Vienna: J. P. Sollinger, 1847).

13. ANGELO DE EISNER-EISENHOF, *Lettere inedite di Gaetano Donizetti a diversi e lettere di Rossini, Scribe, Dumas[,] Spontini, Adam, Verdi a Gaetano Donizetti* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1897), p. 10. However—as Herbert Weinstock has already pointed out—the letter to Spadaro del Bosch of 3 December 1837, had been written in Naples (ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 281, p. 282). Therefore, Eisenhof's statement cannot be correct.

this time. Herz probably met Merelli in Milan in 1837, although there is no concrete proof of this either. What is certain, however, is that Herz corresponded with Merelli in the 1840s. By the early 1840s, Herz had already built up a dense network of personal acquaintances in the theatre and further afield, which gave him some influence behind the scenes. Contemporaries marvelled at the many anecdotes Herz told about the contemporary opera business and its artists. This was the humorous side of Herz's international network. However, his journalistic colleagues were sometimes irritated by the fact that he was said to have reported on Donizetti's success in the smallest Italian theatres in the Viennese *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*. The criticism was somewhat exaggerated, but Herz must have read foreign newspapers and magazines all the time—and not just ones of central importance to the theatre business—and was thus unusually well informed, as the exchange with the *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt* shows.

As a violinist, Herz was always described in reviews as having a very good technique but unclear playing, and by 1838 he probably realised that he could not compete as a first-rate virtuoso. While still playing, he began his journalistic career with the short-lived journal *Adria. Süddeutsches Centralblatt für Kunst, Literatur und Leben*, which was published from January 1838 onwards. The journal was edited by Jakob Löwenthal. He had been a court master and teacher in various cities and had written for the Viennese *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* and other German-language Viennese, Austrian and Italian newspapers in the 1830s (he had a very good command of the Italian language). Based in Trieste from 1834, he founded the German-language journal *Adria*, which ceased publication after only a year as Löwenthal became co-editor of the *Journal des österreichischen Lloyd* (the newspaper pursued a conservative course loyal to the emperor). This is not the place to trace Löwenthal's career but, like Herz later, he was extremely well connected and, as editor-in-chief in Trieste and Vienna, ran various newspapers that today would be described as business journals and, in some cases, government journals. There is no evidence that Löwenthal was critical of the imperial family, only demonstrating loyalty to them and Metternich. Significantly, the second part of Löwenthal's 1859 *History of Trieste* is dedicated to Metternich.¹⁴ Here, too, one can see that Herz moved in circles loyal to the emperor, which is probably where his contact with the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* originated.

Initially, however, Herz wrote for the *Adria*, then for the Austrian *Lloyd*. He also worked as a correspondent from Italy for the Viennese journals *Der Adler* and *Der Humorist*, and possibly as a correspondent for the (German)

14. JAKOB LÖWENTHAL, *Geschichte der Stadt Triest. Zweiter Theil. Von der Regierung Kaiser Josephs II. bis zum Jahr 1820* (Trieste: Literarisch-Artist. Abtheilung des österr. Lloyd, 1859).

Allgemeine Zeitung.¹⁵ In this early phase of his journalistic career, he wrote articles on Slavic wedding customs, the planned railway line between Venice and Milan (explicitly “in the Lombard-Venetian kingdom”¹⁶), or literature, mostly signed with Leone.

As a music critic in Vienna, he was regarded as a mouthpiece of the court, especially when it came to Donizetti: “Herr Leo Herz, by the way, can be sure that the censors will never cut a word from him, for that his patronage is too influential, and he is too well regarded among the higher ups”.¹⁷

Herz must have been based in Vienna by the spring of 1841 at the latest, for from March he was writing reviews of performances in Vienna in the *Adler* and, a little later, in the *Humorist*, signing his articles Leone. He seems to have stopped working for these two journals in 1842, when he began to write for the Viennese *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*—probably as a full-time editor—where he signed articles with L., Leone or, more rarely, his full name. (There was never any doubt in Vienna as to who Leone was, and Herz himself made no secret of this.)

The *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* was the most widely circulated newspaper in Austria during the *Vormärz* period. It was founded in 1806 by Adolf Bäuerle, one of the main authors of the so-called Alt-Wiener-Volkstheater, and existed until 1860, albeit under a frequently changing title. The title of a book Bäuerle published in 1834 shows how loyal he was to the emperor: *What Does Austria Owe to the Favoured Government of His Majesty Emperor Franz the First?*¹⁸

Herz remained loyal to his emperor even in 1848 (and as it seems not quite so loyal to the imperial administration), writing several pro-emperor political articles. In 1859, he published an excerpt about Prince Metternich from

15. From 1846 to 1858 from Vienna, “before that” he was “correspondent in Frankfurt”. EDUARD HENCK, *Die “Allgemeine Zeitung”. 1798–1898. Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Presse* (Munich: Verlag der Allgemeine Zeitung, 1898), p. 251. The latter would explain, on the one hand, why he was apparently still reading the *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt* in Vienna. On the other hand, it cannot be determined exactly when Herz settled in Vienna, so it may well be that after his tour of Italy he lived in Frankfurt from 1840 to 1841. However, it cannot be excluded a mistake or error on Henck’s part.

16. DR. LEO HERZ, “Die Eisenbahn von Venedig nach Mailand, im lombardisch-venetianischen Königreiche”, *Die Warte an der Donau. Oesterreichische Zeitschrift für Verstand, und Gemüth, zur Belehrung und Erheiterung*, 109 (10 July 1839), 110 (11 July 1839), 111 (12 July 1839).

