

Staging Theater to Realize a Nation: The Development of German National Theater in the 18<sup>th</sup>  
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**Abstract**

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This dissertation examines the invention and promotion of German national theater in Prussia, Austria, and the German states of the Holy Roman Empire between 1767 and 1797 to demonstrate how theatrical performance and rituals of theater-going were integral to the formation of German national identity and the burgeoning desire to constitute a German nation-state. I present four case studies that examine the guiding principles and repertoires of three German national theaters: The Hamburg National Theater, the Court and National Theater of Vienna, and the Mannheim National Theater. I also analyze discursive material such as journals, play texts, and correspondence to interrogate how these national institutions served the political aspirations of a diverse population of bourgeois critics, theater practitioners, and German princes. My findings suggest that each theater promoted a different geopolitical configuration of an imagined German nation-state, challenging scholars' assertions that these theaters represented an apolitical cultural project. This dissertation demonstrates that German national theaters not only reflected, but also promoted a "future Germany" that espoused the principles of both republicanism and autocracy, a tension that influenced the politics of unification in the

nineteenth century. The German national theater movement of the eighteenth century also offers a critical starting point for studies of imperial nationalism in German performance.

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## Introduction

The peculiar constitution of the German Reich will always make a universal national theater impossible, so long as what one calls “theater” in Vienna is never recognized as such in Berlin. History describes many failed aspirations to a universal stage.

Anonymous, *Pocketbook for Actors and Actor Enthusiasts*, 1779.<sup>1</sup>

His vocation to the theater was now clear to him . . . and in his comfortable prudence he beheld in himself the embryo of a great actor; the future founder of that national theater, for which he heard so much and various sighing on every side. All that till now had slumbered in the most secret corners of his soul at length awoke.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 1795.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1767 and 1797, more than ten German national theaters were founded in the German-speaking states of Europe, which included Prussia, Austria and the German *Reich*, an empire comprising more than two hundred independent states.<sup>3</sup> The more widely known German national theaters include the Hamburg National Theater (est. 1767), the Court and National Theater of Vienna (est. 1776), the Mannheim National Theater (est. 1777), and the Royal National Theater of Berlin (est. 1786), but the list can be extended much further. It includes theaters in the cities of Munich (est. 1778), Stuttgart (est. 1779), Mainz (est. 1789), Brno (est. 1790), and Augsburg (est. 1795). In the year 1797, Altona, Brunswick, Frankfurt, Graz,

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<sup>1</sup> “Die sonderbare Verfassung des deutschen Reichs wird ein allgemeines Nationaltheater auf immer unmöglich machen, indem man das, was man zu Wien so nennt, nie zu Berlin dafür erkennen wird. Die Geschichte beschreibt manche misslungenen Träume von allgemeinen Bühnen.” From *Taschenbuch für Schauspieler und Schauspielliebhaber* (Offenbach: Weiß 1779. S9f.) qtd. in Wolfgang F. Bender, Siegfried Bushuven, and Michael Huesmann, *Theaterperiodika des 18. Jahrhunderts. Teil 1. Band 1* (München: K.G. Saur Verlag, 1994), xii.

<sup>2</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, trans. Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, Kindle edition (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1885), chap. 9.

<sup>3</sup> The term *Reich* in the eighteenth century referred to the *Heilige Römische Reich Deutscher Nation* (the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation). Historians refer to the area both as the German Empire and the Holy Roman Empire.

Innsbruck, and Prague also advertised a German national theater to their patrons.<sup>4</sup> These theaters, which dotted the geography of a fragmented sovereign landscape, mapped the currency of a dream to politically unify the German nation. As Goethe suggests in the opening epigraph, this dream elicited sighs because it felt so unattainable; and yet, despite insurmountable odds, the German people built one national theater after another, hoping to create a new form of national identity. These theaters, I will argue, served as spaces to rehearse the political unification of Germany even as real political circumstance made the dream untenable.

Because the German people never rallied behind the cause of nation to topple their two-hundred or so respective governments, scholars have argued that the national theater movement was a failure. Three explanations sustain this historiography. In *History of Theater*, Oscar Brockett and Franklin Hildy intimate that German national theaters were replaced by state theaters, perpetuating a decentralized theatrical culture of strong regional, rather than national, companies. In S.E. Wilmer's anthology *Writing and Rewriting National Theater Histories*, Erika Fischer-Lichte suggests that a bourgeois conception of German national theater "degenerated into provincial 'court and national theater.'" And finally, scholars such as Nadine Holdsworth and Michael Sosulski, emphasize that German national theater was an apolitical cultural invention.<sup>5</sup>

All of these explanations, however, discount the material presence of national theaters that decorated the wings of palaces and lined public streets. In cities across a variegated

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<sup>4</sup> The founding years of these theaters have been documented in Michael J. Sosulski, *Theater and Nation in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 16.

<sup>5</sup> Oscar Brockett and Franklin Hildy, *History of Theater* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 277. Erika Fischer-Lichte suggests that German national theater lost its authenticity after the dissolution of the Hamburg enterprise; see "Some Critical Remarks on Theater Historiography," *Writing and Rewriting National Theater Histories*, ed. S.E. Wilmer (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2004), 11. Holdsworth and Sosulski espouse the most pervasive explanation in histories of German national theater. See Nadine Holdsworth's *Theater and Nation* (London: Palgrave, 2010), 30, and Sosulski, *Theater and Nation in Germany*, 10.

geopolitical landscape, the German people constructed buildings (and published countless treatises) to express their desire for a new unified political identity. The German national theaters of the eighteenth century do not represent a failed endeavor; in fact, these theaters imaginatively constituted an alternative geopolitical order within a landscape defined by tiny states and vast empires. These theaters also fostered a tension between republican and imperial ideals that lasted well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the chapters that follow, I present four case studies that focus on three German state capitals – Hamburg, Vienna, and Mannheim – to reveal how the German national theater movement created enduring dreams of German nationhood.

### **On Nations and Sovereignty**

Before the eighteenth century, the people of *Deutschland*, more commonly known in English-speaking countries as Germany, lived divided in a land chiefly governed by princes. A history of imperial conquest and feudal land deals facilitated the development of a shared common language, but this linguistic bond had no political grounding. As Nicholas Vazsonyi has argued:

Whereas references to “Germans,” “the German people(s)” even a “German nation” – as opposed to specific tribes or regions – abound in premodern literature such references cannot be understood in terms of the modern state where the inhabitants are connected by uniform language, laws, customs, economy, and political structure: the combination of cultural “nation” and political “state.”<sup>6</sup>

Here, Vazsonyi refers to the evolution of denotative meaning, which is critical to several facets of this study. We must begin by acknowledging how authors employed the term *nation* (and all of its linguistic iterations) in European discourse prior to the flourishing circulation of political texts at the end of the eighteenth century. Before that time, the term *nation*, which derives

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Vazsonyi, “Montesquieu, Friedrich Carl von Moser, and the “National Spirit Debate.” *German Studies Review* 22, no. 2 (1999): 228.

etymologically from the Latin verb *nasci* (to be born), denoted the unity of a people as separate from the governing powers of a *state*, a territory with a governing construct that exerts sovereign authority.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the German nation, as a unified body of the German people, existed solely within the province of imagination.<sup>8</sup>

European nations were not considered inherently sovereign. They were endowed with sovereignty.<sup>9</sup> For example, the French King Louis XIV once brazenly announced, “In France, the nation is not a separate body but resides entirely in the person of the King.” With this declaration, he fortified his authority over the French nation and the French state.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, the German nation, as I’ve already suggested, had no singular defining government like that of France. At that time, Germany existed as a nation of states, varied in size, and governed in a variety of ways. The largest states were the kingdom of Prussia and the archduchy of Austria. The smaller states of the German Empire included *Reichstädte* (free imperial cities) with

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<sup>7</sup> The connection between nation and nativity is central to Giorgio Agamben’s chapter on “Biopolitics and the Rights of Man” in his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), 126-135. I define the term *state* in very general terms. Ernest Gellner defines the term *state* as “that agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence.” The state serves as a central governing construct that exerts political authority. See his *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2006), 3. We might also consider the term *state* within a historical context. Michael Oakeshott defines *state* as emerging from the English word for the medieval *estate*. In summation, he describes the term *state* as concerned with political activities – governments, policies, and law. Oakeshott writes, “It is the formal word for a *political* association; and it is distinguished, on that account, from less formal non-political words, such as country.” *Lectures on the History of Political Thought* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2006), 362.

<sup>8</sup> This idea of an imagined political construct serves as the basis of Benedict Anderson’s seminal study *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> There are many theories on the idea of sovereignty. In the interest of simplifying a rather large and complicated history of political theory, I draw from Michael Oakeshott’s work. In his published lecture on the generation of a modern state, Oakeshott defines *sovereignty* as follows. “Sovereignty is the quality recognized in a government 1. when it is recognized as the sole authority in the state to make law; 2. when its authority to make law is believed to be unfettered by any superior authority; 3. and when there is believed to be no law current in the society which this government may not repeal or amend.” Oakeshott, *Political Thought*, 386. For a more nuanced discussion see Part Five of Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage 1990), 135-159. See also Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 15-67.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted. in Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg’s *From the Royal to the Republican Body* (Berkeley: U of California P), 3.

republican or oligarchical legislative bodies, but were largely governed by individual princes, counts, bishops, and knights.

In the mid-eighteenth century, something incredible happened. Across Europe, and by extension North America, philosophers, then ordinary people, began to argue that national origins should serve as a precept for sovereignty. This diffused the right of governance from the body of a singular monarch or prince to that of the people. This paradigmatic shift is articulated by Giorgio Agamben in his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Agamben writes:

The principle of nativity and the principle of sovereignty, which were separated in the *ancien régime* (where birth marked only the emergence of a *sujet*, a subject), are now [in the late eighteenth-century] irrevocably united in the body of the ‘the sovereign subject’ so that the foundation of the new nation-state may be constituted [. . .] The fiction implicit here is that *birth* immediately becomes *nation* such that there can be no interval of separation.<sup>11</sup>

In moving from the realm of the theoretical to the historical, two examples of this sovereign transformation immediately come to mind. When citizens of France claimed their sovereign authority in the *French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (1789), they evoked the nation to supplant their absolutist state. Article three reads, “The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body, nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.”<sup>12</sup> When Americans envisioned themselves as a free nation, they issued a declaration that severed their ties to the English monarch George III and created a new sovereign form of government, the United States. Thomas Jefferson writes in *The Declaration of Independence* (1776), “Whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive . . . it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its

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<sup>11</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 128.

<sup>12</sup> “Declaration of the Rights of Man” *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*. (1789), N. pag. *Yale Law School* (accessed 10 Feb. 2016).

foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”<sup>13</sup> These examples demonstrate that declarations, as a constitutional genre, transformed man the “subject,” into man, the “citizen.”<sup>14</sup>

Our modern understanding of the terms *nation* and *nationalism* can be traced to the enlightened confluence of nation and state. In fact, when Benedict Anderson defines the terms *nation* and *nationalism* in his widely cited study *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, he argues that nations possess sovereignty. He writes, “I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined both inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>15</sup> This explanation neatly conforms to Ernest Gellner’s theory of nationalism. “Nationalism,” Gellner writes, “is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.”<sup>16</sup> My study of German national theater begins before these definitions of nation and nationalism became normalized and accepted. I seek to understand why German national theaters were invented to forward the dream of a German nation-state. More critically, I consider how these national theaters promoted a different political nomenclature than that of other European nations.

John Breuilly observes in *The Formation of the First German Nation State 1800-1871*, that in the Imperial Constitution of 1849, Germans are declared citizens of a German state, but

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<sup>13</sup> “Declaration of Independence,” included in Richard Hofstadter’s *Great Issues in American History: A Documentary Record*, vol 1 (New York: Vintage, 1958) 71.

<sup>14</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 128. I deliberately use the term man. Suffrage and popular sovereignty were, after all, considered the rights of men, not women.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

“nationality is treated as a function, not the basis of citizenship.”<sup>17</sup> Similarly, he adds, in the constitution of the first German nation-state (1871), “there is no definition of citizenship nor any account of what rights Germans as citizens would enjoy in the new *Reich*.”<sup>18</sup> In both instances, it is difficult to untangle nation from the German states, or the empire, and that is precisely the point. In contrast to the third article of the *French Declaration*, which holds that the principle of sovereignty resides in the nation, the German Constitution of 1871 emphasizes that “one common nationality exists,” but that “every person (subject, State citizen)” should be recognized as “belonging to any one of the federated States.”<sup>19</sup> During the nineteenth century, imperial politics beleaguered the formation of a German nation-state, time and time again.<sup>20</sup>

This study of German national theater begins in the mid eighteenth century to elucidate the development of this peculiar form of German national identity. It argues that theater practitioners rehearsed the unification of Germany, but their imaginings of nation, as represented in performance, were not singular. They forwarded a national discourse of sovereign complexity: one that simultaneously championed the sovereign will of the people and the sovereign will of princes.

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<sup>17</sup> John Breuilly, *The Formation of the First German Nation State 1800-1871* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), 100.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Elmer M. Hucko, *The Democratic Tradition: Four German Constitutions* (New York: Berg, 1987), 122.

<sup>20</sup> There were three major efforts to unify a German nation-state in the nineteenth century. Although the reasons for their collapse are manifold, I will do my best to summarize them here. In 1815, after the Congress of Vienna, the German people constituted a German Confederation, which consisted of forty-one states. The leading powers of this union were the “semi-detached” powers of Prussia and Austria, which remained an empire of multi-national territories. The German Revolution of 1848, initiated another round of failed negotiations, wherein the struggle between imperial, monarchical and national ideals could not be resolved. In 1871, the German states unified as part of the Prussian state and so the King of Prussia, Wilhelm II, assumed the title of German Emperor. For a concise history of German national politics, see John Breuilly, *The State of Germany: The National Idea in the Making, Unmaking and Remaking of a Modern Nation-State* (New York: Longman, 1992).

There are two major challenges to reading the theater of this imagined terrain. First, the theater historian must contend with a historiography that has dismissed the political significance of these national institutions. As I noted earlier in the introduction, there is a tendency to view eighteenth-century German national theater as inconsistent in terms of form and ideology and thus innocuous, even though Germany's plight to constitute a federal republic divorced of an autocrat, has been long and troubled. The notion that national theater must be singular or espouse just one tradition is a contentious point in other nations' theater histories as well. For example, in her book, *Theaters of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance in India since 1947*, Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker notes that "the problems of relating such concepts as nation, history, and culture to Indian drama, theater, and performance are evident in the frequency which critics either dismiss the notions of 'Indian theater' and a contemporary 'national tradition' as inherently unsustainable concepts."<sup>21</sup> Dharwadker contests the argument that there is no "'Indian theater' because 'there is no theatrical concept in India'" and similarly tackles the difficulties of analyzing abstract ideas of nation in confluence with concrete examples of regional traditions.<sup>22</sup>

Mary Trotter identifies the complexities of analyzing the theater of an imagined nation in her book *Ireland's National Theaters*. She writes, "Creators of a nation do not exactly identify a community out of which to build their state so much as they imagine one."<sup>23</sup> In the case of Ireland, much like Germany, the theater "provided an important field on which nationalist groups

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<sup>21</sup> Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker, *Theaters of Independence: Drama Theory and Urban Performance in India since 1947* (Iowa City: Iowa P, 2005), 22.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Trotter, *Ireland's National Theaters* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse UP 2001), xi.

– each with its own ideas of what made up Irish nationhood – vied for political legitimacy.<sup>24</sup> The quest to theatrically summon a new nation into being is the constituting force that Loren Kruger has correspondingly defined as *theatrical nationhood* in her book, *The National Stage: Theater and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America*.<sup>25</sup> I am deeply indebted to the work of Kruger, Trotter, and theater historian Odai Johnson, who have skillfully grappled with performances of the political imaginary in their scholarship.<sup>26</sup>

The second challenge of this project has to do with methodology. How does one read a theater that maps the terrain of the imaginary, but at the same time manifests the realities of political and economic strictures? We might take a cue from scholars and cultural critics of the eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> In 1772, the musicologist Charles Burney (1726-1814) embarked on a journey through German lands to ascertain origins of the nation’s musical practices and to hear Germans “play and sing *national music*.”<sup>28</sup> His study brought him to the affluent courts of Munich, Vienna, and Berlin, but also to several free imperial cities of the German Empire such as Leipzig and Hamburg. Hence, his examination of national music provides a wide lens view of the diverse qualities of eighteenth-century German culture. In the northern expanse of Germany, for example, he observed that residents were predominantly Protestant and their musical

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., xi and xiv.

<sup>25</sup> Kruger notes, however, that this concept only manifests fully in the nineteenth century “with the rise of mass national politics.” Loren Kruger, *The National Stage: Theater and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992), 3.

<sup>26</sup> See especially Odai Johnson, *Rehearsing the Revolution* (Newark DE: U of Delaware P, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> Some notable examples include Charles Burney’s *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands and United Provinces or The Journal of a Tour through those Countries, undertaken to collect Materials for a General History of Music* (1775). See also the following: Joseph Marshall’s *Travels Through Holland: Flanders, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Lapland, Russia, the Ukraine, and Poland, in the Years 1768, 1769, and 1770* (1773); Johann Kaspar Riesbeck’s *Travels Through Germany* (1787); and the Count of Mirabeau’s *Memoirs of the Courts of Berlin and St. Petersburg* (1786-1791).

<sup>28</sup> Charles Burney, *Dr. Burney’s Musical Tours in Europe Volume II: An Eighteenth-Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands*, ed. Percy A. Scholes (London: Oxford UP, 1959), 40.

presentation reflected the sensibility of their faith, whereas in the southern part of the Empire and within the country of Austria, the ceremony and pomp of the Catholic religion could not be separated from artistic experience. Burney also spoke at length about what he saw at the various courts and compared the presentation of spectacles there to the folk entertainments typical of cities without a governing prince. The breadth of his experiences was so vast that in reading his journals it is difficult to determine any singular expression of national music. He invited readers to experience all of the cultural vicissitudes of the German people as he did. Burney's scholarly reading of eighteenth-century German culture has inspired the structure of this dissertation.