17. “Herr Leo Herz kann übrigens sicher sein, daß ihm nie ein Wörtchen von der Censur gestrichen wird, denn dafür hat er eine zu einflußreiche Protektion, und ist er hoch oben zu gut angeschrieben”. ASMODEUS, “Wien”, *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, 23 (5 June 1844), p. 365. Asmodeus was a fierce opponent of Herz, who published his views abroad rather than in Austria.

18. *Was verdankt Oesterreich der beglückenden Regierung Sr. Majestät Kaiser Franz des Ersten?*, edited by Adolf Bäuerle (Vienna: Ant. v. Haykul, 1834).

his planned memoirs. Although this should be considered as a tribute and not proof of a close personal acquaintance.¹⁹

In short, Herz both privately and professionally moved in a milieu devoted to the emperor and, above all, to Metternich. A letter dated 17 October 1841 shows that Donizetti and Herz had met several times in Italy, probably between 1837 and 1839, after which they lost contact.²⁰ The letter also demonstrates that by the time Donizetti and Herz renewed their correspondence, Merelli had already rented accommodation for Donizetti in Vienna for the spring of 1842, when the composer was to rehearse *Linda di Chamounix*. It seems that Herz had sought to contact Donizetti on his own initiative, although it is impossible to say whether he did so. At that time the Viennese public did not know that Donizetti was going to compose an opera for Vienna, nor that he was coming to Vienna to rehearse it. Therefore, Herz could only have known about Donizetti's Viennese plans because of his good contacts in the capital.

Herz's contact with Donizetti, at a time when Merelli and Donizetti had already agreed on a new opera for Vienna; his advocacy for Donizetti in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*, and for Donizetti's operas more generally—it strains credulity that all these were mere coincidences.

As mentioned, on 11 May 1842, Herz published an article in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* with the title “Gaetano Donizetti, eine biographische Skizze” [Gaetano Donizetti, a biographical sketch], in which he explicitly states that his piece is based on Donizetti's friendly oral communications. The two-page article, published on the frontpage, placed Donizetti alongside Rossini, and can be understood as preparing the periodical's readers for the upcoming premiere of *Linda di Chamounix*. Herz's article praised Donizetti to a truly remarkable degree. Donizetti, in turn, seems to have played a key role in Herz's appointment, in 1843, to the post of Regisseur (director) of the Kärntnertortheater, a position Herz held until 1845. It was Herz's adaptation of the German text of *Don Sebastian* in 1845 that brought a twofold praise from the critics in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*: for Donizetti as composer and for Herz as adaptor of Donizetti's opera.

The Donizetti–Herz connection was, it must be assumed, the tip of an iceberg of personal networks between the Viennese press and the court. Although Donizetti spoke little German, at court and with people important to him in Vienna he was able to communicate in Italian or French. These net-

19. DR. LEONE, “Fürst Metternich als Musikdilettant. (Fragment aus meinen *Künstlerrmemorien*)”, *Wiener Theaterzeitung* [= *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*], 142 (26 June 1859), p. 569. Reprint in *Neue Wiener Musik-Zeitung*, 26 (30 June 1859), p. 103; *Iris. Pariser & Wiener Damen-Moden-Zeitung*, 11, 3/3 (15 July 1859), pp. 107–108.

20. Letter to Leo Herz, in ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 376, pp. 556–557.

works are difficult to trace because they manifested themselves in personal conversations and not always in letters or other written documents. However, on occasion they appear incidentally. For example, as a consequence of professional interactions Donizetti and Herz personally knew the powerful head of the police and censorship office, Josef von Sedlnitzky.²¹ For Herz collaboration with Sedlnitzky involved censorship measures but also the casting of singers.²² Donizetti socialised in the highest Viennese circles and had close contacts in the local nobility.²³ It is not possible to say to what extent also Herz had contacts with the nobility, but it seems likely that he knew people at court who were interested in the theatre.

DONIZETTI AS *KAMMERCAPELLMEISTER*

Contrary to frequent claims, Donizetti did not become a *Hofcapellmeister*²⁴ (director of the court music) in Vienna. After a steady decline since the time of Maria Theresia, mainly due to cost-cutting measures, the court orchestra was essentially confined to the performance of church music. In 1840 it was nominally directed by Joseph Leopold Edler von Eybler, born in 1765, who had been a friend of Mozart. Since 1833, as the result of a stroke, Eybler was partially paralysed, and many of his duties were taken over by the deputy *Hofcapellmeisters*. These were Joseph Weigl from 1827 and Ignaz Assmayer from 1838 onwards (as “supernumerary” deputy *Hofcapellmeister* and court

21. See for example, the anecdote told by Eduard Hanslick about the examination of the singer Alois Ander in 1844; <https://hanslick-online.github.io/hsl-app/c__1864.12.18.html?> (retrieved on 7 November 2024). See (with regard to Donizetti) letter to Leo Herz dated 8 October 1842, in ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 445, p. 630; letter to Leo Herz dated 5 December 1842, *ibid.*, no. 458, pp. 641–642; letter to Leo Herz dated 25 December 1842, *ibid.*, no. 461, pp. 643–644; letter to Antonio Dolci dated 14 February 1843, *ibid.*, no. 474, pp. 657–658; letter to Leo Herz dated 18 October 1843, *ibid.*, no. 509, pp. 691–692; letter to Madame [la Comtesse Amélie de Taaffe] dated 11 July [?], *ibid.*, no. 716, p. 855.

22. See letter to Leo Herz dated 25 December 1842, *ibid.*, no. 461, p. 644 about Sedlnitzky’s rejection of the coloratura singer “Bossini” (*recte*: Gabussi-Bassini), which Donizetti considers to be correct. In 1845 she seems to have been engaged at the Kärntnertortheater, despite all the criticism of her cutting voice.

23. “I am well acquainted with Count Kollovrat, Prince Metternich, and the Minister of Police Sedlnitzky; however, as for the offices and departments of Austria, Bohemia, Italy, and so forth, I do not know a single soul therein”. “Conosco bene il conte di *Kollovrat*, il principe *Metternich*, il ministro di *Polizia Sedlnitzky* [Sedlnitzky], ma perciò che si tratta Uffici, Dicasteri d’Austria, di Boemia, d’Italia etc., io non vi conosco anima”. Letter to Antonio Dolci dated 14 February 1843, in ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 474, pp. 657–658.

24. In the sources you find both *Hofcapellmeister* and *Hofkapellmeister*. To impose some order the former spelling is used here in the text, except in instances where it is a direct quote. Then the original spelling is retained. However, the key is that despite the variation in spelling it refers to the same position.

organist). In 1845, Benedikt Randhartinger and Gottfried Preyer were added as further “supernumerary” vice *Hofcapellmeisters*, presumably to relieve the overworked Assmayer because neither Eybler nor Weigl were able to take over the actual direction of the court chapel. In any case, the court orchestra and its *Hofcapellmeister* were only of local importance for church music.

Even less important around 1840 was the position of *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur* (director of the emperor’s chamber music and court composer). The position had been created by the court in order to be able to pay Mozart a regular salary to cover his living expenses.²⁵ Unlike the *Hofcapellmeister*, the position of *Kammercapellmeister* was not a fixed position within the court system, but based on *ad hoc* appointments. The position was not definitely abolished after Mozart’s death, but recreated in 1792 for Leopold Koželuh (for similar reasons to Mozart’s), who in turn was succeeded by František Krommer who held the post from 1818 to 1831. Subsequently, however, the office was abolished.

Of course, the position of *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur* could be revived *ad personam* at any time. This happened when the emperor appointed Donizetti *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur* on 3 July 1842. What appeared to be a simple appointment, made by the court to demonstrate its attachment to Donizetti, was in fact a rather ambiguous matter, both in terms of Donizetti’s function and the title, the nuances of which was understood only in Vienna.

In the court and state schematism of the Austrian Empire, the position of the *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur* was assigned to the *k. k. Kammerkünstler* in 1843.²⁶ The title of *k. k. Kammerkünstler* was an honorary title. It had been bestowed on artists such as Giuditta Pasta, Fanny Tacchinardi Persiani, Giovanni Battista Rubini and Antonio Poggi, but none of them were paid by the court.

It is one of the usual contradictions of courtly bureaucracy that Donizetti’s position was a hybrid one. Unlike the other chamber artists, Donizetti received a salary from the court. In his decree of 3 July 1842, the emperor granted Donizetti an annual salary of 2,600 florins, 400 florins in quarterly instalments and a further 1,000 florins “for which the latter shall periodically provide my court with suitable musical compositions upon request”.²⁷ At the

25. DOROTHEA LINK, “Mozart’s appointment to the Viennese court”, in *Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 39–64, here 56.

26. *Hof- und Staats-Schematismus des österreichischen Kaiserthumes. I. Theil* (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staats-Aerarial-Druckerey, 1843), p. 133.

27. Appointment decree of the emperor of 3 July 1842, quoted after ODO ABERHAM – ALFRED GÄNSTHALER, “‘Vienna è bella bella bella’. Donizettis Wiener Korrespondenzen”, in *Donizetti und seine Zeit in Wien*, edited by Michael Jahn (Vienna: Der Apfel, 2010), pp. 51–112, here 66.

same time, he was granted the “seventh allowance band” (“siebente Diäten-Klasse”—out of 12); this was an amount of 6.4 convention florins (Gulden CM = Conventions-Gulden). Donizetti was thus formally assigned to be part of the *Kammer-Individuen* (chamber individuals) of the *k. k. Oberst-Hofmarschallstab*. These *Kammer-Individuen* were a group of court posts that were hard to categorise within the bureaucracy but broadly belonged to the emperor’s entourage. They included hierarchically disparate positions such as the *Kammerheizer* (chamber stoker), the *Kammerheizerjung* (assistant to the chamber stoker) and the *Kammerfourier*.²⁸

Donizetti had become an imperial civil servant as a result of this commission and could have made use of a daily allowance for official journeys or the regulations for the use of stagecoaches (as an alternative to using his private coach). As the relevant regulations were complicated and difficult to understand even for a German-speaking official, it can be assumed that Donizetti did not make use of his official rights—if he was aware of them at all.

4,000 florin CM was equivalent to 10,440 francs. This was no small amount. But by 1840 Donizetti was already receiving 10,000 francs for a single opera and usually half of the income from the rights. In 1842, the Viennese publisher Pietro Mecchetti paid Donizetti 6,000 gulden (= florin; about 5,220 francs²⁹) for the publication of *Don Sebastian*³⁰ (the Viennese version of *Dom Sébastien*); Donizetti had received 16,000 francs (about 6,130 florins) for the original Parisian *Dom Sébastien*.³¹ In 1844 he was offered 17,000 francs (about 6,513 florins) for the publishing rights alone for an opera to be performed at the Théâtre-Italien.³² It is impossible to quantify (in modern terms) the flow of

28. See *Darstellung der bestehenden Vorschriften über die Vergütung der Fuhr- und Zehrungskosten für die im Dienste reisenden öffentlichen Beamten, ihrer Gebühren bei Substitutionen und Uebersiedlungen von Carl Trattinnick, Conceptsbeamten der k. k. allgemeinen Hofkammer; Doctor der Rechte etc. nebst dem vervollständigten Diäten-Schema für die verschiedenen Dienstes-Categorien sämmtlicher Hof, dann Staats-, ständischer, städtischer und privatherrschaftlicher Beamten der gesammten österr. deutsch, italienisch und ungarischen Erblande von Emanuel Hünner, Rechnungs-Officialen der k. k. Kameral-Hauptbuchhaltung. Erster Theil* (Vienna: In Commission bei Braumüller und Seidel, 1846), p. 5 of the “Diäten-Schema für sämmtliche k. k. Hofstäbe”. In terms of court bureaucracy, this salary level was not assigned to Donizetti until 6 July 1842.