I have also drawn upon the theoretical work of Ric Knowles in crafting my methodology. Knowles's book *Reading the Material Theater* argues for a methodological approach to reading theatrical production that incorporates investigative practices of cultural materialism, theater semiotics, and reception theory in the field of cultural studies. The case studies in this dissertation exemplify the locality of meaning that Knowles discusses in his book's concluding remarks. He writes, "Theatrical productions take place in history and, *as* cultural productions, are inextricably connected to the material, historical, and cultural contexts from which they emerge and to which they speak. Productions mean differently in different geographical, architectural, historical and cultural contexts."<sup>29</sup>

In the chapters that follow, I investigate the guiding principles and institutional structures of three physical theaters in three different German states: the Hamburg National Theater (est. 1767), the Court and National Theater of Vienna (est. 1776), and the Mannheim National Theater (est. 1777). I have chosen these theaters as my sites of inquiry because they represent the pioneering efforts of the movement to rehearse a new vision of nation. These cities also represent

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<sup>29</sup> Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theater* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2004), 202.

different configurations of state power; a factor that greatly influenced how theater artists practiced their craft.

## Review of the Literature

Erika Fischer-Lichte suggests, in her essay for the anthology *Writing and Rewriting National Theater Histories*, that theater historians responded to an upsurge of nationalist sentiment around 1990 by writing national theater histories. “Thus,” she writes, “the question of how to write a national theater history became urgent, in many European countries, but not in Germany . . . such an enterprise, inevitably, would raise questions about geography and nationality that can hardly be answered.”<sup>30</sup> Her curt dismissal of the idea explains the paltry number of German theater histories that investigate eighteenth-century German national theater.<sup>31</sup> There is even less scholarship on the subject published in English. Michael J. Sosulski’s *Theater and Nation in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (2007) is the only English-language book that examines the history of the movement. Sosulski’s work summarizes some of the goals of German national theater proponents and provides an overview of scholarship on German national identity and nationalism, but skirts the task of bridging a connection between the two. Ultimately, he posits that proponents of German national theater were likely to have imagined a nation like that defined by Benedict Anderson, but emphasizes that “it was by no

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<sup>30</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, “Some Critical Remarks on Theater Historiography,” *Writing and Rewriting National Theater Histories*, ed. S.E. Wilmer (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2004), 12.

<sup>31</sup> The most widely-cited German study is Peter Höyng’s *Die Sterne, Die Zensur und das Vaterland: Geschichte und Theater im späten 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Böhlau, 2003). Höyng’s book is a series of essays that address Friedrich Schiller’s politics, as well as court censorship, the discursive idea of the Fatherland, and other topics. See also several essays in Bauer and Werthmeier’s *Das Ende des Stegreifspiels, die Geburt des Nationaltheaters. Ein Wendepunkt in der Geschichte des Europäischen Dramas* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1983). A good study of German national theater published in French is Roland Krebs, *L’Idée de Théâtre National dans L’Allemagne des Lumières* (Wiesbaden: Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, 1985).

means a body that laid claims to *political* sovereignty.”<sup>32</sup> In this dissertation, I expand upon Sosulski’s analysis to probe the political exigencies of these institutions.

A small number of books examine the national theaters of Hamburg and Mannheim, although only in relation to the biographies of influential figures. The most comprehensive study of the Hamburg National Theater, for example, is J.G. Robertson’s *Lessing’s Dramatic Theory* (1939).<sup>33</sup> Robertson’s book includes documentary material such as the Hamburg National Theater’s repertory records and even a summary of the theater’s operational structure, but doesn’t analyze the political significance of the institution. Robertson devotes several chapters to Lessing’s critical theories. In 2007, Lesley Sharpe published *A National Repertoire: Schiller, Iffland and the German Stage*, which briefly surveys the institutional founding of the Mannheim National Theater.<sup>34</sup> Early on though, Sharpe alters the focus of the work. The book aims to place the biographies of Friedrich Schiller and August Wilhelm Iffland in greater cultural context.

There are a few studies on eighteenth-century Austrian theater published in English. The most frequently cited history focuses entirely on the theater of Vienna. *Theater in Vienna: A Critical History, 1776-1995* (1996) by W.E. Yates offers an overview of theatrical trends in the city, and a brief analysis of the critical debates that informed the founding of the city’s Court and National Theater.<sup>35</sup> Yates offers an analysis of discourse, but does not investigate the institutional structure of the theater in great depth. Moreover, the study is relegated generally to the history of Viennese theater to the exclusion of musical works, such as opera and ballet, which dominated Vienna’s stages throughout the eighteenth century.

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<sup>32</sup> Sosulski, *Theater and Nation in Germany*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> John G. Robertson, *Lessing’s Dramatic Theory: Being an Introduction to & Commentary on His Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1939).

<sup>34</sup> Lesley Sharpe, *A National Repertoire: Schiller, Iffland and the German Stage* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> W.E. Yates, *Theater in Vienna: A Critical History, 1776-1995* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996).

## Organizational Overview

As Fischer-Lichte has observed, the historian attempting a history of German national theater must contend with the daunting task of demarcating linguistic borders and defining the limits of theatrical genres while dealing with the cumbersome definitions of nation, national identity, and nationalism. Nevertheless, these historiographical and theoretical challenges should not warrant the dismissal of a critical facet of Germany's sociopolitical and cultural history. I begin this dissertation by emphasizing that Benedict Anderson's theories of nation and nation-building offers just one lens for exploring German national theater. For example, in *Imagined Communities*, Anderson suggests that imagined nations of eighteenth-century Europe found a mass audience through novels and newspapers "for these forms provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation."<sup>36</sup> This analysis does not hold true for Germany. In print discourse, Germans, in fact, acknowledged the cultural divisions that drove their nation apart. For this reason, I examine the permutations of the national theater discourse, as opposed to tracing one definition or conception of the German term *Nationaltheater*.

In keeping with this idea, I have organized the case studies for this dissertation by geography. I aim to tell the story of a movement that gestured toward a unified German nation-state from a variety of regional perspectives. Each chapter investigates the establishment of one German national theater, in one city, and considers the sociopolitical forces that influenced its creation. This approach elucidates how the Hamburg National Theater represented the German nation as a republic in contrast to the imperial construct of nation promoted in Vienna's Court and National Theater. The early years of the Mannheim National Theater convey an alternative

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<sup>36</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25.

picture of German national theater. There, German national identity was conspicuously tied to the governing authority of a German prince. These case studies show that the dream of nationhood took many sovereign forms and not every German imagined the formation of a democratized nation-state.

In chapter one, which I have titled “Rehearsing the Virtues of a Republican Nation,” I examine how the dream of democratized sovereignty manifested on the stage of the Hamburg National Theater (est. 1767). I first offer a textual analysis of writings by the theater’s founder Johann Friedrich Löwen and then look closely at the institution’s inaugural evening of performances. In 1765, Löwen published *Geschichte des Deutschen Theaters (History of German Theater)*, which chronicled the history of German acting, and probed the utility of the theater within his own time: a time in which, Löwen argued, the true character of the German nation was still wanting to reveal itself.<sup>37</sup> I suggest that when Löwen opened the Hamburg National Theater two years later, he showcased a repertoire of plays that taught the virtues of bourgeois republicanism, a form of national character that countered the largely monarchical identity of the German Empire. In essence, Löwen evoked a form of popular sovereignty to imaginatively supplant the states that divided his German nation.

In my second chapter, “Dreaming of a National Stage,” I examine how residents of Vienna debated the merits of bringing a German national theater to the Austrian capital of the Holy Roman Empire. I forgo an evaluation of Vienna’s Court and National Theater, founded by the Emperor Joseph II in 1776, until chapter three, to consider the national dreams of Joseph’s non-aristocratic subjects. I investigate printed ephemera by several of Vienna’s public figures, to argue that bids for a German national theater in Vienna articulated the political exigencies of

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<sup>37</sup> Johann Friedrich Löwen, *Johann Friedrich Löwens Geschichte des Deutschen Theaters (1766) und Flugschriften Über das Hamburger National-Theater (1766 Und 1767)*, ed. Heinrich Stümcke (Berlin: E. Frensdorff, 1905).

genre. In envisioning a new kind of German theater, Viennese subjects had to negotiate the theatrical customs that already defined their city, such as the Viennese harlequinade, and the desire for a dramatic genre that promoted the values of their class.

In chapter three, “Rehearsing an Imperial Nation,” I examine the Austrian emperor Joseph II’s institutionalization of Vienna’s ‘Court and National Theater.’ In 1778, Joseph supported artists of both German theater and German opera. I discuss how theater practitioners and composers fashioned a repertoire of material that represented German national identity within an Austrian imperial context. One facet of the investigation draws upon work and correspondence by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who frequently collaborated with Viennese actors and playwrights to reify the imagining of an imperial German nation.

In chapter four, “Rehearsing a Princely Nation,” I first examine the socioeconomic dimensions of Mannheim to elucidate how theatrical practices cemented the absolute authority of the petty German prince Karl Theodor. Early in the 1770s, the prince of Mannheim recognized that aligning himself with the German people’s many imaginings of nation was a political necessity. In turn, he not only institutionalized the German arts in his court capital, but also mandated the construction of a brand new theater, dedicated to the dream of his nation. Scholars of theater history tend to focus on the repertoire of the Mannheim National Theater in the 1780s, a period that marked the arrival of Friedrich Schiller.<sup>38</sup> I examine the Mannheim National Theater as an instrument of princely absolutism. At the conclusion of this chapter, I briefly investigate the theater’s opening production in 1777. This production, I argue, placed emphasis on German pride and the continuous progress of Germany under the aegis of a German prince. It

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<sup>38</sup> This is substantiated by Lezlie Shape in the aforementioned book, *A National Repertoire: Schiller, Iffland and the German Stage*, and in numerous studies devoted to the authorial interests of Schiller.

demonstrated how the prince of Mannheim crowned himself ruler of an imagined German nation.

During the eighteenth century, the term *nation* took on new meaning across Europe. It became a precept for sovereign identity. Because of this paradigm shift, we often associate the idea of nation with popular sovereignty. While the founder of the first German national theater Johann Friedrich Löwen might have dreamed that Germany might one day represent the will of the people, he understood the difficulty of severing ties to a history of imperialism and feudal law. As national theaters sprouted up across the German territories, they championed alternative visions of nation and national identity. These theaters manifested a sovereign paradox. The German national theater movement failed to advance a singular imagining of nation, but it shaped the culture of imagining the sovereignty of German nationhood.

### **A Note About Translations**

In instances where a German work has already been translated into English, I use the published English translation. For those works published solely in German, I offer my own translations and summaries of the text. These are quoted in the body of the dissertation and the original German is transcribed in the footnotes. In instances where I cite large blocks of text, the original German is placed beneath the quotations.

## Prologue

### On the Bodies of Kings and Nations

In the eighteenth century, before Europeans began to envision themselves as citizens of free and egalitarian nations, they understood themselves to be subjects of principalities, kingdoms, and empires. For more than fifty years, scholars have therefore turned to Ernst Kantorowicz's study of medieval political theology *The King's Two Bodies* (1957) to understand how representational traditions of kingship normalized the fiction of divine autocracy in Europe.<sup>39</sup> In his book, Kantorowicz argues that jurists of medieval England and France believed a king had two bodies, a natural body, which was subject to the infirmities of the flesh, and a political body, which radiated his divine right to rule. Quoting from the sixteenth-century case of English law *Willion v. Berkley*, Kantorowicz illuminates this dynamic as it applied to sovereign succession.

The King has two Capacities, for he has two Bodies, the one whereof is a Body natural, consisting of natural Members as every other Man has, and in this he is subject to Passions and Death as other Men are; the other is a Body politic, and the Members thereof are his Subjects . . . he has the sole Government of them; and this Body is not subject to Passions as the other is, nor to Death, for as to this Body the king never dies.<sup>40</sup>

The “demise” of the “Body natural” motivates the transference of the “Body politic” to that of another body who will govern with the sacred authority of his forbearers. English funerary rituals marked this transference with the presentation of the king's natural body, enshrined within his casket and no longer visible, as well as the king's artificial body, an effigy decorated with the

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<sup>39</sup> Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

emblems of sovereignty such as the scepter and orb.<sup>41</sup> Although the natural body of the king lay still, his spiritual body of governance was vivified in his sovereign effigy. The departure of one king's life ushered in the birth of another, an irrevocable cycle of power that prevented subjects from imagining an alternative form of government.

In visualizing Kantorowicz's description of the king's two bodies in funerary ceremonial we might also consider a third body, the artist, absented from the *mise en scène*, yet still essential to its order. Rhetorical justifications might have strengthened a sovereign's legal authority, but the artistry of corporeal awe secured the fiction of divine kingship. Across Europe, artists such as painters, architects, scenographers, composers, choreographers, and actors all labored to substantiate the political authority of their respective sovereigns. In public processions and coronations, they affixed his natural body within the representational armature of the state. Up through the seventeenth century, inside of court theaters during the course of an opera or ballet, they might also present an effigy of their prince between renderings of his ancestors and antique heroes. This tradition made the communion of the sovereign's natural body, as seated in the audience, and the body politic, as represented on stage, wholly explicit.<sup>42</sup> It was also not uncommon for a king to participate directly in the theatrical mythmaking. For instance, in printed material and performative acts artists presented Louis XIV (1638-1715) as the sun king; a myth he authenticated by dancing before his court in the costume of Apollo "with gilded braids of hair

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>42</sup> This practice has yet to be fully investigated by scholars. Still, one can see examples of this technique in spectacles commissioned for the Habsburg Emperor Leopold I (1640-1705). Leopold's artists frequently presented effigies of the emperor and painted his portrait upon scenographic backdrops. See engravings for the opera *Il pomo d'oro* in Robert Arthur Griffin's *High Baroque Culture and Theater in Vienna* (New York: Humanities, 1972). Plate I and XXIII offer excellent examples, 89 and 114. See also an account of the horse ballet *La Contesa dell'Aria e dell'Acqua*, presented in 1667. In one climactic scene, the effigies of Leopold I and his bride Margareta Theresa were wheeled into the performance arena on a "Chariot of Glory." Kristiaan P. Aercke, *Gods of Play: Baroque Festive Performances as Rhetorical Discourse* (Albany: State U of New York P, 1994), 229.

simulating the rays of the sun.”<sup>43</sup> In France, during an age of baroque splendor, no one promulgated the fiction of the king’s two bodies better than Louis XIV.

In the mid-eighteenth century, this myth became increasingly difficult to sustain. As I noted in the introduction, Louis XIV once proclaimed that “in France, the nation is not a separate body but resides entirely in the person of the King.”<sup>44</sup> Yet philosophers of the Enlightenment had begun to disprove this credo. In *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Montesquieu contended that all nations were subject to certain governing principles and that these principles were not imposed upon the people by the state, but emerged organically for and by the people themselves. These principles derived instead from the environmental and constitutional qualities of their land, as well as their customs, manners, and religion, what Montesquieu called *character* or an “*esprit general*.” The philosopher gave credence to the idea that an organic political body might exist before the imposition of a governing ruler.<sup>45</sup> This new paradigm of political philosophy eventually gave cause for the French to see the “Body natural” as separate from the “Body politic.” As Sara E. Mezler and Karthryn Norberg observe, “it is small wonder, then, that the defining gesture of the Jacobin republic would be the beheading of the king.”<sup>46</sup> With the impact of one sharp blade, the nation, which Louis XIV declared to reside in the natural body of the king, was excised from the embodied state of France.

The French people envisaged the body politic as separate from the body of their king in the years leading to the revolution because they saw their nation as separate from their absolutist

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<sup>43</sup> Blanning, 34

<sup>44</sup> As quoted in Melzer and Norberg, *Royal to Republican*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), 8-9.

<sup>46</sup> Melzer and Norberg, *Royal to Republican*, 3.

state. The historian David Bell has argued that the publication of *Essais sur le genie et le caractère des nations* (*Essays on the Genius and Character of Nations*) in 1743 marked a critical turning point in French political thought.<sup>47</sup> The author, a priest and magistrate named François-Ignace d’Espiard de la Borde, contended that “the lordly manner is the manner of the Frenchman and by contrast bourgeois mores are the customs of the citizen . . . But all this has been sacrificed by the spirit of French society.”<sup>48</sup> He further noted that “bourgeois customs are the true customs of republics.”<sup>49</sup> Not long after, in 1748, Montesquieu made a similar, albeit more abstract claim about the relationship between bourgeois custom and the governance of republic nations. Rousseau echoed Montesquieu’s claim in the *Social Contract* (1762).<sup>50</sup>

Simultaneously, the political literature that manifested in the German states examined the relationship between nation and state with less certainty. In his internationally acclaimed treatise *On National Pride* (1758), the Swiss-born philosopher Johann Georg Zimmermann argued that Germans, who kowtowed to the cultures of other nations, lacked a unifying spirit, which he defined as “pride.”<sup>51</sup> The statesman Friedrich Carl von Moser argued that the German nation shared little more than speech and name.<sup>52</sup> The resulting German discourse suggests that while the French galvanized their nation by promoting the virtues of bourgeois republicanism, the Germans remained disjoined, unable to find common ground. German intellectuals expressed a

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<sup>47</sup> David Bell, introduction to *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800*. Kindle edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 5.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 113.

<sup>51</sup> Zimmermann’s essay titled before translation as *Von dem Nationalstolze* was so popular it was published in several editions. The first edition was made available in 1758 and the fourth edition was published in 1768.

<sup>52</sup> Friedrich Carl von Moser, *Von dem Deutschen Nationalgeist* (1766), 3.

desire to understand German *Sittlichkeit* (mores) and a German *Denkungsart* (way of thinking), but recognized that the disparate qualities of their nation represented the qualities and character of numerous princely bodies that governed over the German states.

That is not to say that Germans were incapable of imagining a republican nation like that of their French neighbors. The founder of the Hamburg National Theater, Johann Friedrich Löwen, strove to elevate the societal status of the German dramatic arts and teach the mores of bourgeois republicanism to Germany. Using the stage of the Hamburg National Theater as a political platform, his company of actors reminded citizens of the mercantile city to “uphold their virtue,” the governing principle that would sustain a republic.<sup>53</sup> Throughout the course of their two years of production, the company continued to endorse the values of an independently governed bourgeois society in the local periodical *Hamburgische Unterhaltungen* and in prologues that framed their productions.<sup>54</sup> On opening night of the first season of performances, Löwen’s wife Elisabeth declared Hamburg to emanate the virtues of Athens, a city-state where *the people were the body politic*.

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<sup>53</sup> Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 6.

<sup>54</sup> Transcriptions of these endorsements were poeticized and can be found in Krebs, *L’Idée de Théâtre National*, 631-634.

## Chapter 1: The Hamburg National Theater

### Rehearsing the Virtues of a Republican Nation

In 1766, critic Johann Friedrich Löwen (1727-1771) established the first German national theater in the city of Hamburg. Despite this accomplishment, Löwen is often depicted as a minor figure of the national theater movement. Owing to his talents as a writer and philosopher, Löwen's contemporary, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), is more frequently cited as the true visionary of the institution. Yet Löwen's limited abilities as a critic and theater practitioner should not deter us from taking a close look at his critical writings and dramatic theory. I suggest that Löwen was the first to practice a new model of theater production *because* he was an outsider. In this chapter, I examine how he bridged his knowledge of the law with his love of the stage. His writings show how he used the Hamburg National Theater to imagine the future of Germany as a republic.