29. The conversion is based on the *lira austriaca* to franc rate. In reality, the usual conversion rates were slightly higher, and a decimal conversion would have increased the value even further. Thus, 17,000 francs would have been worth 6,800 convention florins (decimal conversion factor: 0.4).

30. See letter to August Thomas dated 14 November 1843, in ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 519, p. 702.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

32. Letter to Antonio Dolci dated 21 April 1844, *ibid.*, no. 558, p. 744.

tantièmes that resulted from the frequent performances of his operas, which in the 1840s still depended on the contracts with the *impresari* and the legal situation at the performance venue. Therefore, Donizetti's fee from the Viennese court was a useful and regular extra income, but it did not play a central role in his total earnings.

DONIZETTI AND MEYERBEER

More interesting than the question of Donizetti's courtly function is that of the date of his appointment and the title. In May 1842, *Linda di Chamounix* was premiered at the Kärntnertortheater causing a great sensation. On 11 June 1842, the King of Prussia appointed Giacomo Meyerbeer *Generalmusikdirektor* (general music director) and *Hofcapellmeister* in Berlin. A few days later, the Viennese court offered Donizetti the post of *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur*, this was followed by the official appointment by the Austrian emperor on 3 July 1842. Meyerbeer had to stay in Berlin for no more than six months a year, a condition that also applied to Donizetti in Vienna.

Unlike his predecessor Spontini, Meyerbeer was a Prussian citizen. Although Donizetti was Italian, as a citizen of Lombardy-Venetia he was a subject of the Austrian emperor. In Berlin, the most famous Prussian opera composer had been recruited as *Hofcapellmeister*; in Vienna, the most famous opera composer of the Austrian Empire had been recruited to an office which, as we shall see, was understood outside Vienna as the office of *Hofcapellmeister*.

Meyerbeer received 3,000 Prussian thalers for his work as *Generalmusikdirektor* and *Hofcapellmeister*. Donizetti in Vienna received 4,000 florins (convention coin) as *Kammercapellmeister* and *Hofcompositeur*. The Viennese press occasionally remarked that Donizetti received more than the Prussian *Hofcapellmeister*, but this was incorrect. 4,000 florins was equivalent to about 2,100 Prussian thalers or 12,000 *lire austriache* (which in turn was equivalent to 10,440 francs = *lire italiane*). The difference, however, was that Meyerbeer wanted to waive his salary (which was not possible for legal reasons) while Donizetti, presumably to the astonishment of the court, negotiated his salary up to 4,000 florins.

In July 1842, the *Intelligenzblatt* of the *Allgemeine-Literaturzeitung*, published in Halle, announced that "*Hofkapellmeister* Meyerbeer has been appointed *Generalmusikdirektor* in Berlin; Donizetti *Hofkapellmeister* [*sic!*] in Vienna".³³ In Vienna, Meyerbeer's appointment was reported in the *Allge-*

33. "[...] der Hof- Kapellmeister Meyerbeer [wurde] Generalmusikdirector in Berlin; Donizetti [wurde] Hofkapellmeister in Wien". *Intelligenzblatt der Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung*, 33 (July 1842), Section: "Personal-Nachrichten", col. 265.

*meine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*³⁴ and Donizetti's in the *Sammler*.³⁵ Other newspapers also reported the news; and in April 1843, an article on composers' salaries in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* began with the paragraph:

Auber became director of the Paris Conservatory, Meyerbeer Generalmusikdirektor of the King of Prussia (with a salary of 3,000 thlr. and six months' annual leave), Donizetti Hofkapellmeister to the Emperor of Austria (with a salary of 4,000 silver florins). A newspaper remarked: "There is a lot in in these few lines".³⁶

There is no further comment on this. But, as seen from the outside, in all three cases the country's leading composers seem to have been appointed to the most important musical position. In the case of Donizetti's title of *Kammercapellmeister*, however, this was by no means true. While in Vienna the title was almost always rendered correctly, abroad Donizetti was always referred to as *Hofcapellmeister* of the emperor. Vienna's complicated differentiation of titles was unknown abroad and there seems to have been no interest in Vienna in setting the record straight when the opportunity arose. From the Viennese point of view, the cultural and political advantage of this confusion was that Donizetti's position in Vienna seemed to correspond to Meyerbeer's in Berlin. Even Leo Herz maintained the fiction of the title *Hofcapellmeister* in relation to foreign countries by not correcting the term.

Donizetti is the governor of all opera stages. The Bergamasque star [...] followed in the footsteps of the Swan of Pesaro, and wherever there is only the baton of a conductor to guide a state of operatic artists [...] his melodies resound. [...] In the learned, stiff North, as well as in the sedate South, his name has a good ring to it [...].

wrote the *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung* in October 1841.³⁷ The "Bergamasque star", that is to say, a citizen of an Italian territory belonging to the

34. *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*, 79 (2 July 1842), p. 324 (with mention of the salary).

35. *Der Sammler*, 108 (7 July 1842), p. 451.

36. "Auber ist Director des Pariser Conservatoriums der Musik geworden, Meyerbeer General-Musik-Director des Königs von Preussen (mit 3000 Thlr. Gehalt und sechs Monate jährlichem Urlaub), Donizetti Hofkapellmeister des Kaisers von Oesterreich mit 4000 Silbergulden Gehalt. Eine Zeitschrift bemerkte dabei: 'in diesen wenigen Zeilen liegt viel'". *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 17 (26 April 1843), col. 305.