To begin I'd like to probe how the idea of "theatrical nationhood" might be used to analyze Löwen's ambitions for the Hamburg National Theater. Loren Kruger argues that "the notion of staging the nation," and "representing as well as reflecting the people" within theaters began during the European Enlightenment.<sup>55</sup> But how did this idea manifest in practice? If we consider the theater as a liminal space that both reflected and modified the customs of a society, we can begin to see how Löwen prompted the citizens of Hamburg to imaginatively summon a new political construct into being.

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<sup>55</sup> Kruger, *The National Stage*, 3.

In his book, *A Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke suggests that we interpret the relations between “law” and “custom” in two ways. He writes that, first, “law” can observably serve as a codification of custom, “which would construct a precept for the future of obedience to the past as already constituted.”<sup>56</sup> Second, he writes, law might be read as “innovative, as a device for the transformation of customs.”<sup>57</sup> These definitions exemplify why Löwen’s *Nachricht* (notice), which announced the Hamburg National Theater’s founding, urgently declared a break with convention to forge a new institutional model of theater-making. He pronounced that his national theater would showcase a form of elevated German character for his ideal imagined citizens to follow. And, following the publication of this announcement, he created a theater to elevate the sociopolitical status of German actors, playwrights, and audiences.<sup>58</sup>

Because Löwen was a bit of an eccentric, with little experience in theatrical management, it is easy to see how the Hamburg National Theater failed to garner an audience. The enterprise dissolved in 1769. But I am not interested in Löwen’s failures. I am interested in how he rehearsed the virtues of a republican nation using the theater as his platform. This chapter examines his desire to nationalize the German stage, grant the German people an authority they did not yet possess, and teach them to be citizens. I analyze Löwen’s early writings to trace the inception and genesis of Germany’s first national theater and I conclude with an account of the Hamburg National Theater’s inaugural evening of productions, an event where a rather lofty ideal finally received concrete expression.

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<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1969), 342.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> As published in George W. Brandt and Wiebe Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater 1600-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 198-200.

## The Story Begins

Johann Friedrich Löwen was born in the small town of Clausthal and studied law in Göttingen, a city made famous for its university founded by the British monarch George II (who was also the Hanoverian Elector).<sup>59</sup> Celebrated for its sciences and liberal politics, the school was a center for Enlightenment thinking, coming perhaps only second to the prestigious university in Leipzig. While a student in Göttingen, Löwen joined a German *Gesellschaft* (German Society), an intellectual forum where noblemen and prestigious members of the bourgeois community met to pursue a reasoned analysis of society. During that time, he became acquainted with Johann Christoph Gottsched's (1700-1766) theories of German social advancement, which were fostered chiefly through reforms in the output of German dramatic literature.<sup>60</sup> He analyzed Gottsched's work and reflected upon the symbiotic relationship forged between theatrical institutions and governing principles. Löwen had no training in the theater but he intuitively felt its necessity and potentiality as an instrument for the improvement of German society. Following the completion of his studies, he pursued a position in London as a diplomatic minister. Finding no success there, he turned instead to his passion for writing and reform. He searched for a cameral position in the German territories. When he arrived in Hamburg in 1751, he found a middle-class metropolis that regularly hosted companies of German actors and formed his first acquaintances in the professional theater.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Löwen's biography can be found in the nineteenth volume of *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie. Neunzehnter Band* (Leipzig, 1884), 312-313.

<sup>60</sup> For more on Löwen's interest in the work of Gottsched see Ossip D. Potkoff, *Johann Friedrich Löwen (1727-1771) mit näherer Berücksichtigung seiner dramaturgischen Tätigkeit* (Heidelberg, 1904).

<sup>61</sup> At the time Hamburg was the third largest German-speaking city, behind Berlin and Vienna.

Löwen's early ties to the theater community were nurtured by the *Prinzipal* (actor/manager) Johann Friedrich Schönemann (1704-1782), whose company performed in the northern territories of what we would call modern-day Germany. The majority of these performances took place in Hamburg and the nearby town of Schwerin where the troupe was recruited to play for the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin with some regularity. In 1752, Löwen began recording his critical observations of Schönemann and his actors; and after earning their trust was permitted to accompany them on tour. He traveled with them to Rostock in 1754 and then back to Schwerin in 1755, assisting with performances celebrating the betrothal of the duke to the Princess Sophie of Sachsen-Coburg-Saalfeld. During his tenure with Schönemann's troupe, Löwen learned the significant issues of the theater profession—both the fundamental concerns of staying afloat as a business and the challenges of presenting a dramatic repertoire of artistic integrity. Schönemann, for example, vied with other German *Prinzipale* to present the very best of the French repertory in German translation and had completely eliminated improvised comedies and *Haupt-und Staatsaktion* (chief-and-state) plays, a theatrical genre that depicted chivalric stories of court life, from his repertoire. Although Schönemann's troupe upheld the dramaturgical standards of the Gottsched-school of playwriting, they worked hard to refine the declamatory acting style that had become associated with Gottsched's translations.

Löwen's relationship with Schönemann brought him closer to his company of actors. He fell in love with Schönemann's daughter, an actress named Elisabeth Lucia Dorothea (1732-1783) and they married in 1757. Löwen also became an associate of the leading actor Konrad Ekhof (1720-1778) and as evidenced in the *Theaterkalendar's* dedicatory poems, the two

developed a mutual admiration for one another.<sup>62</sup> When Ekhof earned the patronage of the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and established an acting academy in 1753, Löwen observed him at work lecturing on the importance of an actor's aptitudes and faculties, what Ekhof enumerated as "reading and writing, a good memory, eagerness to learn [and] an inexhaustible urge to constant self-improvement."<sup>63</sup> Löwen's own treatise on acting entitled *Kurzgefasten Grundsätze von der Beredsamkeit des Leibes (Short Principles on the Eloquence of the Body)* published in 1755 was inspired, in part, by Ekhof's short-lived academy.<sup>64</sup>

When Schönemann's company disbanded in 1757, Löwen and his wife moved to Schwerin. The young critic took a post as private secretary to the duke. During his tenure there, he continued writing criticism and poetry but was disconnected from the theatrical activities of Hamburg. This changed in 1763, when Schönemann's protégé Konrad Ackermann (1712-1771) arrived to establish his company in the city. Ackermann had come to Hamburg with ambitions to stay and so Löwen forged his acquaintance, offering his services as a literary advisor. Soon after, Ackermann received authorization from the city to build a playhouse where the dilapidated opera house once stood; this permission might be considered an architectural tribute to the changing ethos of the city. The structure, which once showcased the grandeur of the city's wealthy families with music and elaborate baroque machinery, was razed for the construction of a multi-purpose playhouse, subsidized by the government and controlled by a company of German actors. This new vision of theatrical possibility brought Löwen closer to Ackermann as an advisor and an

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<sup>62</sup> These poems are published in Potkoff, *Johann Friedrich Löwen*, 54.

<sup>63</sup> "Ekhof on Basic Principles of Acting, 15 June 1754" originally printed in Heinz Kindermann's *Konrad Ekhofs Schauspieler-Akademie*. Excerpted and reprinted in translation, Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 154.

<sup>64</sup> Potkoff, *Johann Friedrich Löwen*, 51.

informal resident playwright. He frequently authored prologues, epilogues and *Vorspiele* (opening plays usually comedic in nature) for the company. Ackermann christened Hamburg's newly erected theater on 31 July 1765 with a play written by Löwen entitled *Die Comödie im Tempel der Tugend (The Comedy in the Temple of Virtue)*.<sup>65</sup>

Within a year, Löwen's relationship with Ackermann grew contentious. As a young critic, Löwen was enraptured by new instructional possibilities that the German theater could afford its public, but Ackermann was no longer a hungry initiate to the business. When he arrived in Hamburg, he was well into his 50s. Looking for a sense of stability, he petitioned to become a citizen of the city and requested first right of performance, barring any other German company from performing there for twelve years.<sup>66</sup> Ackermann presented a repertoire of plays and ballets that he perceived would cater to the tastes of a mostly bourgeois audience, French plays to be certain, but also translations of Goldoni and works indebted to the English bourgeois tragedy. He was the first to premiere Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson* while on tour in Frankfurt. Löwen, however, was frustrated by what he perceived to be Ackermann's lackadaisical attitude toward the business of running a theater and he wrote disparagingly of his managerial style.<sup>67</sup> Between 1765 and 1766, Löwen began to formulate a paradigm of theater production that completely departed from Ackermann and the *Prinzipal*-model of production. He published his ideas in *Geschichte des Deutschen Theaters (History of German Theater)*.

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<sup>65</sup> Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory*, 16.

<sup>66</sup> Ackermann's arrival in Hamburg is documented at length in Erika Fischer-Lichte, *History of European Drama and Theater*, trans. Jo Riley (New York: Routledge, 2002), 150.

<sup>67</sup> The first of these invectives "Schreiben an einen Freund über die Ackermannsche Schaubühne," was published in 1765 and the second, "Schreiben an einen Marionetten-Spieler al seine Abfertigung des Schreibens an einen Freund über die Ackermannsche Schaubühne. In Namen des Ackermannschen Lichtputzers," was published in the following year. Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory*, 17.

Despite its title, the *History of German Theater* shows how Löwen drew intersections between the problems of theater production following the *Prinzipal* system and larger contemporaneous issues concerning national identity that proliferated in mid-eighteenth-century German print. The debilitating qualities of the German theater, observably foreign in character, Löwen noted, reflected the cultural disunity that beset the German nation. He wrote in *History of German Theater*, “We Germans aren’t yet properly acquainted with our national character; or, better, we Germans don’t in fact have a character that can be precisely defined.”<sup>68</sup> The French philosopher Montesquieu had theorized in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748) that all nations were subject to certain governing principles dictated not only by the environmental and constitutional qualities of the land, but also the customs, manners, and religion of its inhabitants.<sup>69</sup> The shared qualities of a nation’s people constituted a nation’s general character, or *esprit general*. Within this context, character formed the basis for the laws of governance, but it also alluded to cultural production: that which could be empirically observed of a nation, e.g. fashion, architecture, wine, furniture, as well as visual and literary arts, were all representative fixtures of class and taste that Germans were apt to copy from the French.<sup>70</sup> Some bourgeois Germans, in fact, expressed serious concerns that they were lacking a sense of naturalized national taste. For this reason, Löwen expressed in *History of German Theater* that he strove to elevate the societal status of the German theater and showcase the unifying mores of a nation otherwise divided. In essence, Löwen wished to realize the theater of a nation still unknown to itself.

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<sup>68</sup>“Wir Deutschen kennen unsern Nationalcharacter noch nicht recht: oder besser, wir deutsche haben in der That einen nicht genau zu bestimmenden Character.” Löwen, *Geschichte des Deutschen Theaters*, 46.

<sup>69</sup>Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), 8-9.

<sup>70</sup>These are but a few examples listed in J.G. Zimmermann’s *Essay on National Pride*, trans. Samuel H. Wilcocke (London: C. Dilly, 1797), 6.

The creation of a national theater, however, was inherently problematized by the peculiar nature of German sovereign divisions. The nation of “Germany” in common parlance referred to the linguistic bond that unified the German people, but it did not denote a modern-day “nation-state.” Within an eighteenth-century context, Germany was, in fact, not a state at all, but had been fragmented instead into more than two-hundred states. In the 1760s, the two largest were Prussia, governed by Frederick II, and Austria, overseen by the Austrian monarch Maria Theresa and her son the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II. Hamburg was one of the *Reichstädte* (free imperial cities) within a German Empire governed mostly by individual princes, bishops, prelates, counts, and knights.<sup>71</sup>

Theatrical production in the German territories was largely dictated by the sovereign nobility; most princes maintained a theater at court and upheld legislation that monitored theatrical activity within their jurisdiction. A famous example of the court theater model is Duke Karl August’s theater in Weimar where Johann Wolfgang von Goethe began his career in 1775. But in the decades that preceded Goethe’s arrival there, the presence of German theater practitioners at court was quite uncommon. The predominant fashion was to erect a theater for the presentation of foreign entertainments. In 1751, for example, the Elector of Bavaria had the Cuvilliés Theater in Munich built chiefly for the production of Italian opera. The Elector Karl Theodor of Mannheim erected a court theater to present Italian operas and French plays. In Vienna, there were but two theaters permitted to operate in the city and both were monitored closely by the regent Maria Theresa’s administration. Favoring foreign entertainments before

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<sup>71</sup> For an account of sovereign divisions see Michael Hoesedlinger, *Austria’s Wars of Emergence: 1683-1797* (London: Pearson, 2003), 51.

those of German origin, the Austrian monarch actually outlawed the extemporization of players and the production of German language plays in 1752.

In free imperial cities such as Leipzig, Frankfurt, and Hamburg, German theater practitioners played with a *Privilege* from a governing magistrate and tailored their repertoire to cater to local tastes. This trend, however, did not entirely negate artistic experimentation. Löwen's father-in-law, Schönemann, for example, learned a repertoire of French plays in translation as an actor under the tutelage of the *Prinzipalin* Caroline Neuber (1697-1760) and Gottsched when they partnered to produce a canon of French neoclassical works for German audiences. After the Neuber-Gottsched partnership dissolved, Neuber, assuming full reign of her company once more, produced works to suit the tastes of her audience, which included German plays by German authors. In fact, in January 1748, she was the first to present a comedy entitled *Der junge Gelehrte (The Young Scholar)* by Lessing (at the time, a Leipzig University student), launching the writer's distinguished career in the theater. Conversely, when Schönemann formed his own company, he chose to uphold many of the artistic standards endorsed by Gottsched.<sup>72</sup> Still, despite the wealth of theatrical activity in the free cities, and particularly in Leipzig, it was incredibly difficult for a company of actors to achieve financial stability without a noble patron. Therefore, German actors toured the territories to earn their keep, a custom that contributed to their low social status as rogues or vagabonds.<sup>73</sup> The representative term for a company of German actors was *die Wanderbühne* (the wandering stage).

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<sup>72</sup> For more on Schönemann, see Hans Dervient, *Johann Friedrich Schönemann und Seine Schauspielergesellschaft* (Hamburg and Leipzig: Leopold Voß, 1895), 104

<sup>73</sup>From the Salzburg Government archives. "Strolling Players Decried as Rogues and Vagabonds, 1796." Excerpted and reprinted in translation Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 122.

While by the mid-eighteenth century social aspirants had long congregated in the playhouses of England, the situation in the German territories was patently different. During Löwen's time, few permanent theater structures were maintained for the public. If German actors were not invited to perform for a court, they acted upon makeshift stages wherever they found accommodations. The situation in Hamburg offers a particularly good illustration of this type of theatrical culture. As noted earlier, when the opera fell out of fashion, the city opera house was essentially abandoned. Given the circumstances, companies of actors typically performed in Hamburg's *Komödienhaus*, which was originally a stable for riding horses. Ackermann found the space unsuitable for performance and made an appeal to the city Senate to obtain permission to build a new public theater. In addition to this request, Ackermann had also applied for citizenship, an effort imperative to the advancement of his social reputation. Given that citizenship implied permanence, socioeconomic belonging, and allegiance to one particular location, German actors who wandered the territories were ineligible to uphold the title of *Bürger* (citizen).<sup>74</sup>

More broadly, one might argue that these circumstances of production not only mirrored a feudal society, but also reinforced a system of labor where peasants remained peasants and nobles remained nobles. Those in the middle class or more precisely the *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated bourgeoisie) who struggled for recognition in the sciences and literary arts, continuously felt the burden of aristocratic power. Löwen, saw the mimetic arts as an instrument for uplifting the marginalized middle-class, although he also recognized that the practicalities of achieving a publicly-oriented theater would be challenging. Writing or performing in the theater was not a respectable way to make a living.

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<sup>74</sup> The noun *Bürger* also means "bourgeois".

In his journal *History of German Theater*, Löwen addressed this complicated state of affairs. In sum, he argued that the German courts' proclivity for foreign entertainments created little incentive for German authors to write for the stage. This practice, in turn, fostered an indigent culture of theater production with almost nothing to offer a respectable noble or bourgeois citizen. The benefits of a strong theatrical culture were well understood, but a life in the theater was too dangerous a prospect for individuals with their livelihoods at stake. At the time, the question frequently arose: why should a prince or wealthy *Bürger* do anything to support the piteous German theater? Lessing addressed this problem in a *Litteraturbrief* (1760), writing:

The fact that German drama is still in such a wretched state is not perhaps solely and exclusively the fault of princes failing to give it their protection, their support. Princes do not care to concern themselves with matters for which they anticipate hardly or any successful outcome. And when they look at our actors, what can the latter offer them? People without education, without breeding, without any talents: a master tailor, a creature that was a washerwoman but a few months ago, etc. What can princes see in such people that is in any way like themselves and that might encourage them to raise these stage representatives of themselves to a better and more highly respected status?<sup>75</sup>

Löwen's independently-funded national theater offered a daring solution to the problem addressed by Lessing here. His analysis, though, in *History of German Theater* suggests that at first, he envisioned a very different system of production, one that relied on the patronage of a visionary German prince.

From the onset, Löwen pronounced that this solution for theatrical reform would be nothing like that of Johann Christoph Gottsched. In the opening address of *History of German Theater*, Löwen wrote that Professor Gottsched had nursed the troubled German stage to elevate

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<sup>75</sup> Reproduced in Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 126.

the beauty of “*Volk* literature,” but lamentably did little to promote native German authorship.<sup>76</sup> Löwen observed that the Germans had forwarded a long register of absurd and farcical plays to suit a diversity of tastes. He wrote that foreign translations and comedies, which mixed the observable qualities of French and German sentiment, dominated the German stage. He questioned, to what end?<sup>77</sup> The German theater could no longer be defined by the ribald and crude theatrics of clowns such as *Hanswurst* and *Pickelherring* (popularly performed in the first half of the eighteenth-century), but it had assumed qualities characteristically foreign to its naturalized origins. That Gottsched wished to reform the German drama and not the circumstances germane to its production, I argue, marks a significant difference in the philosophical attitudes of reformists from two generations.