37. "Donizetti ist der Gubernator aller Opernbühnen. Der Bergamasker Staar tritt ist [*sic*] in die Fußstapfen des Schwanes von Pesaro und allüberall, wo nur der Tactstock eines Capellmeisters einen Staat von Operisten lenkt [...] tönen seine Weisen. [...] Im gelehrten steifen Norden, wie im gehäbigen Süden, hat sein Name guten Klang [...]". *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*, 124 (16 October 1841), p. 518.

Austrian Empire, dominated the opera stages even in the cultivated north, a reference to Berlin. Donizetti had succeeded Rossini, the “Swan of Pesaro”, and thus brought Vienna, which lived from its past in terms of music and above all opera culture, back to the forefront of European cultural and operatic life. This exaggerated enthusiasm seems slightly overdone, but the goal was clear. Vienna was to be a direct competitor to Berlin in the field of court opera and the cultural and political character of the city of residence.

The fact that Donizetti’s appointment as *Kammercapellmeister* was seen as a political act by his Italian circle of friends is demonstrated by the letters in which Donizetti tried to dismiss the criticism that could be expected as a result of his engagement with the emperor. Donizetti’s strategic line was to point out not only the good salary of the position, but also its musical-historical significance, which had previously been held by Mozart, Koželuh and Krommer,³⁸ and its prestige, reflected in a gold-trimmed uniform (which, however, was not intended for the *Kammercapellmeister*).³⁹ Meanwhile, Donizetti’s position as “maestro di cappella alla Corte di S. M. l’Imperatore d’Austria” does not seem to have aroused much interest in Italy and was rarely mentioned in the press, although it is included in the Lombard edition of the court schematism (*Manuale provinciale della Lombardia per l’anno bisestile 1844*⁴⁰) from 1844 onwards.

HERZ VS. BÖRNSTEIN

In Vienna Donizetti’s position was understood as a political one (perhaps to a greater extent than Donizetti himself realised), as demonstrated by a controversy between Herz and Börnstein. In November 1843, the *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt* published a polemical article by Walter vom Berge against Donizetti’s *Dom Sébastien*, which had recently been premiered in Paris. The name, sounding medieval, was a pseudonym of Heinrich Börnstein, who had attended the same school (and class) as Herz in Lviv. In the second half of the 1820s, Börnstein wrote for the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*. As a result of a dispute with the short-lived journal *Iris*, which was printed in Ofen (Buda), the person behind the pseudonym was known in Vienna, at least in press circles, since 1827 at the latest. Börnstein had enjoyed a certain prominence both as an actor and as a journalist. Due to his revolutionary views, since

38. Letter to Antonio Dolci dated 16 June 1842, in ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 428, pp. 616–617; letter to Antonio Dolci dated 30 (“ultimo”) June 1842, *ibid.*, no. 429, pp. 617–618; letter to Antonio Vasselli dated 13 July 1842, *ibid.*, no. 430, p. 618; letter to Antonio Vasselli dated 3 August 1842, *ibid.*, no. 437, pp. 623–624.

39. See ABERHAM–GÄNSTHALER, “‘Vienna è bella bella bella’”, p. 67.

40. Milan: I.R. Stamperia, 1844.

1842 Börnstein worked in Paris as a correspondent for various German periodicals. Politically, he was well-known for his democratic republicanism, a fact that enraged the Prussian government to such an extent that it demanded that Paris expel him from France. Börnstein's short-lived (1844–1845) journal *Vorwärts! Pariser Signale aus Kunst, Wissenschaft, Theater, Musik, Literatur und geselligem Leben*, was co-financed by none other than Meyerbeer, who presumably wanted to stay on good terms with Börnstein,⁴¹ suggesting that his journalistic influence should not be underestimated. Börnstein's revolutionary views were known in Vienna too; and it comes as no surprise that his review of the Paris premiere of Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien* shows related political undertones:

One wondered whether the Donizetti of *Lucia* had not been replaced in Vienna or elsewhere *en route*, and whether a false Donizetti, merely outwardly similar to him, had taken his place and was aping the Parisians. — Poor Donizetti! it is really him, — but he has run out of melodies, lacks ideas, — he only makes scores, — and so he is a knight of several orders, — *Cavaliere*, — Imperial and Royal *Hofkapellmeister*, — but no longer a composer of music.⁴²

In the same article, Börnstein comments on *Maria di Rohan*, which was performed the day after *Dom Sébastien* at the Théâtre-Italien and which, as he points out, “had first been performed in Vienna”. Referring to an anecdote about Lessing, he says of Donizetti's music that “the good in it is not new, the new is not good”.

Donizetti, whom Herz had apparently informed of the review,⁴³ did not care much about Börnstein's opinion, especially since, contrary to Börnstein's assertion, *Dom Sébastien* was a great financial success.⁴⁴ Herz, however, saw

41. See the correspondence between Meyerbeer and Börnstein in 1844, in *Giacomo Meyerbeer. Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 3, 1837–1845, edited by Heinz Becker and Gudrun Becker (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1975), pp. 499, 500–502 and comment on p. 767.

42. “Man fragte sich, ob der Donizetti der *Lucia* nicht in Wien oder sonst unterwegs ausgetauscht worden seye, und ein falscher Donizetti, bloß ihm äußerlich ähnlich, seinen Platz eingenommen habe und die Pariser äffe. — Armer Donizetti! er ist es wirklich, — aber die Melodien sind ihm ausgegangen, die Ideen fehlen, — er macht nur noch Partituren, — und so ist er Ritter mehrerer Orden, — Cavaliere, — k. k. Hofkapellmeister, — aber kein Tondichter mehr”. WALTER VOM BERGE [= HEINRICH BÖRNSTEIN], “Aus Paris (17. November.)”, *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt*, 322 (22 November 1843), pp. 1287–1288 and 323 (23 November 1843), p. 1290. Here quoted p. 1287.