Gottsched was a man of letters who learned the fundamental practices of social elevation through his study of French literature. Early in his career, he translated the works of the French critics Jean le Clerc and Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle and worked on a moral weekly modeled after French translations of Addison and Steele’s *Spectator*. He was also the first to establish a *Deutsche Gesellschaft* (German Society) in 1727, a forum, inspired by the French literary orders of the previous century, which strove to bring the upper stratum of the bourgeoisie closer to the monarch. Perhaps one of Gottsched’s most celebrated achievements was the 1730 translation of Nicolas Boileau’s treatment of the Horatian verse “Art of Poetry” (1674), which extolled the merits of classicism as a guide to reason. These are but a few examples of why Gottsched’s

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<sup>76</sup> Löwen, *Geschichte des Deutschen Theaters*, 46.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

conversance with the values of late-seventeenth-century French society predictably influenced his program of educational reforms for the German dramatic arts.

French neoclassical dramaturgy, bound to the laws of what is possible and probable, perfectly suited the logic of Gottsched's theatrical pedagogy. He approached playwriting as a systematic equation: first choosing a suitable moral thesis that he wished to convey to an audience and then crafting an arrangement of sequential actions, which would then lead to the discovery of that moral truth.<sup>78</sup> Like other scholars of Cartesian rationalism, Gottsched presumed that the actions of man reflected a universal order—the experience of enlightenment achieved not as a function of the imagination or sensual aesthetics, but through deductive logic. The text therefore served as an instrument to guide an individual closer to reason.

This kind of textual edification, however, was inherently problematized by a largely illiterate and uneducated target audience. Gottsched recognized that theatrical performance, where stories of moral value could be presented and spoken aloud before a socially-diverse and vastly illiterate audiences, was the best medium for his scholarly ambitions. He began translating plays from the courtly theaters of the French to present before German audiences that would congregate in fair grounds and city squares to watch. Elocution was critical to the presentation of dramatic texts, requiring that Gottsched find an experienced partner who could formulate a program of German acting to match his interests. He approached Caroline Neuber, who trained her company to adopt a declamatory style of presentation. This style required limited gesture so that the edifying qualities of the text could be rationally followed.

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<sup>78</sup>This theoretical approach is described by Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 336.

By the 1760s, empirical philosophies had supplanted the dogmas of the previous century. It was not enough to simply dress French dramatic custom in German costume; the German stage needed to represent a theater that was unmistakably German in character. Lessing was critical of Gottsched's efforts. Writing in a *Literaturbrief* (1759), he noted, Gottsched "didn't wish so much to improve our old theater as to become the creator of an entirely new one. And what sort of theater did he wish to create? A *French* one: and this without pausing to ask whether a French theater would be suitable to the German way of thinking or not."<sup>79</sup> His sentiments were echoed by one of Gottsched's former students Johann Elias Schlegel (1719-1749), who eventually went on to establish a national theater in Denmark. Schlegel observed in 1746, "The Germans [Gottsched and Neuber] made the mistake of indiscriminately translating all sorts of plays from the French, without first considering whether the character of these plays was suited to German customs. They therefore turned their own theater into nothing more than a French theater in German language."<sup>80</sup> Gottsched's ignorance of German custom, or what Lessing described as a "German way of thinking," was not disputed solely on stylistic grounds; his dramaturgical theory, rooted in the philosophical doctrines of the French court, was perceived to do nothing to elevate the character of the German nation.

In order to counter the tradition ushered in by Gottsched's initiatives, Löwen argued that German playwrights and actors needed to embody the proper mores and manners of the German people. To clarify this idea further, it is helpful to recall Lessing's description of German actors:

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<sup>79</sup>Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "The Seventeenth Letter Concerning the Newest Literature," *Essays on German Theater*, ed. Margaret Herzfeld-Sander (New York: Continuum, 1985), 2.

<sup>80</sup>From Schlegel's prologue to *Hermann. Ein Trauerspiel* (1743), quoted in Sosulski, *Theater and Nation in Germany*, 38.

“a people without education, without breeding, [and] without any talents.”<sup>81</sup> Because the institution of the theater was dominated by Germans of low-birth and education, Löwen offered a multi-step solution. He argued, first, that an instructional German stage needed to be conceived by a German playwright of education, who would accordingly write plays to accurately capture the mores and manners of bourgeois Germans.<sup>82</sup> German actors would then perform these plays, and through this performance, teach a bourgeois audience how to be German, and at the same time, learn to be model bodies themselves.

Löwen believed that a strong patron of the arts and the establishment of a German artistic capital would improve the status and quality of German theater. The problem was that the nation of Germany, which principally occupied a place in the German imagination, had no clear governing authority and thus no obvious capital for the arts. And so, in the concluding portion of *History of German Theater*, Löwen muses over which city might emerge as the nation’s artistic capital. Which prince would care for the taste and the pleasure of his people, he wondered. Frederick II, who had captured the hearts of so many bourgeois subjects during the Seven Years War (1754-1763), was perhaps the most suitable choice. Löwen described the Prussian monarch as “a powerful King; a Prince who even has the taste and inclination to see his people happy and gay,” suggesting that in Berlin, there is “a republican freedom of thought and of writing; and a confluence of men who, either as critics or as authors, have proved themselves the fittest for the recording of German literature, and drama in particular.”<sup>83</sup> At the time, Nicolai’s *Allgemeine*

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<sup>81</sup> From a *Literaturbrief* (1760) reproduced in Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 126.

<sup>82</sup> This bourgeois prescriptive is never overtly stated, but implied.

<sup>83</sup> “Wir kommen also immer wieder auf Berlin zurück. Ein mächtiger König, ein Fürst, der selbst Geschmack und Neigung hat, sein Volk glücklich und vergnügt zu sehen, eine republikanische Freiheit, zu denken und zu schreiben, ein Zusammenfluss von Männern, die entweder als Critici, oder als Schriftsteller bewiesen, dass sie die würdigsten zur Aufnahme der deutschen Literatur, und der Bühne insonderheit wären.” *Ibid.*, 69.

*deutsche Bibliothek* (*German General Library*), published in Prussian Berlin, played an instrumental role in promoting writings of the German Enlightenment. Despite King Frederick's Francophile leanings, the German print industry had begun to flourish; perhaps an indication that the German drama might also blossom in the Prussian state.

Before reaching this conclusion, however, Löwen considered two other cities. He wrote: "Vienna certainly not, although the good grace of the Kaiser maintains an established German theater there. Austria has still given us too few good writers. Hamburg perhaps— but it could obtain support only, as one might assume, for its superficial expenses."<sup>84</sup> These reservations suggest that the author was wary of the monetary challenges of institutionalizing the dramatic arts without a noble patron. A German theater in the free imperial city of Hamburg might garner subsidies from the senate but a director would most certainly confront the challenges of commissioning and presenting plays alone. Löwen was confident that a patron prince, who ruled in the spirit of republicanism, would be a more successful champion of the German arts.

These careful observations at the conclusion of the work represent a significant shift in the tone of *History of German Theater*, which was originally published in four parts. Löwen began his history with a rallying cry to fellow nationalists, but concluded with a humble appeal to princes. In the history's opening remarks, he wrote: "The accusation made by foreigners that we have no theater of our own is all too justified; and it would merely betray an excessive patriotism if one wanted to argue against it."<sup>85</sup> This inclusive sense of "we" suggests an

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<sup>84</sup> "Wien gewiss nicht, obgleich die Gnade des Kaisers eine beständige deutsche Bühne daselbst unterhält. Osterreich hat uns noch zu wenig gute Schriftsteller geliefert. Hamburg vielleicht – aber es könnte diese Unterstützung nur, und wie zu vermuthen, ganz allein in dem äußerlichen Aufwande bestehen." Ibid., 68.

<sup>85</sup> "Der Vorwurf, den uns die Ausländer machen, dass wir kein eigenes Theater haben, ist mehr als zu gegründet; und es würde bloss eine übertriebene Eigenliebe seiner Nation verraten, wenn man dawider streiten wollte." Ibid., 3.

imagined bourgeois readership familiar with the ongoing “national spirit debates” that dominated the pages of German periodicals after the Seven Years War.<sup>86</sup> Löwen observes that it is not enough to produce sophisticated plays within German lands, German theatrical tradition should both represent and reinforce the values of the German nation.

Löwen then followed these claims with a historical narrative that traced the fledgling German literary drama as well as the history of German acting. When he arrived in the present to address the contemporaneous issues that hindered the blossom of the German stage, he discarded the voice of historian to assume the role of a prince’s capable advisor. The root of the problem, he contended, was that the German theater had traditionally been managed by *Prinzipale*; men and women who bore the responsibility of playing kings and queens, nobles and knights, but in fact possessed but little breeding and education themselves. Although German sovereigns had ultimate authority over where and when a company of actors could perform, they had given the theatrical arts to a class beneath the dignity of a German citizen. If the theater were entrusted into more capable hands, he argued before an imagined prince, “you will have the souls of the citizens – lifted, the hearts expanded, the morals improved upon, and taste and feeling will enliven all classes.”<sup>87</sup> His plea for an egalitarian theater suggests that the fate of the stage could not be severed from the beneficence of a prince but could prove a critical step to earning the favor of German subjects.

Yet despite all of Löwen’s appeals for sovereign leadership, his observations also betray a yearning for an alternative vision of government evoked in little glimmers of description. When

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<sup>86</sup> For a discussion of the national spirit debates, see Vazsonyi, “National Spirit Debate,” 225-46.

<sup>87</sup> “Ihr werdet die Seelen die Bürger - erhöhen, die Herzen erweitern, die Sitten verbessern; Und Gefühl und Geschmack wird alle Stande beleben.” Löwen, *Geschichte des Deutschen Theaters*, 60.

Löwen recited the inherent qualities of German acting, he remarked that the German *Fastnachtspiele* (Shrovetide comedies), which traditionally satirized *Bürger* custom, were remarkably similar to the satires of the ancient Greeks. But, he noted, the ancients presented vice on stage. And what is more, he continued, “poets are even paid by the magistrate, just as if they were censors of the republic.”<sup>88</sup> These habitudes were markedly absent from the customs of German governments. He recalled that even Aristophanes was permitted to sit at Plato’s table; a somewhat daring critique as the leading satirist of his own age, Voltaire, had been expelled from the Prussian court.<sup>89</sup> Löwen’s remarks articulate a reverence for the ancients common among his contemporaries, but his interest in the democratic freedoms of speech demonstrates a longing for a classical theater not driven by aesthetics, but by the laws that allowed the theater to flourish. His legal training arguably forged the beginning of this perspective. While a student in Göttingen, Löwen discussed the merits of the theater in his *Gesellschaft*, writing that, “in a well-constituted republic, the efflorescence of the stage must necessarily be sustained.”<sup>90</sup>

When Löwen began working on *History of German Theater*, he was not yet assured of a theatrical directorship in Hamburg. His writings, in fact, suggest some deep reservations about the prospect. Yet it proved easier to place pressure on Ackermann and push his way into a leadership position in Hamburg than it was to negotiate a place in the court theater of a community, where he had no ties or sense of belonging. In effect, Löwen’s theater was situated in Hamburg because that is where he cultivated his relationships, the most important of which

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<sup>88</sup> “Es gibt gewisse Laster, wider welche die Gesetze nicht eifern. Dichter sogar von dem Magistrate besoldet; gleichsam als Censores der Republik.” Löwen, *Geschichte des Deutschen Theaters*, 6.

<sup>89</sup> See Plato’s *Symposium* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994), xiv. Voltaire left the Prussian court in 1753.

<sup>90</sup> “In einer wohl eingerichteten Republik muß der Flor der Schaubühne nothwendig erhalten werden,” transcribed from Löwen’s notes in Krebs, *L’Idée de Théâtre National*, 598.

was a consortium of financial backers. Of these financiers, the three most actively involved were Abel Seyler, a Swiss-born businessman; Johann Martin Tillemann, a business associate of Seyler's; and Adolf Siegler Bubbers, a tapestry manufacturer who pursued a career as an actor as a youth. Bubbers was the only member of the organization that had acquired citizenship in Hamburg.<sup>91</sup> Together, the group supported Löwen's ascension to artistic director of the Hamburg Theater, acquiring Ackermann's lease along with his scenery, properties and costumes.<sup>92</sup> They also utilized their personal associates to convince Lessing to take a post as the theater's resident playwright.

After visiting members of the Hamburg consortium in December 1766, Lessing agreed to join the company, not as playwright, but as dramaturg and in-house critic; he received a salary of eight-hundred talers per year.<sup>93</sup> Having Lessing on board was certainly a coup, but Löwen also boasted a company of actors already famous in the German territories. Sophie Friederike Hensel (1737-1789), an actress who once worked with Ackermann, returned to Hamburg from her residency in Vienna. Praised by Löwen for her "beautiful deportment" and manners both "grand and assured," Löwen thought her a perfect fit for his theater of German character.<sup>94</sup> Löwen also called upon his friend Konrad Ekhof, an actor who bore comparison to the English actor David Garrick (1717-1779), but maintained an acting style that was uniquely German. Other resident actors included Johann Michael Böck (1743-1793), David Borchers (1744-1796), Sophie Böck (dates unknown), and Löwen's own wife, Elisabeth Lucia Dorothea.

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<sup>91</sup> H.B. Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: His Life, Works, and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 371.

<sup>92</sup> Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory*, 18.

<sup>93</sup> Nisbet 367.

<sup>94</sup> From Johann Friedrich Löwen's *Schriften*, vol. 4. Excerpted in Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 145.

In *History of German Theater*, Löwen makes direct reference to the theater of a German nation but never explicitly calls this theater a *Nationaltheater* or *Nationalbühne* (National Stage). The Viennese were using the term before Löwen even published his *History*. For example, the playwright Christian Gottlieb Klemm, wrote in the *Austrian Patriot* (1764/1765) that the two imperial theaters of Vienna represented an Austrian National Theater.<sup>95</sup> In the case of Vienna, a national theater would have generated a natural tie between the imperial traditions of the Austrian Kaiser and his growing *Bürgertum*. The city of Hamburg endowed Löwen's national theater with a very different purpose.

A member of the Hanseatic League, Hamburg prospered as a mercantile hub governed by a Senate and a "Citizens' Council." Hamburg, in fact, was a self-declared republic with a republican constitution under which aristocrats were not entitled to citizenship but only temporary residence.<sup>96</sup> One of Hamburg's prominent educational reformers, Johann Carl Daniel Curio, claimed of Hamburg: "We have no nobles [here], no patricians, no slaves, no, not even subjects. All true Hamburgers belong to and acknowledge only one class, that of *bürger*, nothing more and nothing less."<sup>97</sup> This declaration, however, was not entirely true. Those with familial or economic ties in Hamburg could assume the title of *bürger* because of their professional status; retailing, skilled trades, tavern-keeping, and some forms of peddling were all considered *bürger* occupations. Those who could not count themselves as citizens were occupationally defined as day laborers, non-guilded craftsmen, or wanderers.<sup>98</sup> But Hamburg was also quite

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<sup>95</sup> Heinz Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte Europas, V Band* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1962), 64.

<sup>96</sup> Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, 360.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Mary Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers: Hamburg, 1712-1830* (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), 61.

<sup>98</sup> Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers*, 62.

unique in offering quick paths to citizenship despite status by birth or originating profession. Citizenship might be granted to an individual who could grow the economic stability of the city.

The sustainability of a republic by virtue of its citizens was an idea that carried both social and political weight in the mid-eighteenth century, so it is worth briefly considering the philosophical contributions of Montesquieu and Rousseau to understand how Löwen envisioned the republican spirit of his national theater. Prior to the Enlightenment, the dominant philosophy of government in Europe privileged aristocrats who justified their ability to govern by right of noble lineage; an inheritance of classical virtue(s) that distinguished the respectable upper classes from that of the masses. This theory perpetuated the belief that through the embodiment of excellence, nobles were better equipped to rule than commoners of lesser character. Machiavelli, for example, who examined how principalities are won, held, and lost in the *Prince*, suggested that in the face of cynicism, rulers should present the appearance of virtue before their ignorant public.<sup>99</sup> When Montesquieu published *The Spirit of the Laws* in 1748, he contended that “virtue” was not the principle of monarchical government, nor that of princely despots who governed by fear, but rather sustained the interests of a popular state or republic.<sup>100</sup> He wrote that virtue is what divided the ancient civilization of Greece from the Roman Empire. “The political men of Greece who lived under the popular government recognized no other force to sustain it than virtue . . . When that virtue ceases, ambition enters those hearts that can admit it, and avarice enters them all.”<sup>101</sup> By citing examples from history, he reasoned that the rise and fall of

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<sup>99</sup> As summarized by Bertrand Russell in *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 510.

<sup>100</sup> Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 22.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

nations marked a failure to abide by principle. The actions of men could damage the nature of their government, undermining as it were, that which was designed to sustain it.

Indeed, that was the very reason that the philosopher Rousseau was *opposed* to using the theater to strengthen national character. In his *Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theater* (1758) Rousseau wrote: "It follows from these first observations that the general effect of the theater is to strengthen the national character, to augment the natural inclinations, and to give a new energy to all passions. In this sense it would seem that, its effect being limited to intensifying and not changing the established morals (manners), the drama would be good for the good and bad for the vicious."<sup>102</sup> He contended that if the republic of Geneva were granted a theater, its entertainments would only augment the natural inclinations of its people (all states, of course, consisted of citizens both virtuous and vicious), thus manifesting a danger to the republic. Rousseau, like Montesquieu, believed that without the principle of virtue, the people would fall victim to ambition and avarice, the very values that festered in the courts of so many European princes.<sup>103</sup>

Yet Rousseau's critique of bourgeois theater presumed an audience that would be swept up by sensual emotion and thus forget the guiding principle of their republic. Löwen, like Rousseau's challengers Diderot and D'Alembert, believed the very reverse. Spectators in the theater, whether inherently good or bad, had the capacity to change provided they were given

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<sup>102</sup> Rousseau's translator Allan Bloom conveys the meaning of *moures* in its eighteenth-century context by using both *morals* and *manners*. "Moures" Bloom writes, are "habits as they are related to moral goodness or badness." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theater*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1960), 20 and 149.

<sup>103</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 113.

proper models of behavior from which to follow.<sup>104</sup> Löwen's theories of aesthetics clearly depart from that of Rousseau, but what they share in common is the presumption that theatrical practices, and in particular theatrical institutions, are inextricably linked to an existing form of government. Thus Löwen reasoned that because Hamburg was a self-proclaimed republic, the city's theatrical successes could logically serve as a model for the rest of the German nation that had yet to emerge.

He made this intention clear in the theater's opening announcement published on 24 October 1766, although in this text the republican paradigm was never overtly stated, but implied. Löwen likened Hamburg to the great civilizations of Greece and Rome, well-known for integrating theater into community practice. His comparison appealed to the citizens of Hamburg's own sense of imagined national identity and proved especially useful for painting the German territories as ancient poleis, each individual in character, but still representative of a greater national identity. Hence Löwen contended that the German drama, still in its infancy, relied on the patronage of Hamburg citizens so that it could represent the republic and prove a conduit for the bloom of bourgeois values. He wrote: "And precisely for this reason, the advantages that flow from the refinement of taste and manners as they extend to the whole state and into the resiliency of its citizens."<sup>105</sup> His statement conflates Hamburg with the nation: classically republican, bourgeois, and egalitarian.