43. Since Herz and Donizetti communicated in French, it can be assumed that Herz had summarized the review for Donizetti in French.

44. “After all, if the letters from Frankfurt speak ill; Börnstein gives his opinion; or if he is made to give one without having truly been present — it's all the same to me”. “Après cela, si

things quite differently and, using the pseudonym Leone, responded to Börnstein's article with a heavy rhetorical touch. On the surface, Herz tried to refute the accusation that Donizetti had composed bad music to a bad libretto by Eugène Scribe; but (more importantly) he addressed Börnstein's criticism of Donizetti's political recognition:

Furthermore, my learned correspondent, as long as you take up arms against the titles and decorations bestowed on Donizetti as a public tribute to his outstanding achievements in the field of art, and as the highest mark of that homage which even crowned heads pay to genius, I have no objections. — You are right to be annoyed that His Majesty the Emperor of Austria appointed him and not someone else as *k. k. Hofcapellmeister* [*sic*], even though Donizetti is not only Italian but also Austrian, for he is a Bergamo native and Bergamo is a city in Lombardy, and the Emperor of Austria is not only Archduke of Austria but also King of Lombardy. Finally, you are also right to be offended that the King of the French made Donizetti a Knight of the Legion of Honour, that the Pope made him a Knight of the Order of St. Sylvester, and that the Sultan Abdul Meschid awarded him the Order of Nischan Istichar in diamonds, and I advise you to call the cabinet of the Tuilleries, the Holy See and the Ottoman Porte to account for this.⁴⁵

Herz, as a convinced monarchist and editor of a monarchist newspaper, aimed his rhetorical guns at a socialist and republican correspondent. In Vienna, where Herz was regarded as the voice of the court when it came to Donizetti, his intervention carried considerable weight as it represented the court's point of view.

les lettres de Francfort disent du mal ; le Börnstein dit son opinion ; ou bien on la lui fera dire sans avoir assisté véritablement, cela m'est égal". Letter to Leo Herz dated 2 December 1843, in ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 528, pp. 711–712.

45. "So lange Du ferner, mein gelehrter Hr. Correspondent, gegen die Titel und Ordensverleihungen zu Felde ziehst, die Donizetti zu Theil wurden, als öffentliche Würdigung seiner ausgezeichneten Leistungen im Gebiete der Kunst, und als allerhöchste Merkmale jener Huldigung, die selbst gekrönte Häupter dem Genie darbringen, habe ich auch nichts einzuwenden. – Du hast Recht, Dich zu ärgern, daß Se[ine] Majestät der Kaiser von Oesterreich, ihn und nicht Jemand Anderen zum k. k. Hofcapellmeister [*sic*] ernannte, obschon Donizetti nicht blos *Italiener* sondern auch *Oesterreicher* ist, denn er ist ein Bergamasker und Bergamo ist eine Stadt in der Lombardei, und der Kaiser von Oesterreich ist nicht nur Erzherzog von Oesterreich sondern auch König der Lombardei. Du hast endlich auch Recht, Dich zu kränken, daß der König der Franzosen Donizetti zum Ritter der Ehrenlegion, der Papst ihn zum Ritter des St. Sylvester-Ordens ernannte und daß der Sultan Abdul Meschid ihm den Nischan-Istichar-Orden in Brillanten verlieh, und ich rathe Dir, Du sollst deshalb das Cabinet der Tuilleries, den heiligen Stuhl und die Ottomannische Pforte zur Verantwortung ziehen". LEONE [= LEO HERZ], "Ein Wort der Wahrheit über die boshaft hämische Korrespondenz im *Frankfurter Conversationsblatt* vom 22. November 1843, Donizettis *Dom Sébastien* betreffend", *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*, 284 (28 November 1843), p. 1236.

The argument that because his move to Vienna Donizetti had lost his ability to compose is vehemently rejected in the guise of apparent indifference. When Herz points out that Donizetti was Italian and Austrian, and that the Emperor of Austria was also the King of Lombardy, he was not appealing to his readers' cosmopolitanism, but sought to underline the Empire's rightful possession of Lombardy. Although Donizetti was not Viennese, his role in Vienna corresponded to an almost natural position, precisely because it symbolised Vienna's imperial ambition, reflected in the composer's double subjecthood as an Austrian and as an Italian. At the same time, of course, Herz took issue with Börnstein's polemic against Donizetti's titles in general, the purpose of which was to denigrate the composer as a pawn of the court, alienated from any creativity of his own.

Börnstein, for his part, mocked Leone's (Leo Herz's) background:

Leone! *Ex ungue leonem*. Not: head director of the k. k. Hoftheater nächst dem Kärnthnerthore *in partibus infidelium*, not: real privileged reviewer of the k. k. Kärnthnerthorhoftheater,—not real comital—nothing of all that, but merely quite modest: Leone.⁴⁶

Börnstein also points to the fact that his differences with Herz date back to the times when they attended school together, pointing to Herz's own diligence and contrasting it with himself as a “*mauvais sujet*”. Behind this stands his view that Herz had always been on the side of those in power.

After a lengthy attempt to remove the factual basis for Herz's rebuttal of *Dom Sébastien*, Börnstein continues: “You could have spared yourself the patriotic allusions, dear Leone! — firstly, they look very well made, and secondly, nobody has questioned or attacked either your or Mr Donizetti's patriotic merits — here we were only talking about *Dom Sebastian*”.⁴⁷ This was obviously untrue, but it was in line with Börnstein's tactic of only hinting at the political content or allowing it to appear in the background of seemingly harmless remarks.