The novelty of Löwen's theater was stressed first and foremost by the establishment of an acting academy. In the theater's opening announcement, he emphasized the urgency of

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<sup>104</sup>Löwen quotes Diderot extensively both in the *History of German Theater* and in his opening announcement; see Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 198-200.

<sup>105</sup>"Und aus eben diesem wichtigen Grunde, dessen Folgen für eine ganze Nation interessant sind, und wovon sich die Vortheile, die aus der Verfeinerung des Geschmacks, und ihrer Sitten fließen, auf den ganzen Staat und auf die Biegsamkeit seiner Bürger erstrecken." Reprinted in Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theater*, 20.

transforming the practice of acting from a “bread-and-butter craft” to an “agreeable and instructive branch of the arts.”<sup>106</sup> Under the reigning models of production, German actors could be nothing more than vagabonds, but by institutionalizing the theater, Löwen argued, a company of actors would assume a new and purposeful role in the community. He boasted that they would receive salaries commensurate with their talent and a pension for retirement. More importantly, as performers for a national stage, these actors would in turn serve as instructional bodies for audiences, to offer “the noblest delight of which human reason is capable [and] the richest treasures of purified morality.”<sup>107</sup> Nobility, within this context, was a quality that distinguished the barbaric from the civilized and morality might be defined as an asset to refine the customs of the city’s citizens.

The second mission of Löwen’s Hamburg National Theater was to cultivate the German dramatic canon. He was confronted, however, with the challenge of attracting talent, and creating circumstances so that this talent or genius could grow. In view of that fact, he announced a playwriting competition for monetary prizes.<sup>108</sup> Having very little time before announcing the theater’s establishment and opening the house for business, Löwen could not rely on the hope of inspiring German authors to begin his enterprise. The repertoire was perhaps first conceived to honor his mission, but more importantly, draw in audiences to sustain the life of the new institution. Löwen invested in the presentation of tragedies, some of which were German in origin, but many were French.<sup>109</sup> Yet his repertoire departed from Gottsched’s a generation

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<sup>106</sup>Translation from “Provisional Notice of the Changes Planned for the Hamburg Theater for Easter 1767.” Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 199.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> By way of comparison, as *Prinzipal* of the Hamburg Theater from 1764-1767, Konrad Ackermann produced a total of 92 tragedies, which represented approximately 21% of the total repertoire. Under Löwen’s

before, in veering away from neoclassical works. Within the first year of the enterprise only one tragedy, Voltaire's *Zayre* (a play that debuted in 1732) was lifted from the six volumes of plays published in Gottsched's *Deutsche Schaubühne* (*The German Stage*, pub. 1745 and 1747).<sup>110</sup> Löwen was particularly fond of Voltaire and the "historical tragedy," crafted so that audiences might emulate the heroic qualities of figures from the past, suited the mission of the Hamburg National Theater.

Spectators who attended the inaugural production of the Hamburg National Theater on 22 April 1767, walked down a store-lined street in the *Gänsemarkt* to enter the building. The space, as described by the company's leading actor Konrad Ekhof, was "cramped" but suitably accommodating and audience-members could sit within the sloping parterre, two rows of boxes, or within the gallery.<sup>111</sup> Upon finding their seats, they faced a proscenium stage flanked on each side by Corinthian pillars painted to resemble marble. The ceiling was decorated by two allegorical murals: the first depicted Liberty protecting Comedy and Tragedy and the second showed a curtain drawn to reveal the Hamburg coat of arms - a three-tiered tower with its gates drawn closed for protection.

Because Konrad Ackermann leased the Hamburg Theater prior to that April and Löwen cast his productions with Ackermann's actors, there were few physical signs to distinguish the new initiative from the old. Löwen emphasized that his theater was a "national space" by word-of-mouth and his published notice of intent. On the first evening of performances, Ackermann

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directorship of the Hamburg National Theater from 1767-1769, the theater produced 129 tragedies, representing approximately 33% of the works presented during the company's two seasons. See Krebs, *L'Idée de Théâtre National*, 634-635.

<sup>110</sup> Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory*, 134.

<sup>111</sup> The descriptions of the theater are from J.F. Schütze's *Hamburgische Theater-Geschichte* (1794) and Ekhof's memories of the theater as recounted in Robertson, 14-15.

underscored his departure from the theater by publicly offering his best wishes to the new enterprise.<sup>112</sup> These gestures pointed to the creation of a new enterprise, but we cannot be certain that they inspired a sense of national community. The defining indication that spectators occupied a national space was manifested in a pamphlet by Lessing. Upon entering the theater, they received Lessing's introductory essay for the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (*Hamburg Dramaturgy*). Dedicated to the Hamburg public, the essay described the instructional mission of the company and encouraged the audience to envision their participation in the theater as an essential duty of citizenship.<sup>113</sup>

The essay forgoes the pomp of Löwen's solicitations by acknowledging the theater's intention to serve the common good and also confronts the company's critics. Lessing wrote, "To be sure there are always and everywhere a people who, because they know themselves so well, see nothing but ulterior motives in every good undertaking. We could gladly grant them this with respect to themselves; however, when they use these supposed ulterior motives to attack the undertaking itself, and when their spiteful envy, in seeking to block these motives, also derails the project, then they really ought to understand that they are the most despicable members of human society."<sup>114</sup> Those few, Lessing asserted, should not set the tone for the rest of society. He evoked the language of democracy to emphasize the theater's natural place within a functioning republic. It is up to Hamburg's "well-meaning citizens" to serve the greater good and to protect

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<sup>112</sup>Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, 367.

<sup>113</sup> This announcement (*Ankündigen*) was later published with the first three essays of *Hamburg Dramaturgy* on 8 May, 1767 by Johann Joachim Christoph Bode of Hamburg. While the original pamphlet has been lost, many historians have speculated that the republished version was similar, if not the same. See Robertson 123.

<sup>114</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *The Hamburg Dramaturgy: A New Translation of the Complete Text*, trans. Wendy Arons and Sara Figal, ed. Natalya Baldyga (Oxford: Routledge, 2014). *Media Commons Press Online*, Preface.

the “better part of the whole.”<sup>115</sup> Lessing, however, is careful to avoid Löwen’s bold assertion that the Hamburg National Theater would exemplify the virtues of Germany. He expresses his reservations by adding, “There are many steps an emergent theater must climb in order to reach the pinnacle of perfection. . . . Both he who promises too much, and he who expects too much does himself harm.”<sup>116</sup>

The two works presented on that evening were perhaps already familiar to members of the audience: Johann Friedrich von Cronegk’s tragedy *Olint und Sophronia* (1764) and a comedic afterpiece called *Der Triumph der vergangen Zeit* (*The Triumph of Times Past*), which was translated from Marc Antoine Le Grand’s *Le Triomphe du Temps* (1725).<sup>117</sup> While Le Grand’s work was selected because it was a piece already performed in German repertories, Cronegk’s play was chosen to represent the merits of German authorship. Awarded the *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften* prize for work on an earlier play called *Codrus*, Cronegk was an author favored by Löwen in his *History*, as his plays were uniquely Germanic and exemplified the virtues of the ancients.<sup>118</sup> Yet as Lessing slyly pointed out in the first essay of *Hamburg Dramaturgy* “the choice [of *Olint und Sophronia*] would warrant criticism, if anyone could demonstrate that they have found something better.”<sup>119</sup>

Inspired by Tasso and set in twelfth-century Jerusalem, Cronegk’s play depicts the plight of two Christian lovers, Olint and Sophronia, who find themselves duplicitously aligned with a powerful Muslim Sultan named Aladin. After a series of fraught events, wherein their Christian

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> The plays’ publication histories are included in Robertson 58.

<sup>118</sup> Löwen. *Geschichte des Deutschen Theaters*, 49-50.

<sup>119</sup> Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 1.

faith is challenged by their earthly love, they die martyrs of the Crusades.<sup>120</sup> The tragedy had been successfully performed in Vienna in 1764. There, the themes were quite topical. For the Viennese, Ottoman invasion remained an ever-present threat. Perhaps for this reason it was also brought to cities in southern Germany by the Viennese actor known as Bernardon (Joseph Felix von Kurz).<sup>121</sup> But when Löwen presented the play in Hamburg, a German city far to the north, it was framed to show his ongoing efforts to emphasize the natural bridge between theater and the law.

Lessing wrote seven essays on the inaugural production of *Olint und Sophronia* for *Hamburg Dramaturgy*. Two of these essays were exclusively devoted to the original prologue and epilogue. In Essay 7, Lessing noted that among the English, every new play is given a prologue and epilogue used not as the ancients had intended, that is to instruct the spectators, but rather to predispose an audience to a playwright or to his work.<sup>122</sup> The convention, as adopted by the Hamburg National Theater, aimed to do both and the speeches were delivered before and after *Olint und Sophronia*, and published in full within the sixth essay of *Hamburg Dramaturgy*; the author deliberately unattributed.<sup>123</sup> Lessing emphasized that the speeches needed no commentary. Yet perhaps unable to resist breaking this vow of silence, he offered a few words of explanation: “The prologue presents the theater in its most noble aspect, insofar as drama may be regarded as a supplement to the law. . . The epilogue lingers over one of the primary lessons [. . .]

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<sup>120</sup>Because Cronegk died before the work was completed, Viennese writer Cassian Anton von Roschmann-Hörburg penned the rest of the play.

<sup>121</sup>The performance history is documented in Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory*, 54-55.

<sup>122</sup>Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 7.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., Essay 6.

of this tragedy.<sup>124</sup> In his description of the epilogue Lessing makes his meaning more explicit, suggesting that Herr Cronegk's story of tolerance was undermined by the rather brutal ideological realities of the Crusades, but kept his analysis of the prologue brief (no longer than a few sentences) and within the realm of the abstract. He concluded with the following observation, "drama takes a stand on either one side of the law or the other, and handles the particulars of that subject matter only insofar as they get lost in the ridiculous or expand into the terrifying."<sup>125</sup>

On that evening, it was Madame Löwen who delivered the prologue concerning *drama* and the *law* to the citizens of Hamburg. "Dear Friends" she announced, "who have enjoyed here the manifold display of humanity through the art of imitation" we deliver to you a theater that awakens "pity, compassion, and generosity," conceived to both civilize and to teach "and for the benefit of the state, to turn the angry wild man into a human being, citizen, friend, and patriot."<sup>126</sup> This theater, crafted to uphold the principle of virtue, was dedicated to the republican spirit of Hamburg; to an audience who observed the law for the security of their state and did not think themselves above it.

But as Madame Löwen continued, she presented an alternative picture of the law: a sovereign that could quickly fall victim to the vices of a tyrant and rule in the spirit of despotism. The gravity of her expression was emphasized in the allegorical language of princely ambition. "The desire to rule," she proclaimed, "rejoicing in the decay of the law, plants its foot on freedom's neck; there he, who represents such laws, succumbs to obscenity and thuggery and

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124 Ibid., Essay 7.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid., Essay 6.

slaughters innocence with Themis' bloodstained sword."<sup>127</sup> Would the German nation fall to this, or for so many Germans, had it already fallen? The parable of the work was made explicit in the presentation of a solution. Looking out upon the faces in the audience, she asked:

Who is innocence's protector, who will stand in opposition? -

Who? The fearless art that wields both dagger and scourge  
And dares to hold the mirror up  
That unwraps the web deception spins around itself,  
And says to tyrants that they are tyrants;  
That, fearless, has no shame before a throne.<sup>128</sup>

The answer was the drama and the themes that echoed in the speech loosely corresponded to the plot of the play *Olint und Sophronia*. But the prologue's parable, which animated the political templates put forth in Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, glorified political virtue as separate from Christian virtue. Madame Löwen crystallized the existence of two societal constructs: the first personified as a prince aging upon a throne of corruption, the second a hero, gaining strength through virtuous action.

In the conclusion of the prologue, this hero finds his muse, *Thalia*, who had once strengthened the democracy of the ancient Athenians, but as the centuries passed sought a new stage in vain. Madame Löwen proclaimed, "In Hamburg she found protection: here is her Athens!" And so the actress once more implored her audience, "And some of this fame shall be yours, you benefactors. O be worthy of the same! Uphold your virtue!" Concluding her speech, she reiterated the sentiments of her husband who dreamed that the Hamburg National Theater

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid..

<sup>128</sup> Ibid..

would strengthen the republican virtue of the German nation and proclaimed, “And remember, O remember, all Germany looks to you!”<sup>129</sup>

With this final directive, Madame Löwen transformed the Hamburg audience into citizens of the German nation and christened their right to sovereignty. In essence, she used the public theater to declare a new political order and articulate a precept that would soon define the revolutions of America and France. This theatrical utterance might be viewed as an antecedent to the constitutional ambitions of the eighteenth-century declaration. Concluding an analysis of the *French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, Giorgio Agamben suggests that “declarations of rights must therefore be viewed as the place in which the passage from divinely authorized royal sovereignty to national sovereignty is accomplished.”<sup>130</sup> Perhaps Madame Löwen was able to transport her audience into this liminal sovereign space, somewhere between a nation governed by German princes and a nation that embodied the spirit of Athenian democracy.

In Löwen’s manifesto, published before the opening of the theater in 1766, he stressed the social utility of the dramatic arts within the Hamburg community, a city which he well knew privileged the welfare of its people above all else. He did this, as I have previously noted, by evoking the theaters of classical Greece and republican Rome, and to that end, he offered his readers an associative model to define his ambitions as a theatrical producer, and establish a protocol for his future audience. The theater itself thus served as a space to transform the citizens of Hamburg into citizens of a democratized German nation-state. Löwen’s call for action couldn’t have been more clear, if we once again consider the theater’s opening prologue.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 128.

Madame Löwen declared from the stage of the Hamburg National Theater, “Remember, O remember, all Germany looks to *you!*”<sup>131</sup>

## Conclusion

Yet when all was said and done, the people of Germany were not looking to Hamburg to find their model nation. They still saw their nation in the body of a king, or more precisely, the two hundred or so German princes that governed the German states. The prince was a fixture of the German imagination and the theater was a fixture of his eminent domain. As patron and sponsor of all theater within his sovereign purview, a German prince maintained a symbolic hold over the art form. Moreover, as it became fashionable to open court theaters up to the public in the mid-century, he could literally be seen as the master of a highly organized social order. The Hamburg National Theater was an anomaly of this order and both lackluster tickets sales and a deficiency of leadership contributed to the Hamburg National Theater’s demise. The experiment to remove the prince from the theatrical order was a failure.

As Kenneth Burke has argued, though, “vision,” or the constitutional “ideal” operate in a “hypothetical world of pure intention, or pure futurity.”<sup>132</sup> He adds that in point of fact, “ideals are never ‘practicable’; indeed, they are *by definition* something that you don’t attain; they are merely *directions* in which you aim.”<sup>133</sup> Following this logic, Löwen gestured toward a new vision of nation, and he founded a theatrical playing space to rehearse its constituted form. By that time, other places, such as the imperial capital of Vienna, were engaged in conversations

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<sup>131</sup> Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 6. I stress the significance of the word “you” here.

<sup>132</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 344.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

about the merits of a German national theater; though, the Viennese dreamed of a different form of nation.

## Chapter 2: German National Theater in Vienna

### Dreaming of a National Stage

Seven years after the dissolution of the Hamburg enterprise, the Austrian Emperor Joseph II established a German national theater in Vienna. A chronology that has led some historians to intimate, if not suggest, that the Hamburg National Theater served as an institutional model for the Viennese enterprise.<sup>134</sup> This argument, in my view, is supported by one facet of a much larger discourse. Although there is sufficient evidence to suggest that national theater writings by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Johann Friedrich Löwen circulated in Vienna as early as 1767, Viennese periodicals examined the idea of a German national theater before the Hamburg enterprise was ever publicized.<sup>135</sup>

To begin this discussion on German national theater in Vienna, it is fruitful to briefly review the guiding principles of the Hamburg National Theater. When Löwen announced his directorship in 1766, he laid out a plan to institutionalize the German theatrical arts. He envisioned to provide a permanent stage to a company of German actors, sponsor a playwriting contest to discover new talent, and solicit the expertise of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a writer already famous for his plays and dramatic criticism. Löwen contended that with the assistance of Hamburg's citizens, his theater would teach the virtues of republicanism and nurture the bloom

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<sup>134</sup> Krebs begins his chapter on national theater in with observations by the Viennese academic Joseph von Sonnenfels, who discussed the Hamburg national theater project in his journal, *Der Mann ohne Vorurteil* (1766), 438. It has also been noted that Joseph II “kept abreast with developments in Hamburg” and sent an actor from his national institution abroad to Hamburg and report his findings; see Yates, *Theater in Vienna*, 12.

<sup>135</sup> Joseph von Sonnenfels repeatedly makes reference to Lessing, and sometimes Löwen, in his journal *Briefe über die wienerische Schaubühne* (1767-1768). Heinz Kindermann observes that the Viennese playwright Christian Gottlieb Klemm used the term *Nationaltheater* in the *Austrian Patriot* (1764/1765), 64. This publication suggests an evocation of the term prior to the start of the Hamburg enterprise. Moreover, when Klemm uses the term, he refers to an Austrian national stage rather than a German one.

of bourgeois values. In turn, he argued, Hamburg would become the capital of an imagined German republic.

In the 1760s, as residents of Vienna also considered the benefits of a national stage, institutional structure was a secondary consideration. The imperial Habsburgs already financed the operation of two commercially-run public theaters and by proxy, countless theatrical artists of both foreign and native birth. The Viennese were, in fact, so accustomed to seeing German performers in their theaters that the adoption of Löwen's institutionally-driven project would have been misplaced, and his vision of a nation entirely too democratic.

For the reasons I have articulated above, Viennese subjects perpetuated an alternative vision, or rather *visions*, of nation. These imaginings reflected both the political and theatrical customs that dictated their experiences of theater-going in Vienna. I will address the politics first.

### **The Politics of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation**

Until about 1700, there was no question that the German *Reich* (Empire), a separate nation from that of hereditary Austria, was under the aegis of the Austrian Emperor; from his throne in Vienna, he bore the title of Holy Roman Emperor of the *Heilige Römische Reich Deutscher Nation* (the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation).<sup>136</sup> But in the eighteenth century, constantly at war (or facing the threat of war), the Habsburgs lost their territorial stronghold over the German Empire.<sup>137</sup> By 1740, according to the historian Michael Hochedlinger, “Habsburg dynastic power policy had almost completely emancipated from the

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<sup>136</sup> In a treaty composed in November of 1700, the Habsburgs formally recognized Frederick III of Brandenburg as King of Prussia, an act that facilitated Prussia's rise to power and the slow erosion of the dynasty's empire.

<sup>137</sup> The list of territorial disputes is too great and too complicated to quantify here, but it is worthwhile to note the significance of the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748), and the Seven Years War (1756-1763).

interests of the *Reich*.”<sup>138</sup> The Habsburgs therefore refocused their efforts and resources to maintain their hereditary lands and, as a consequence, the notion of “Austrian identity” took on dynastic rather than ethnic associations.<sup>139</sup>

The practice of tracing national identity, though, is a rather challenging and somewhat flawed endeavor. The designation *Österreich* (Austria) has historically connoted many geopolitical constructions: an archduchy, kingdom, and a multi-national and multi-lingual empire. It is still possible to decipher a few rhetorical codes that point to how Germans differentiated themselves from Austrians, and vice versa.<sup>140</sup> For instance, the composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart called himself “German” as the Habsburgs had no political hold over the bishopric of Salzburg where he was born. Moreover, Mozart’s letters suggest that he felt like an outsider within the Habsburg’s imperial city, and closely identified with a growing cadre of German composers who found fame elsewhere in Europe. Conversely, the Viennese playwright Christian Gottlob Klemm professed allegiance to the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II by both identifying as an Austrian and suggesting that his German-language plays be viewed as part of an Austrian canon.<sup>141</sup>

When Viennese subjects debated the merits of establishing a German national theater, their arguments were quite nuanced. Given the distinction that arose between Habsburg dynastic lands (Austria) and the *Reich* (Empire), they questioned how an instrument associated with

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<sup>138</sup> Hochedlinger, *Austria’s Laws of Emergence*, 10. For further discussion, see Derek Beales, *Joseph II* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 110.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>140</sup> For more on the complexities of Austrian identity, see Richard Georg Plaschka, *Was Heisst Österreich?: Inhalt und Umfang Des Österreichbegriffs Vom 10. Jahrhundert Bis Heute* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1995), and Ruth Wodak, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999).

<sup>141</sup> Klemm, *Beiträge zum Deutschen Theater, Vorrede* (Vienna, 1767).

German national identity, such as a German national theater, might encumber their distinctly Austrian traditions. They also contemplated how the introduction of a German national stage might influence the sociopolitical dynamics of their multinational and multilingual city.

Naturally, Vienna's status as an imperial capital discouraged the promotion of any radical political agenda from within. It behooved the Viennese aristocracy to be amenable to the tastes and attitudes of their emperor. Similarly, many bourgeois champions of national theater argued that the German stage would *not* promote imaginings of a democratic nation-state, but rather strengthen the sovereignty of the empire.<sup>142</sup> Still, the omnipresence of their emperor did not prevent them from dreaming of an alternative nation-state. I postpone my analysis of Joseph II's Court and National Theater (est. 1776) to chapter three, to examine, here, the national dreams of his subjects, as circulated in print discourse and as reified on the Viennese stage. This evidence attests to what Carl Schorske has argued in his book *Thinking with History*, "It was the theater, from the lowly folk-comedy to the lofty court stage, [that] became the primary cultural form through which the Viennese of every class made meaning of their world."<sup>143</sup>

### **Viennese Theatrical Custom and the Idea of German National Theater**

For most of the eighteenth century, the Habsburg imperial family funded two theaters in Vienna. Their stages presented a variety of foreign works, e.g., French plays and Italian opera, and German entertainments, e.g., harlequinades (*Hanswurst* shows) and comedic pantomime. In the 1760s, when Viennese subjects exclusive of the aristocracy, dreamed of a German national theater they had to negotiate the theatrical customs that already defined their city and the desire

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<sup>142</sup> For an additional overview of the discourse, see Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte*, 83-92.

<sup>143</sup> Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998), 127.

for a German dramatic canon that promoted the new values of their class. This negotiation played out in several ways.

First, there was a sect of the Austrian *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated bourgeoisie) who strove to advance the bourgeois German drama, but had no ready solution to account for the dearth of bourgeois German playwrights. For some members of this group, the obvious answer was to do away with the popular Viennese harlequinade and look toward France for new theatrical models. France, after all, had a monarchical government like the majority of German-speaking states. Moreover, the project of forging a national theater (both in terms of literary output and a physical institution) was something that France had already accomplished. By the mid-eighteenth century, the state was famous for their dramatic output. The French King Louis XIV had also created “a proto-type” of the national theater model. His *Comédie Française* was maintained by the state’s central government and dedicated to the advancement of French drama.<sup>144</sup> Those members of the Austrian *Bildungsbürgertum*, who winced at the thought of a French archetype of theatrical production, may have envisioned a national theater like that of Löwen’s in Hamburg, but they did not readily publicize this ideal in print. That was too dangerous.

Finally, there was a third group of Viennese subjects, including the Habsburgs’ resident company of German players, who argued that the Viennese harlequinades should not be discarded for a new canon of German plays, but rather celebrated as the proper genre of German theater and Austrian custom. They faced opposition from those who ascribed to the Gottsched school of playwriting and those who championed “authentic” kinds of German plays, like those written by Lessing. In the end, each of these proposals were problematic in one way or another.

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<sup>144</sup> S.E. Wilmer, *National Theaters in a Changing Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 39.

But the fact that there appeared to be no viable solution did little to quiet the debates. Proponents of national theater imagined, and their writings now document their collective gesture toward nationhood.

### **Making a Case for Hanswurst**

Although theater historians have vociferously debated Jürgen Habermas's historiography in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (first translated into English in 1989), they've said little about the philosopher's argument that the "representative public sphere [transformed into] a rational-critical one during the eighteenth century."<sup>145</sup> Prior to the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere, absolutist princes and feudal lords made political decisions in secret and practiced a form of "representative publicness" before their subjects.<sup>146</sup> The Habsburgs were no different. As rulers of a Catholic religious state, they used carefully-staged forms of public display to emphasize both sovereign strength and piety before their subjects. Vienna, the capital of their empire since the thirteenth century, benefited from this steady tradition of theatrical patronage. Events commemorating births, funerals, weddings, and coronations typically involved some element of public spectacle, while festivities tied to the Roman Catholic liturgical year also necessitated feasts, pilgrimages, and public displays of worship. In the seventeenth century, the family gained repute for their courtly entertainments, which included a diverse repertoire of machine plays, ballet, fireworks, *Singspiel*, opera, and

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<sup>145</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1991). David Wiles, for example, only begins his critique of Habermas after acknowledging that a transformation from the representational to the rational occurred; see *Theater and Citizenship: The History of a Practice* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2011), 208. Christopher Balme offers a review of theater histories and dramatic theory pertaining to Habermas in *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014), 4-21. The basis of his own analysis begins with Habermas's theories and he summarizes them succinctly for an English readership.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

oratorio. During a typical seventeenth-century *fête*, these genres were often combined and performed with musical accompaniment.<sup>147</sup> As the bourgeois public sphere began to emerge in the eighteenth century, some of the exclusive pleasures of the court were also extended to non-aristocratic subjects of the city.<sup>148</sup>

In 1705, the Emperor Joseph I (1678-1711) sanctioned the construction of a public playhouse. Similar to the Parisian *Hôtel de Bourgogne*, the Viennese Kärntnertor Theater was conceived to host players of the *commedia dell'arte*. Within a year of opening in 1708, companies of German descent were also permitted to perform there. Historians have suggested that Kärntnertor audiences preferred to see German players before actors of Italian descent, thus, initiating a precedent for German-language performance in Vienna.<sup>149</sup> The German players, no doubt, owed much of their success to training abroad in the Catholic provinces of Austria and what is now southern Germany. Bringing the comedic hijinks of the southern-peasant farmer of the *Fastnacht* or carnival season to the imperial stage, they connected to audiences by spoofing local manners and mores. Their work borrowed conventions from the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, such as stock characters and extemporized scenarios, but still evoked a distinctly Germanic sensibility. The *Prinzipal* (actor/manager) Anton Stranitzky (1676-1726) proved especially adept at performing this kind of comedy, and as a result, acquired exclusive access to the Kärntnertor stage for the duration of his career.

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<sup>147</sup> A machine play refers to an ornate baroque spectacle (typically an opera) that incorporated stage machinery for spectacular effect. Judith Aikin, *German Baroque Drama* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 122.

<sup>148</sup> I borrow and employ the term *bourgeois public sphere* from Habermas here to emphasize the turn from representational culture to a culture more assertively controlled by the public.

<sup>149</sup> Verena Keil-Budischowsky, *Die Theater Wiens* (Wien: P Zsolnay, 1983), 85; see also Yates, *Theater in Vienna*, 4.

Before Stranitzky became a star of the Viennese stage, he trained as a puppeteer. Born the son of a liveryman from Graz, he left home early to find his fortune as an entertainer and toured the Bavarian cities of Munich, Augsburg, and Nuremberg with his marionettes. When he came to Vienna in the early 1700s, he studied to be an actor with “*Die teutschen Comödianten*” (The German Comedians). Soon after, Stranitzky grew famous for his portrayal of the clown Hanswurst, who borrowed the gestures and slapstick of the Italian-born *Arlecchino*, burlesqued the customs of a Salzburg peasant, and spoke in a dialect that was distinctly Viennese.<sup>150</sup> His signature costume, which included a green jacket, ruffled shirt collar, and pointed green hat, made him instantly recognizable and spawned countless imitators. As with other Hanswurst actors, Stranitzky spoofed some ubiquitous elements of German customs (a predilection for sausage for instance), but his success was most certainly contingent upon his ability to parody Viennese customs and capitalize upon residents’ particular fondness for the Italian opera.<sup>151</sup> Stranitzky’s work incorporated material from many genres including *Haupt und Staatsaktionen* plays, comic interludes, and operatic music. The theater historian Otto Rommel counts at least five of the fourteen surviving Stranitzky plays as parodies of popular Habsburg operas.<sup>152</sup> His libretti were simplified, as were the scores, but the presentation of “good music” in each of his performances warranted the approval of the Kärntnertor Theater lease.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> James Van Horn Melton, “School, Stage, Salon: Musical Cultures in Haydn’s Vienna,” *The Journal of Modern History* 76, no.2 (2004): 266.

<sup>151</sup> Whereas harlequin actors in Protestant Germany were rarely privy to the works of Italian composers and were unlikely to have studied music, in Austria, musical education was a privilege even afforded to the poor.

<sup>152</sup> Otto Rommel, *Die Alt-Wiener Volkskomödie; Ihre Geschichte Vom Barocken Welt-Theater Bis Zum Tode Nestroys* (Vienna: A. Schroll, 1952), 231.

<sup>153</sup> Yates, *Theater in Vienna.*, 4.

Despite the existence of a few extant texts, it is difficult to know exactly what went on in the Kärntnertor Theater during Stranitzky's tenure. As per the custom of the day, much of his work was improvised.<sup>154</sup> We can, however, ascertain some sense of a performance from the letters of an English visitor named Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762). As the wife of an ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, she attended several Viennese entertainments including operas performed within the Habsburg Gardens and comedic works presented at the Kärntnertor. In a letter from 1717, she was pleased to report that she attended a German comedy with a familiar subject. Because the *Amphitryon* was handled in Latin, French and by an English poet, she wrote, "I was curious to see what an Austrian author would make of it."<sup>155</sup> She recorded her experience as follows:

I understood enough of that language to comprehend the greatest part of it, and besides I took with me a lady that had the goodness to explain to me every word. . . I never laughed so much in my life. It begun with Jupiter's falling in love out of a peephole in the clouds, and ended with the birth of Hercules. But what was more pleasant was the use Jupiter made of his metamorphosis, for you no sooner saw him, under the figure of *Amphitryon* , but, instead of flying to Alcmena with the raptures Mr. Dryden puts into his mouth, he sends for *Amphitryon* 's tailor, and cheats him of a laced coat, and his banker of a bag of money, a Jew of a diamond ring, and bespeaks a great supper in his name; and the greatest part of the comedy turns upon poor *Amphitryon* 's being tormented by these people for their debts.<sup>156</sup>

Lady Montagu found another aspect of the production rather confounding. In one scene, two of the actors had "let down their breeches in direct view of the boxes, which were full of people of

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<sup>154</sup> Some of these plays are published in Joseph Anton Stranitzky, *Ein Jahrhundert Wiener Komödie*, ed. Johann Sonnleitner (Salzburg: Residenz, 1996).

<sup>155</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Alexander Pope, Vienna, 4 September 1717, in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Mrs. Hale (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1876), 127.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

the first rank” and despite this gross display of indecency, the audience “seemed very well pleased with their entertainment, and assured me this was a celebrated piece.”<sup>157</sup>

In the eyes of a foreign visitor, this crass gesture before the nobility pointed to Austria’s slow progress toward a more civilized theater and, by extension, a more civilized society. Lady Montagu often suggested that her Austrian hosts were a bit boorish and when the English musicologist Charles Burney arrived in Vienna in 1772, he concurred, recounting her story as evidence of German “ribald taste.”<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, the longevity of Strantzky’s tenure in the theater and the absence of censorious theatrical legislation, suggests that the Viennese court did not share Lady Montagu’s misgivings. Because Austria maintained a strong delimited feudal structure, why would the gross behavior of a peasant be of any concern to aristocratic society? Hanswurst and his comedic brethren were not model bodies of decorum, nor did they aspire to be. They evoked the Austrian peasants who masqueraded in the public squares and upheld the proper mores of their station. A tradition of musical harlequinades continued in the Kärntnertor Theater with little controversy up until the mid-eighteenth century.

If we look at a more expansive picture of German theater in eighteenth-century Europe, the resilient presence of the harlequin in the Kärntnertor is rather remarkable. The Germanic scholar Judith Popovich Aiken argues that the carnival farce before Lenten fasting was virtually eliminated in the Protestant states by the end of the 1500s, and while the harlequin could be found on the temporary stages of market squares well into the 1700s, criticism by Protestant

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<sup>157</sup> Wortley Montagu, *Letters*, 128.

<sup>158</sup> Burney, *Musical Tours in Europe*, 75.

reformists such as Johann Christoph Gottsched significantly diminished both his presence and popularity.<sup>159</sup>

Gottsched asserted that a peasant unable to satiate his corporeal desires modeled the very lowest form of social decorum, and in his moral weekly *Der Biedermann*, he admonished those who attended carnival harlequinades. Writing in 1728, for instance, a *Biedermann* correspondent suggested that the practice would invite a most horrifying consequence. “A mother who frequented the carnival everyday gave birth to a child in whose face a mask of flesh had grown and whose body showed red, yellow, and green patches all over: for the mother had mostly attended the carnival in the costume of Harlequin.”<sup>160</sup> The story tapped into a pervasive anxiety that a bourgeois witness might imitate the mannerisms of a crass peasant and thus transform into one herself. It also reminded readers that the stage was an inherent platform for the distillation of social mores. Following the end of Gottsched’s crusades, his protégés, who had trained with his partner Karoline Neuber (1697-1760), began forming their own companies and repertoires. Under the direction of *Prinzipale* such as Johann Friedrich Schönemann, harlequinades were discarded for a repertoire of foreign plays in translation. In 1761, the German scholar Justus Möser noted that the harlequin, who represented the temporary freedoms of both feudal and religious restraint, could still be found on stages in Bohemia and Austria, but nary a one seemed to thrive in the Protestant states of lower Saxony.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Aikin, *German Baroque*, 12.

<sup>160</sup> This account is quoted in Karen Jürs-Munby, “Hanswurst and Herr Ich: Subjection and Abjection in Enlightenment Censorship of the Comic Figure,” *New Theater Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (2007): 132. The analysis is my own.

<sup>161</sup> Justus Möser, *Harlequin: or, a Defense of Grotesque Comic Performances*, trans. Joach. Warnecke (London, 1776), 68.

As evidenced from Möser's observation, the harlequin still appeared on Austria's stages in 1761, but thanks much in part to Gottsched, suffered persecution. The year 1748 marks the beginning of the Viennese *Hanswurststreit* (Hanswurst Dispute), a series of controversial reforms aimed to temper the harlequin's popularity and champion the German literary drama.<sup>162</sup> Although historians typically argue that the dispute began when Queen Maria Theresa attempted to legislatively censor German plays in her theaters, the trouble actually began when Vienna's resident company of German actors tried to implement some of Gottsched's reforms in the Kärntnertor.<sup>163</sup> At that time, in addition to the regular presentation of their German comedies, the company also performed French tragedies in German translation.<sup>164</sup> For example, in the first season of the project, the German players presented Gottsched's adaptation of Voltaire's *Alzire* (1736) and Thomas Corneille's *Le Comte d'Essex* (1678).<sup>165</sup> In the following two years, the trend continued with German translations of Voltaire's *Oedipus* (1718) and *Zaire* (1732), as well as Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid* (1637), *Cinna* (1639), and *La Mort de Pompée* (1642).<sup>166</sup> Ultimately, these translations failed to attract a substantial audience. The Viennese were accustomed to

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<sup>162</sup> See Yates, *Theater in Vienna*, 8. For further reading, see Karl von Görner's *Der Hans Wurst-streit in Wien und Joseph von Sonnenfels* (Vienna, 1884).

<sup>163</sup> It is worth noting a critical exception. The resident troupe of German actors incorporated some of Gottsched's reforms into their repertoire in 1748, though the ballet master Franz Hilverding had already taken similar measures to ban Hanswurst from the stage even earlier. As noted by the historian Bruce Alan Brown, in 1742, Hilverding substituted the "Harlequins, Pulcinellas, and Giangurgolos" in the traditional *pas de deux* with a more realistic assortment of peasant characters such as "threshers, colliers, and Hungarian gypsies." See B.A. Brown, *Gluck and the French Theater in Vienna* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), 153-154.

<sup>164</sup> The historian Gustav Zechmeister notes that a member of the German ensemble named Friedrich Wilhelm Weiskern (1711-1768) actually contacted Gottsched regarding a production of his play *Cato*. *Die Wiener Theater Nächst der Burg und Nächst dem Kärntnerthor: Von 1747 bis 1776* (Vienna: Böhlau Im Komm, 1971), 31.

<sup>165</sup> A fairly comprehensive index of productions is included in Zechmeister. The productions cited above can be found on pgs. 401-402.