46. “Leone! *Ex ungue leonem*. Nicht: Ober-Regisseur des k. k. Hoftheaters nächst dem Kärnthnerthore *in partibus infidelium*, nicht: wirklicher privilegirter Rezensent des k. k. Kärnthnerthorhoftheaters, – nicht wirklicher gräflicher – nichts von allem dem, sondern bloß ganz bescheiden: Leone”. W. v. B. [= HEINRICH BÖRNSTEIN], “Aus Paris (14. Dezember.) – An Leone in Wien”, *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt*, 350 (20 December 1843), p. 1400. (The allusion to “gräflicher” [comital] seems to refer to Herz's courtly connections, although in light of current knowledge this cannot be confirmed.)

47. “Die patriotischen Anspielungen, lieber Leone! hättest Du Dir ersparen können; – erstens: sehen sie sehr gemacht aus, und zweitens hat ja Niemand weder Deine, noch Herrn Donizetti's patriotische Verdienste in Frage gestellt, oder angegriffen – hier war nur vom *Dom Sebastian* die Rede”.

Herz's reaction to Börnstein's comment on Donizetti's courtly position was similarly strong when, in April 1845, the *Berliner musikalische Zeitung* and the Leipzig *Signale für die musikalische Welt* spread the rumour that Donizetti had been invited to conduct his *Dom Sébastien* at the Berlin Court Opera and was to succeed Meyerbeer as Prussian *Hofcapellmeister*. The way this news was reported was an insult to Vienna, for the *Berliner musikalische Zeitung* explained in detail that with Spontini, Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer great composers had been (or would be) lost in Berlin, because they had not received the necessary support. It seems, added the journal, as if great musicians could not assert themselves here or did not do well, as if Berlin were the promised land of composers and musicians of second rank, of noble mediocrity. It then indignantly reported that Donizetti was to be Meyerbeer's successor:

If that were true, Mr Donizetti would by no means be swaying on lilies in Berlin, for the Prussian government does not issue new censorship instructions for his sake, as the Austrian does. We have proved often enough that we know how to appreciate Donizetti's talent, we have not made him a heretic out of a narrow-minded patriotic prejudice or envy of his successes, but to grant him such a position on our stage would be to open the door to the ruin of German opera.⁴⁸

With his wealth, Donizetti could live much better as a private citizen than in an official position. "He should lighten his office, leaving the rehearsals of the operas to others, supervising them only, and directing the development of our operatic stage only as a commanding general".⁴⁹

From the Viennese point of view, the article was clearly offensive, and so it was inevitable that Leo Herz (signing again as L[eone]) responded vehemently and more or less officially in the *Illustrierte Theaterzeitung* on 14 May 1845—the successor to the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*,⁵⁰ which at the time was published by the Habsburg loyalist Bäuerle:

Donizetti never dreamed or wished to come to Berlin, or to become Meyerbeer's successor, nor does he know that he is to conduct his *Dom Sebastian* there. Doni-

48. "Wenn das wahr wäre, so würde Hr. Donizetti keinesweges in Berlin auf Lilien sich wiegen, denn ihm zur Liebe erlässt die preussische Regierung keine neuen Censurinstructionen, wie die österreichische. Wir haben oft genug bewiesen, dass wir Donizetti's Talent zu würdigen wissen, wir haben ihn nicht nach einem engherzigen patriotischen Vorurtheile oder aus Neid über seine Erfolge verketzert, aber ihm eine solche Stellung bei unserer Bühne einräumen, hiesse dem Verderben der deutschen Oper das Thor öffnen".

49. "Er erleichtere sich sein Amt, überlasse das Einstudiren der Opern Andern, überwache dies nur und leite die Entwicklung unserer Opernbühne nur als kommandirender General". "Nachrichten. Berlin", *Berliner musikalische Zeitung*, 14 (5 April 1845).

50. The journal often changed its name for reasons not to be discussed here.

zetti, who occupies such an excellent position as *Kammercapellmeister*⁵¹ and *Hofcompositeur* to His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, and who accompanies such an honourable court charge to his monarch, should long for Berlin and trade it for Vienna, where he enjoys himself so much and lives so pleasantly! — No, dear *Musikzeitung*, he has just as little desire for this as he has for the opera sceptre in general, since he has no contact whatsoever with the opera theatre in his position as *k. k. Kammercapellmeister* and *Hofcompositeur*, and does not even take or want to take direct part in the Italian opera season in Vienna.⁵²

In other words, Donizetti already had an office in Vienna as “commanding general”, he was not concerned with the Court Opera and its day-to-day business, but had a prominent position as “honourable court charge” to “his” and not just any monarch. It is very clear here that Donizetti was to play a role at the Viennese court and in Viennese politics, similar to Meyerbeer’s position in Berlin. In Herz’s article, the *composer* Donizetti was mentioned only at the end, and then only indirectly: “We must be surprised, however, that a journal in Berlin should take such a role—in protecting German art”.

The German wording of Donizetti’s official denial is known only indirectly through a summary of the letter in the *Wiener allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*. Its wording suggests that it was Herz who wrote this denial for his friend Donizetti.⁵³ Herz / Leone chose a more polite wording in the official version, but the textual similarities to the article that appeared in the *Wiener allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, which quotes Donizetti’s letter, are striking enough:

51. It is significant that Herz uses the term *Kammercapellmeister* here—as the official mouthpiece of the court, so to speak.