<sup>166</sup> Zechmeister documents two French plays in translation out of a repertoire of thirteen productions in the *Kärntnertheater* during the 1748 season. In 1749, four out of sixteen productions were translated from French works and the numbers were similar in the following year. See Zechmeister, *Die Wiener Theater*, 400-410.

seeing comedies, and the tragic repertoire did little to draw crowds. By that time, the German players had also lost a substantial number of aristocratic patrons. In 1741, Maria Theresa converted her palace tennis court into the Burg Theater, which proved attractive to spectators who desired closer proximity to the court and imperial family.

The Austrian turn toward France occurred rather late compared to that of Hohenzollern Prussia and other princely domains.<sup>167</sup> It was only after the Duchy of Lorraine, Francis Stephen, assumed the crown of Holy Roman Emperor in 1745, that the Viennese court truly embraced French theatrical conventions. Maria Theresa gifted a French acting company to her husband in 1752. Some years before, in 1748, the couple renovated the Burg Theater's modest interior in the French classical style. The architect Jean Nicolas Jadot (1710-1760) ornamented the pilasters of the theater with Corinthian capitals, sharply delineated the theater's proscenium frame, and decorated its façade with just two allegorical figures, Time and Fame. Additionally, as per French custom, he ornamented the theater's exterior façade with a similar allegorical design.<sup>168</sup> Structural changes to the theater's seating arrangements placed greater emphasis upon the social hierarchy of the audience. In the theater's renovation agreement, the lessee Baron Rocco Lo Presti agreed to several stipulations. The contract maintained that "proper loges" should be designated for "distinguished nobles" and "for the highest of these the great middle loge and the loges next to the proscenium."<sup>169</sup> Moreover, a part of the gallery was to be consistently reserved for the "disposition of the court."<sup>170</sup> Although the Burg Theater was originally conceived as a

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<sup>167</sup> As I noted in chapter one, German princes would often solicit a French company of players before actors of German descent.

<sup>168</sup> Daniel Hertz, "Jadot and the Building of the Burgtheater," *Musical Quarterly* 68 (1982): 7-8.

<sup>169</sup> As quoted in Hertz, "Jadot and the Burgtheater," 5.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

public institution, the 1748-renovations to the interior made the space feel demonstrably prohibitive to bourgeois patrons. As the musicologist Daniel Hertz has argued, the cultural values of mid-eighteenth-century Vienna were thus reified in the architecture of the city's two theaters. Whereas the front of the Kärntnertor turned toward the city, entreating the public to enter; the Burg Theater symbolically faced the palace, beckoning to the court.<sup>171</sup>

This audience stratification prompted another transformation in Vienna's theatrical culture. When the project to implement Gottsched's reforms in the Kärntnertor led to a financial crisis, tragedies were discarded and the harlequin actors were charged once more with bringing audiences back inside the theater. Because the court spent most of their time in the Burg Theater, the German players in the Kärntnertor introduced a new and markedly politicized repertoire of plays. This new version of harlequin, in step with the rise of bourgeois political consciousness, no longer exemplified an innocuous and humble servant. The Viennese comedic actors considered themselves satiric "truth-tellers," and by poking fun at aristocratic mores, they subverted social hierarchies and governing order by employing "the ludic power of the stage."<sup>172</sup>

The two men chiefly responsible for reviving the harlequinade in Vienna were Joseph Felix von Kurz (1717-1784), otherwise known as Kurz Bernardon, and Gottfried Prehauser (1699-1769). As evidenced from accounts of their work, both men were indebted to the Hanswurst-actor Stranitzky, but had adapted his costume and comedic material to suit the spirit of their own time. Prehauser, for example, donned his predecessor's signature green jacket and

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>172</sup> I borrow this phrase from Christopher Balme to emphasize an alternative way of thinking about the development of a public. Whereas we might consider the dramaturgical criticism of Gotthold Emphraim Lessing as right in step with the transformation of a Habermasian bourgeois public sphere, the same cannot be said for the harlequin actors. of Vienna. They did, however, activate an alternative discourse through clowning. See Balme, *Theatrical Public Sphere*, 12.

pointed green hat. Yet in contrast to his predecessor Stranitzky, Prehauser was described by peers as less vulgar. In *Theatererinnerungen eines alten Burgschauspielers (An Old 'Burg' Actor's Memories of the Theater, 1802)*, the actor Johann Friedrich Müller noted that Prehauser was an actor who “stayed true to nature” and “was restrained and cleverly tempered when compelled to use parody.”<sup>173</sup>

Much to the delight of audiences, Prehauser and his cohorts had actually taken to parodying the French players in the Burg so that the theaters were in constant conversation with one another. The music historian Bruce Brown has documented several accounts of this in his book *Gluck and the Viennese Theater*. He writes:

Regnard’s *Le Joueur*” he writes given in the Burg Theater in 1752, and revived several times during the next year, inspired the German comedians to produce *Hanswurst der Spieler*, on 3 December 1753. When the French piece was given again in 1761 (on 16 July), the parody followed only two weeks later. . . . In 1753 *Hanns Wurst Herr und Knecht* was being played a mere eight days after *Arlequin maître et valet* (by Moissy) in the French theater.<sup>174</sup>

Even years later on the evening of 3 November 1761, the Kärntnertor Theater presented a comedy entitled *Don Juan, oder Der steinere Gastmahl (Don Juan or The Stone Banquet)* an annual mainstay of the *All Souls* holiday that featured the wily Hanswurst as Don Juan’s servant. On the very same evening, *Don Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre*, a *ballet d’action* by Christoph Willibald Gluck and Gasparo Angiolini was presented in the Burg Theater.<sup>175</sup> Although Prehauser’s detractors criticized the actor for taking on the persona of a peasant, there appears to be no record of him mooning his audiences like the German clown seen by Lady Montagu in

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<sup>173</sup> “Er blieb stets der Natur treu. Wurde er genötigt zu übertreiben oder zu parodieren, so geschah es mit Verstand und Kluger Mäßigung.” As quoted. in Helmut G. Asper, *Hanswurst: Studien Zum Lustigmacher Auf Der Berufsschauspielerbühne in Deutschland Im 17. Und 18. Jahrhundert* (Emsdetten: Lechte, 1980), 58.

<sup>174</sup> B. A. Brown, *Gluck and the French Theater*, 102.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

1716. As a man driven by corporeal urges (hunger, thirst, sex), the Salzburg peasant played by Prehauser made the excess of sovereign nobility, which decorated the theater, visible to the public.

Prehauser's partner Kurz Bernardon was particularly adept at the other facet of Stranitzky's work, the comedic pantomime. Yet, unlike his predecessor, who burlesqued the Italian opera, Bernardon collaborated with native-born composers such as Joseph Haydn. Haydn's biographer Albert Christoph Dies wrote that Kurz admired the composer's ability to write music that supported the actor's gestures and recounts the duo's first collaboration:

You sit down at the *Flügel* [said Kurz] and accompany the pantomime I will act out for you with some suitable music. Imagine now Bernardon has fallen into the water and is trying to save himself by swimming. Then he calls his servant, throws himself flat on the stomach across a chair, makes the servant pull the chair to and fro around the room, and kicks his arms and legs like a swimmer, while Haydn expresses in six-eight time the play of waves and swimming. . . . So began *Der krumme Teufel*.<sup>176</sup>

Bernardon and Haydn's *Der krumme Teufel* successfully drew crowds to the Kärntnertor Theater for two performances before the show was forced to close because of offensive remarks in the text.<sup>177</sup> Maria Theresa eventually exiled Kurz Bernardon from the city.

In 1752, the Habsburg queen seized control of both theaters' leases and attempted to regulate repertoires by outlawing the extemporization of players and the production of German language plays. Upon calling a meeting with officers of the court, she advised:

The German theater must remain completely separate from the other; apart from this, I approve the proposal. The comedy should give no pieces other than those coming from the French, Italian, or Spanish theater [i.e. in translation]; locally produced pieces by Bernardon and others are to be completely discontinued; however, should there be some good ones by Weiskern, these should carefully be

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<sup>176</sup> Dies, as quoted. in translation by Vernon Gotwals, *Haydn Two Contemporary Portraits* (Madison: U of Wisconsin, 1968), 97.

<sup>177</sup> Albert Christoph Dies, *Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph Haydn* (Vienna, 1810), 41.

read through in advance and no *équivoques* or filthy language tolerated in them, nor should the actors be allowed to use them with impunity.<sup>178</sup>

Her language, in this instance, might be considered deliberately vague. If she exiled the German players *in toto*, she would disrupt a forty-year tradition of presenting German theater to the German-speaking public. She would also appear ignorant of her subjects' theatrical predilections. On the other hand, without some degree of censorship, the imperial family remained susceptible to ridicule before subjects and distinguished guests. While the Kärntnertor went dark for much of that year, the comedians were back to work in 1753. Judging from repertory records, they continued to be productive for the remaining part of the decade, performing quite regularly in spite of Maria Theresa's attempts at censorship.<sup>179</sup>

### **Making a Case for Austrian Tradition**

There is little evidence to suggest that Viennese proponents of German national theater desired to break from the sovereign dictates of the Austrian Emperor, at least publically. For some, German national theater alluded to Austria's loss of power in the German Empire. They argued that a national title be awarded instead to the Kärntnertor stage, long home to the Viennese harlequinade. Others believed that the public's love affair with the German clown not only hampered the development of a German dramatic canon, but in fact stymied Austria's cultural and political influence in the German Empire. As I have already suggested, this debate did not take place in isolation. Members of the Viennese court also considered proposals to establish a national theater.

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<sup>178</sup> As quoted in B. A. Brown, *Gluck and the French Theater*, 65.

<sup>179</sup> Zechmeister, *Die Wiener Theater*; 425-444.

In 1765, Prince Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, former *Öberdirektor* of the city's theaters and close advisor to the Habsburg family maintained that the proper language of the theater was that of the noble class.<sup>180</sup> A “*théâtre national*,” or German theater, he argued, would fail to satisfy Vienna's international dignitaries and guests.<sup>181</sup> He wrote:

The German language not being as prevalent as the French or the Italian and these, and the last especially, being in greater usage among the select society of Vienna, one would be depriving this society almost entirely of spectacle if one were limit it to just the national [German] theater. . . . With the theater closed, the hours dedicated to decent amusement are absolutely empty most of the time for persons of a certain distinction. On this basis one will not be easily persuaded that in Vienna one [a national theater] should surpass the French theater, already adopted in all of Europe as a school of morals and politeness, and the Italian opera, which has been established among all enlightened nations as an assemblage of all the fine arts.<sup>182</sup>

Kaunitz's position against the establishment of a German national theater suggests that the idea was not only pervasive, but also potentially threatening to diplomatic affairs. He used language employed to rally support for a national theater like that in Hamburg, such as the teaching of mores and manners, to champion a larger pan-national vision of the imperial arts. Kaunitz was not against the German theater per se, but he took issue with the idea of using a German national stage to represent the capital of the Austrian Empire.

Vienna, Kaunitz argued, was a place where citizens of all nations might be treated to Europe's finest entertainments. In many respects, this boast was true. Earlier in the century, Lady Montagu wrote: “Tis true that Austrians are not commonly the most polite people in the world, nor the most agreeable: but Vienna is inhabited by all nations, and I had formed to myself a little

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<sup>180</sup> An *Öberdirektor* oversaw activity in the two theaters and had the power to solicit artists from abroad on behalf of the imperial family.

<sup>181</sup> B. A. Brown, *Gluck and the French Theater*, 3-4.

<sup>182</sup> Translated from a 1764 letter to Maria Theresa and qtd. in Bruce Alan Brown's essay “Lo specchio francese: Viennese Opera Buffa and the Legacy of French Theater,” *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, ed. Mary Kathleen Hunter and James Webster (New York: Cambridge UP, 1997), 52-53.

society of such as were perfectly to my own taste”<sup>183</sup> When the English musicologist Charles Burney came to Vienna in 1772, he also observed that Vienna attracted people from across Europe and that the city’s musicians and theater practitioners socialized like their international patrons. For example, when Burney asked the composer Metastasio whether he had the patience to learn German, the Italian replied, ““A few words only, to save my life.””<sup>184</sup> This retort exemplifies how language reinforced social hierarchies in the city. German artists had maintained a consistent presence in the theaters, but represented a fraction of Vienna’s audience.<sup>185</sup> In sum, according to Kaunitz, Vienna’s theaters needed to represent the interests and tastes of an international, multi-lingual, and elite population.

One of the earliest proponents of a national stage in Vienna was the playwright Christian Gottlob Klemm (1736-1810). Klemm’s cause was not predicated upon the development of a new German literature like Gottsched or Löwen, but the elevation of Vienna’s own theatrical arts. In 1766, he took the post of secretary at the Kärntnertor and committed himself to putting the genre of Austrian comedy to paper.<sup>186</sup> In the preface to his *Beyträge zum Deutschen Theater* (1767), a collection of plays, Klemm offered the following proclamation: “The arena of the German stage is not yet so finished that one should deem contributions to it to be unnecessary.”<sup>187</sup> This contribution (in reference to his own), he argued, may not be considered a masterpiece, but the

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<sup>183</sup> Wortley Montagu, *Letters*, 58.

<sup>184</sup> Burney, *Musical Tours in Europe*, 104.

<sup>185</sup> The music historian John Rice notes that Vienna’s population in the 1760s was the most linguistically cosmopolitan city in Europe with residents who spoke German, French, Flemish, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian, and Italian. See John Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera* (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1998), 32.

<sup>186</sup> Christian Gottlob Klemm, *Der auf den Parnass versetzte grüne Hut* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2013), 42.

<sup>187</sup> “Das Feld der deutschen Bühne ist noch nicht so bearbeitet, das man Beyträge derselben für unnöthig halten sollte.” Christian Gottlob Klemm, *Beyträge zum Deutschen Theater, Vorrede* (Vienna: 1767).

whole of dramatic literature in Germany was surely not deemed so either. In an impassioned appeal to his fellow patriots, he wrote: “I live and write in Austria, and I have had to strive to please the Viennese audience since the larger plays of this collection were performed at the Viennese theaters. Therefore, it was impossible to avoid the local character and language of the city.”<sup>188</sup> Klemm’s evocation of local character combatted the call for a national literature of Germany. Moreover, in defining himself as an Austrian who wrote for the theaters of the Austrian capital, he rhetorically inscribed Vienna’s theaters as German in terms of language, but Austrian in spirit.

### **Making a Case for an “Authentic” German National Stage**

No one opposed Klemm’s beliefs about Austrian local character more than the Viennese professor Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732-1817). A self-appointed *Kunstrichter* (arts critic) and chair of Vienna’s newly-created *Deutsche Gesellschaft*, Sonnenfels was both the chosen representative of Austrian literary affairs and an ongoing correspondent for several periodicals of the German Enlightenment.<sup>189</sup> We might therefore conclude that Sonnenfels’ fervent patriotism and ongoing communication with some of Germany’s leading intellectuals fueled his convictions about theater and the law.<sup>190</sup> Yet where critics in the German Empire showed mixed feelings about Hanswurst (Lessing, for example, thought banishing the clown a bit overzealous),

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<sup>188</sup> “Ich lebe und schreibe in Österreich, ich habe mich bestreben müssen dem wienerischen Publikum zu gefallen, denn die grössern Stücke dieser Sammlung sind auf dem Wienertheater aufgeführt worden. Ich habe also unmöglich das Locale in Charaktern und in der Sprache vermeiden können, das der Stadt gemäß ist.” Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Representative publications include the *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste*, *Der neue Teutsche Merkur*, and the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*.

<sup>190</sup> He corresponded with both Lessing and Friedrich Nicolai, among others.

Sonnenfels abhorred him.<sup>191</sup> He contended that the gross indignities of the Viennese harlequin would undermine the appearance and interests of Austria in the eyes of foreign dignitaries and impede the empire's cultural influence in Germany. If Austria were to fund a national theater, he argued, the emperor would be the first to transform the dignity of German authorship and manners, thus, paving the way for lesser German courts to follow his lead.

As argued by the historian Robert Kann, Sonnenfels's approach to governance adhered to the ideals of Enlightenment philosophers such as Montesquieu, but only as they applied to the established social order. In other words, Sonnenfels believed that the aristocracy should maintain their sovereign birthright, but that noblemen should also be "trained to become the leading class not merely by right of birth, but by virtue of achievement as well."<sup>192</sup> This rhetoric suggests that Sonnenfels subscribed to a theory of theatrical reform similar to that of Löwen. As I noted in chapter one, Löwen argued that a national stage should serve as an instructional stage. Yet whereas Löwen contended that the Hamburg National Theater would teach the proper mores and manners of an imagined German republic, Sonnenfels believed that a national stage would help to sustain the Austrian Empire.

In *Briefe über die wienerische Schaubühne (Letters on the Viennese Stage, 1767-1769)*, Sonnenfels delineated the failures of earlier reformers like Gottsched to incentivize his own agenda for the Kärntnertor stage. For instance, in Essay 17, Sonnenfels argued that the city of Leipzig where Gottsched began his work was far too small to impact the taste of an entire nation.<sup>193</sup> Perhaps in reference to companies run by Gottsched's apprentices like Schönemann,

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<sup>191</sup> Sosulski, *Theater and Nation in Germany*, 45.

<sup>192</sup> Robert A. Kann, *A Study in Austrian Intellectual History: from Late Baroque to Romanticism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1960), 171.

<sup>193</sup> J.V. Sonnenfels, *Briefe über die wienerische Schaubühne* (Vienna, 1884), 101.

Sonnenfels argued the following point: “For the German theater troupes, these types of plays are exactly the way they should be ... [It is the fate of these troupes to be] the fools of Thepsis, as they go fleetingly from town to town.”<sup>194</sup> But what of these things, he added, if the theater were properly entrusted to a court city? Vienna, he asserted, was a city that had both the clout and resources to initiate a lasting reformation of the German stage. Though again, he departed from the arguments of national theater proponents, like Löwen, when he emphasized that a national stage in Vienna was also important for maintaining an authoritative presence in European politics. He warned that condoning Hanswurst-actors like Prehauser made Austria appear weak to foreigners.

Despite the best of intentions, Sonnenfels’ criticisms of the theater earned him few friends in Vienna and abroad. Even Lessing observed in a letter to his wife Eva König: “At any rate, Herr von Sonnenfel’s all too severe zeal against the burlesque is not at all the right way to win the public.”<sup>195</sup> In February of 1767, the playwright Klemm actually used the Kärntnertor stage to publically take him to task. In Klemm’s satiric play, *Der auf den Parnass versetzte grüne Hut* (*The Green Hat has been Moved onto Parnassus*), the playwright not only mocked Sonnenfels’ staunch criticisms, but also christened the German clown Hanswurst, with his signature green hat, as an imperial and national icon. At the conclusion of the play, Hanswurst literally ascended to the kingdom of the muses at the top of Mount Parnassus.