52. “*Donizetti* hat nie geträumt noch gewünscht, nach Berlin zu kommen oder Meyerbeers Nachfolger zu werden, und weis auch nichts davon, daß er seinen *Dom Sebastian* dort dirigieren soll. Donizetti, der als Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur Sr. Majestät des Kaisers von Oesterreich eine so ausgezeichnete Stellung einnimmt, und eine so ehrenvolle Hofcharge bei seinem Monarchen begleitet [*sic*], soll sich nach Berlin sehnen und Wien, woselbst er sich so gefällt und so höchst angenehm lebt, mit Berlin vertauschen!? – Nein, liebe Musikzeitung, dazu hat er wahrlich ebensowenig Lust, als es ihn überhaupt nach dem Opernscepter gelüstet, da er vielmehr in seiner Anstellung als k. k. Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur mit dem Operntheater in gar keiner Berührung steht, ja nicht einmal an der italienischen Opersaison in Wien direct Antheil nimmt oder nehmen will”. L[EONE], “(Donizetti als Schreckensfantom der Berliner Musikzeitung)”, *Illustrierte Theaterzeitung*, 115 (14 May 1845), p. 464.

53. German version indirectly reproduced in “Berichtigung”, *Wiener allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, 55 (8 May 1845), p. 220. This version was quoted in “Wien”, *Berliner musikalische Zeitung*, 22 (31 May 1845), no pagination, last page of the issue. Italian version letter “Al Sig. Smith, Redattore della Gazzetta Musicale” in ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 633, p. 808. See also the letter to Tommaso Persico, *ibid.*, no. 636, pp. 810–811.

As far as the latter is concerned, Donizetti never received an invitation to stage his new opera *Dom Sebastian* in Berlin, but with regard to the former, the esteemed maestro declares that in his position as Hof-Compositeur und Kammer-Kapellmeister to H.M. the Emperor of Austria, it does not seem desirable to him to apply for a position of this kind elsewhere.⁵⁴

An Italian version of the letter was sent to the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* by Donizetti himself, but was not published. The translated Italian version reads: “For the latter matter I had no invitation, and as for the former, it even could not have been considered, as the position I have the honour of occupying with H. M. the Emperor and King would not allow me to take on any other commitments of such a nature”.⁵⁵

It is noteworthy that the word “King” (namely: of Lombardy) is added here, which corresponds exactly to the argumentation in Herz’s text, quoted above, and was important to Donizetti’s position in Italy. What is more, the concluding sentence shows a sense of irony that was not unusual for Herz but not characteristic of Donizetti: “Also, [...] a country that counts men like Spontini, Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn among its own should hardly feel the need for other composers”.⁵⁶ In 1845, none of these composers played an international role comparable to that of Donizetti in the number of stage performances. Spontini had gone out of fashion, Meyerbeer had not composed an internationally successful work since *Les Huguenots* (1836) and Mendelssohn enjoyed recognition in Germany and Britain only.

The *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* reported in November 1845 on the Prussian composer Meyerbeer’s attempted resignation as *Generalmusikdirektor* (which had been rejected by the Prussian king).⁵⁷ However, there were no reports in May 1845 about the Italian (or rather Lombard) composer Donizetti’s denial and his wish to retain his position at the imperial court in Vienna. Traditionally, Italian music critics stayed out of political disputes. In this re-

54. “Was das letztere anbelangt, so hat Donizetti nie eine Einladung, seine neue Oper *Dom Sebastian* in Berlin in Scene zu setzen, erhalten, in Bezug auf das erstere jedoch erklärt der geschätzte Maestro, daß es ihm in seiner Stellung als Hof-Compositeur und Kammer-Kapellmeister S. M. des Kaisers von Oesterreich nicht wünschenswerth erscheine, sich um eine anderwärtige Anstellung der Art zu bewerben”. “Berichtigung”, p. 220.

55. “Per quest’ultimo oggetto non ebbi alcun invito, e circa il primo non ne ha potuto essere questione, giacché il posto che ho l’onore di occupare presso S. M. l’Imperatore e Re non mi permetterebbe d’assumere altri impegni di tal natura”.

56. “Auch dürfte wohl, nach seiner Aeußerung, ein Land, das Männer wie Spontini, Meyerbeer und Mendelssohn zu den Seinen zählt, kaum ein Bedürfniß nach andern Componisten fühlen”. / “E d’altronde in un paese dove trovansi riuniti Spontini, Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn [*sic*] è troppo a dovizia fornito per abbisognare d’altro”.

57. “Notizie”, *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 47 (23 November 1845), p. 200.

spect, the refusal to print Donizetti's letter of denial is an indication that his role at the Viennese court was understood as more than a mere honorary post, that it was seen as a political position. It almost looks like an editorial accident that Donizetti's Austrian court title was mentioned in the newspaper, even if only once in the whole year of 1845.⁵⁸

58. Nine lines of a report on a court concert at Schönbrunn that was, so to speak, politically conflict-free and limited to the facts, and in this context Donizetti's court title was mentioned: "The chamber chapel master and court composer Mr Gaetano Donizetti accompanied the singing pieces on the piano". "Il maestro di cappella di camera e compositore di corte signor Gaetano Donizetti accompagnò al pianoforte i pezzi di canto". "Altre cose", *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 25 (22 June 1845), p. 108.

Abstract

Throughout the 1830s, Donizetti pursued plans to progress his career in Paris. Vienna played only a secondary role in his considerations, offering him less favourable conditions. When in 1842 he received a contract from the Vienna Court Opera, observers quickly recognised political potential behind the offer. Donizetti's main supporter in Vienna was Leo Herz, a leading Viennese music journalist, known to be loyal to the emperor and to Metternich. Donizetti's new role in Vienna was meant to mirror Meyerbeer's role in Berlin. In the ensuing debates, Herz pointed out that Donizetti was both Italian and Austrian, a native from the Austrian Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. When rumours began to circulate that Donizetti considered the option of succeeding Meyerbeer in Berlin, Herz vehemently refuted these reports. According to Herz, Donizetti held such a prestigious position at the Viennese court that any consideration of moving to Berlin was out of question.