In order to understand the comedic intricacies of Klemm’s satire, it is important to recognize its comedic origins. Klemm, like the actors Prehauser and Kurz Bernardon, utilized the

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<sup>194</sup> “Für die deutschen Schauspielertruppen zwar sind diese Art Stücke gerade, wie sie seyn sollen: die meisten haben noch nicht ein viel glänzen: deres Schicksaal als den Narren des Thespis, auf den sie von Städtchen zu Städtchen flüchtig gehen.” Ibid., 102.

<sup>195</sup> “Schon des Herrn von Sonnenfels allzu strenger Eifer gegen das Burleske ist gar nicht der rechte Weg, das Publicum zu gewinnen.” Quoted in Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte*, 72.

machine play to refashion the highly regulated conventions of baroque spectacle into a spectacular joke. In essence, as the historian Joseph Horn Melton suggests, the Viennese actors elicited laughter when they “disjoined baroque effect from its sacred matrix, transforming the miraculous into a vehicle of comical slapstick.”<sup>196</sup> Melton offers the following description of their antics, “the machinery in a Jesuit drama that enabled, say, an angel to descend from the heavens to rescue a repentant sinner was, under Kurz’s direction, employed to transport a live donkey across the stage, fly Bernardon through the air atop a mechanical rooster, or dangle Hanswurst from a cloud as he converses with the devil.”<sup>197</sup>

In *The Green Hat*, Klemm subverted another baroque trope, the princely apotheosis, to elevate the basest commoner Hanswurst to the highest form of tribute. Whereas baroque spectacles typically aligned a prince with a hero of antiquity, Klemm apotheosized Hanswurst as the actor Prehauser, blurring the distinction between man, harlequin, sovereign, and god. The Viennese could therefore pay tribute to the iconic Viennese harlequin as well as the man who played him. So too, by holding Prehauser up as a comedic muse, Klemm made a parodic jab at Sonnenfels, who worked so hard to banish the Hanswurst-actor from the stage. In the following pages, I include a synopsis of the play to suggest that the issues enumerated in printed matter concerning the reformation of the German stage were dramatized before the Viennese public. I also offer this synopsis, along with selected translations, to illustrate the character and sensibility of this Viennese popular stage.

The opening sequence of *The Green Hat* began as follows. The audience looked within the theater’s proscenium frame to find the muses climbing Mount Parnassus and upon reaching

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<sup>196</sup> Van Horn Melton, *School, State, Salon*, 269.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

the pinnacle, stopping to revel in a celebratory dance. Soon after, Apollo and Thalia also appeared at the top of the mountain and surveyed the ground below them. Thalia turned to Apollo and conveyed her uncertainties, noting, I fear my empire will be destroyed by someone who conspires against me.<sup>198</sup> To which Apollo replied empathetically, who would have thought that the Critic, an obvious reference to Sonnenfels, should have degraded into such a horrifying fury?

In the following scene, the aforementioned character of Critic entered the stage, and the actress playing her was likely recognized by the audience for her reoccurring role as Hanswurst's mistress Colombina.<sup>199</sup> Admonished by Apollo for her impudent behavior, the critic was then accused of taking sides with Momus. In scene three, when the god Mercury entered to report that Momus had conspired to chase "the green hat" out of Thalia's temple, she could not contain her glee. Mercury cautioned her. He advised, Apollo will decide what is to come of the green hat.<sup>200</sup> Entreating the assistance of Thalia and Mercury, Apollo and his companions then entered the realm of mortals to play a comedy. The critic and Momus followed.

In the second act, the scenery changed from the realm of the gods to an earthly location. The actors playing Apollo, Thalia, Critic and Momus left the stage. Mercury entered the new scene alone and found the actor Prehauser sitting in a garden, turning the pages of a *Wochenblättel* (a weekly newspaper well-known for dramatic criticism). Mercury had since transformed in character; no longer a god, he entered as a young suitor named Clitander. He

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<sup>198</sup> Christian Gottlob Klemm, *Der auf den Parnass versetzte grüne Hut* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2013), 4.

<sup>199</sup> The ongoing relationship between the German Hanswurst and the Italian lady's maid exemplifies how the *Commedia dell'arte* informed the German comedy.

<sup>200</sup> Klemm, *Grüne Hut.*, 7.

greeted Prehauser jovially and reported that a man named Leander would be staying a week in the nearby house. Would Prehauser, he asked, be willing to play in Leander's upcoming comedy? Prehauser showed his hesitation. The exchange went as follows:

PREHAUSER. What role would you give me?

CLITANDER. We would appreciate if you would take on the Hanswurst.

PREHAUSER. You must be joking. The green hat? Just go ahead and read, and you will hear wonders. You cannot have such foul taste.

PREHAUSER. Was wollen sie mir denn für eine Rolle geben?

CLITANDER. Sie würden sich uns sehr verbinden, wenn sie den Hannswurst.

PREHAUSER. Den Hannswurst? Ach gehn sie, sie spaßen; den grünen Hut? da lesen sie einmal den davon, da werden sie Wunder hören. Sie werden ja von keinem so verdorbenen Geschmacke seyn.<sup>201</sup>

Clitander scoffed. "Corrupted taste, when one loves the laughing comedy?"<sup>202</sup> He then encouraged Prehauser to don his green hat and costume. Alright, replied Prehauser, "If that is how they want it."<sup>203</sup>

In the following scene, the actress who had previously played the critic appeared on the stage as herself. She would once again reprise her role as lady's maid. The players who assumed the roles of Thalia and Apollo transformed into young lovers Isabelle and Leander. Then, during a series of negotiations, the company determined that they would bring one more actor into the play. Friedrich Wilhelm Weiskern, popularly known as Odoardo, was to play Isabelle's elderly father Lysimon. Finally, after each role in the *commedia* troupe was carefully assigned, Odoardo announced the beginning of a new play and his corporeal gate transformed from that of a vivacious actor into the stance of old *Pantalone*.

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>202</sup> "Verdorbenen Geschmack, wenn man das lachende Komische liebt?" Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> "Wenn sie es so haben wollen." Ibid., 11.

The plot of the play-within-a-play proved rather conventional in that the character of Lysimon, a bourgeois merchant, wished to marry his daughter Isabelle to a worthy suitor. He meets with three young men in pursuit of this objective: Leander, a nobleman with “too little money,” Clitander with “too much money,” and Cleon (the same actor who played Momus), a German Francophile who was just “not right.”<sup>204</sup> The plot, framed within the private sphere of domesticity, showcased the trio’s negotiations for the hand of Isabelle, but alluded to the ongoing public debate about the national identity of the Viennese theaters. It was therefore no accident that the actor who played the overly critical Momus also played the Francophile suitor Cleon. An entire scene in the play was devoted to Cleon’s inclination for pontification. For example, when Leander challenged Cleon to discuss his views on German literature, he answered as follows:

CLEON. Is it not true Isabelle, the French *Büchel* is worth more than all of the tomes the Germans have ever written? I cannot endure fifteen minutes of a German book. It is sheer blabber; a couple verses of Hofmannswaldau did please me once, otherwise nothing— nothing more in the world.

LEANDER. Hofmannswaldau? You know nothing but that? I would have thought Gellert, no?

CLEON. He is washed-up.

LEANDER. Haller?

CLEON. He is a prater and dry.

LEANDER. Uz, Gleim, Hagedorn?

CLEON. They are nothing, I tell you. If they were in any way useful, I would know of them. And my judgment is correct, I have never yet duped myself by means of it.

LEANDER. Now that is certainly a rightful course. And which, of the French do you like the best?

CLEON. Corneille passes as with Racine. Voltaire would otherwise be good, if only he had not written tragedies. Other than the *Misanthrope*, I prefer to read Moliere.

CLEON. Nicht wahr, Isabelle, das französische Büchel ist mehr werth, als alle Folianten, die die Deutschen jemals geschrieben haben? ich kann halt keine Viertelstunde bey einem deutschen Buche aushalten. Es ist lauter

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<sup>204</sup> These quotations represent Lysimon’s sentiments; see Klemm, *Grüne Hut.*, 14.

Geschwätzig; einzige paar Verse noch aus dem Hofmannswaldau haben mir einmal gefallen, sonst nichts – nichts auf der Welt mehr.  
 LEANDER. Hofmannswaldau? Kennen sie keinen als den? Ich dünkte doch Gellert? –  
 CLEON. Er ist wässerig.  
 LEANDER. Haller?  
 CLEON. Er ist ein Schwätzer und trocken.  
 LEANDER. Uz, Gleim, Hagedorn?  
 CLEON. Nichts sind sie, sage ich ihnen; wenn sie was nutz wären, so müßte ich sie ja kennen. Und mein Urtheil ist richtig, ich habe mich in meinem Urtheile noch nie betrogen.  
 LEANDER. Das ist nun freylich eine richtige Folge. Welche gefallen ihnen denn unter den Franzosen am besten?  
 CLEON. Der Corneille passirt, der Racine auch so noch mit. Voltäre wäre sonst brav, wenn er nur keine Tragödien geschrieben hätte. Außer dem *Misantröpe* lese ich den Moliere noch so am liebsten mit.<sup>205</sup>

Perhaps, to no one's surprise, these displays of erudition helped Cleon win the good will of Isabelle's father Lysimon. In response, the leading lover Leander remedied the situation with the assistance of his dutiful servant Hanswurst.

Hanswurst arrived at Lysimon's house disguised as an art critic. With a regal swagger, he greeted both Lysimon and Cleon and introduced his authoritative views on the subject of "good taste." Because you are surely familiar with my work, Hanswurst (doing his best impression of the real critic Sonnenfels) inquired of the two men with a wink and a nod, "Do you think that I have made it so that the green hat no longer pleases?"<sup>206</sup> Cleon asked, who is the green hat?

Hanswurst replied a bit dismayed:

HANSWURST. That is the person of the theater that chooses to wear a peculiar and silly form of dress, because in local costume he can tell the truths that one would never condone were they uttered by a lackey in livery.  
 LYSIMON. Is it not funny then?  
 HANSWURST. No, it is against good taste.  
 LYSIMON. What, then, is good taste?

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>206</sup> "Denken Sie, ich habe es doch schon so weit gebracht, dass der grüne Hut nicht mehr so gefällt?" Ibid., 29.

HANSWURST. What I declare it to be! Nothing funny, just long moral treatises that one can write out in peace without the need to further exercise oneself, and with which one can put the people to sleep by sheer laziness.

HANSWURST. Das ist eine Person auf dem Theater, die deßwegen eine sonderbare einfältige Kleidung gewählt hat, weil sie in der Tracht Wahrheiten sagen kann, die man einem Lakey in der Livree niemals verzeihen würde.

LYSIMON. Ist denn das nicht lustig?

HANSWURST. Nein, es ist wider den guten Geschmack.

LYSIMON. Was ist denn der gute Geschmack?

HANSWURST. Was ich davor ausbebe. Nichts lustiges, aber lange moralische Abhandlungen, wobey man ruhig ausschreiben kann, ohne daß man sich weiter weh zu thun braucht, und wodurch man recht mit Bequemlichkeit die Leute einschläfert.<sup>207</sup>

When Cleon had grown impatient with Hanswurst's stuffy display of knowledge, the conversation escalated to a brawl and the pair exited the stage to duel. Leander's plan to exploit Cleon's boorishness was thus realized by the trickery of another trickster.

At the end of the play, Cleon finally determined he was being deceived and declared the true identity of Hanswurst the critic to be Hanswurst the clown. As a result, Leander was forced to confess his motives. Fortunately, he had already won the favor of Lysimon and thus the hand of Isabelle. Lysimon declared, "But is it possible to have so much as one single good thought in such a costume?"<sup>208</sup> His question was answered when the top of Mount Parnassus once again appeared within the proscenium frame.

Apollo revealed his scheme. He confessed that the gods and muses had taken on the characters of mortals to assess the true nature of the German clown Hanswurst. His judgment was made clear, when he decreed: "The voice of the people, or of Nature, decides alone in comic

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid..

<sup>208</sup> "Aber ist es denn möglich, das man in einer solchen Tracht einen einzigen guten Gedanken haben kann?" Ibid., 37.

works.”<sup>209</sup> Turning to Prehauser, he added, “The rigor of strict ethical teachers must never frighten you; their work consists in advancing the universal delight of people.”<sup>210</sup>

He then invited Prehauser to preserve the spirit of Thalia’s Empire. “My dear Prehauser,” he declared, “for forty-four years you have given pleasure to the very highest court, a high nobility, and an enlightened public . . . give me your hand, my friend, and continue to broaden our empire and amuse our virtuous people.”<sup>211</sup> Prehauser had the last word. Looking out upon the audience, he suggested his allegiance to both the Viennese court and the German nation. He declared, “As long as my gray head can still collect thoughts, and as long as this old body can still stand upright, I will utilize all my strength to dedicate my comic performances to the greatest of European courts and the best nation.”<sup>212</sup> In the twilight years of Prehauser’s career, he saw the emergence of a bourgeois German nation and the resiliency of an autocratic government; ever eager to please, he played to both.

Although Klemm’s *Green Hat* poked fun at Sonnenfels and his zealous reforms, the critic still undeterred, continued to push his agenda for a more authentic kind of German national stage. In fact, when the actor Prehauser died two years after the production in 1769, Sonnenfels argued that it was a particularly apt time for reform.<sup>213</sup> He recognized that by that time, the stakes of national representation had accrued an even greater sense of import. If we consider the

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<sup>209</sup> “Die Stimme des Volks, oder der Natur entscheidet allein in komischen Werken.” Ibid., 39.

<sup>210</sup> “Der Ausspruch strenger Sittenlehrer müsse sie nie schrecken; ihre Arbeit besteht darinn, das allgemeine Vergnügen der Menschen zu befördern.” Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> “Schon seit vier und vierzig Jahren vergnügen sie einen allerhöchsten Hof, einen höchsten Adel, und ein erleuchtetes Publikum. . . Geben sie mir ihre Hand, meine Freunde, und fahren sie fort, unser Reich zu erweitern, und rechtschaffene Leute zu vergnügen.” Ibid., 40-41.

<sup>212</sup> “Ja, das will ich auch thun, so lange mein grauer Kopf noch Gedanken sammeln kann, so lange dieser alte Körper noch aufrecht steht, so lang werde ich alle meine Kräfte anwenden, dem größten Hofe Europens, und der besten Nation meine komischen Vorstellungen zu widmen.” Ibid.,41.

<sup>213</sup> Yates, *Theater in Vienna*, 9.

Hamburg National Theater's inaugural prologue (1767) once more, we'll recall that Löwen offered two visions for the future of Germany: The nation could either remain beneath the foot of a despotic prince or transform into a state more in step with the values of bourgeois Enlightenment.

These sentiments were not uniquely his own. In his *History of Osnabrück* (1768), the widely-read legal scholar Justus Möser contended that the history of Germany faced a new turn “where territorial sovereignty and despotism [would] ultimately take their place as either a fortune or disastrous resolution.”<sup>214</sup> His narrative traced the origins of the Saxon people to the Germanic tribes described in Tacitus's *Germania* (98 CE), an anthropologic approach that showed the gradual disappearance of an ancient Germanic right to freedom and property. According to Möser, the nation's fate was yet to be determined, but its democratic character was an implacable relic of the past. Goethe ruminated on this vision of Germany in his memoir *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: “We see a system resting upon the past, and still in vigorous existence. On the one hand, there is a firm adherence to tradition, on the other, movement and change which cannot be prevented.”<sup>215</sup>

Sonnenfels' ongoing correspondence with German intellectuals made him acutely aware that this political consciousness was burgeoning in the German Empire, and it was slowly beginning to impact the theatrical arts. As proof, he monitored the activities in Hamburg quite closely, making note of the national theater project as early as 1766 in his journal, *Der Mann*

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<sup>214</sup> Excerpt translated by Jonathan Knudsen from the *History of Osnabrück* (1768) and quoted in *Justus Möser and the German Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 103.

<sup>215</sup> Translated from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and published in *The Autobiography of Goethe: Truth and Poetry from my Own Life*, trans. John Oxenford (London, 1848), 518.

*ohne Vorurteil (The Man without Prejudice)*.<sup>216</sup> In July of 1768, he wrote in *Letters on the Viennese Stage* that four artful plays had recently been produced in Hamburg and that authorial genius was beginning to pop up throughout Germany.<sup>217</sup> Perhaps that is why his petitions for a national stage thereafter assumed an even greater sense of urgency. In another essay, he pleaded with the Austrian Emperor, “Should Germany forever be doomed to remain without a decent playhouse? Vienna alone can achieve this fame; all of the circumstances for this are superbly favorable here, and since we contribute so little anyway to the refinement of taste..., because we have let every little province outdo us in that regard, should we not be eager to grab the single remaining means by which to earn a place in the history of Germany?”<sup>218</sup>

Finally, after more than a decade of controversy, the Austrian Emperor Joseph II established a German national stage in Vienna. Joseph’s institution, however, looked nothing like the visions of Prince Kaunitz, the playwright Klemm, or Joseph von Sonnenfels. Instead, the emperor founded a theater that catered to his own tastes and represented an entirely different vision of nation. The Court and National Theater of Vienna gestured toward the reinvention of an empire that once thrived under the command of his ancestors, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.

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<sup>216</sup> As noted in Krebs, *L’Idée de Théâtre National*, 438.

<sup>217</sup> Sonnenfels, *Briefe*, 204.

<sup>218</sup> “Soll Deutschland ewig verurtheilt sein, ohne anständiges Schauspielhaus zu bleiben? Wien allein kann sich diesen Ruhm erwerben; alle Umstände sind hiezu vorzüglich günstig, und da wir ohnehin an den übrigen Seiten der Verfeinerung des Geschmacks einen so geringen Antheil haben, da wir uns an den Beiträgen zu der Besserung desselben von jeder kleineren Provinz haben übertreffen lassen, sollten wir nicht begierig nach dem einzigen Mittel greifen, welches nun noch übrig ist, in der Geschichte Deutschlands einen Platz zu verdienen?” From “Über die Nothwendigkeit, das Extemporieren Abzustellen” as quoted in Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte*, 70.

## Chapter 3: The Court and National Theater in Vienna

### Rehearsing an Imperial Nation

In the spring of 1776, the Austrian Emperor Joseph II decreed that the city's imperial Burg Theater, was to become a German national stage. With this announcement, he dismissed the theater's resident foreign artists and welcomed the city's German players in their stead. Two years later, he also endorsed the national *Singspiel* (song play). Thus, between 1776 and 1783, Vienna's national theater sustained a company of German musicians (both instrumental and vocal), composers, and dancers, in addition to a troupe of German actors. These artists collaborated frequently with one another. Wolfgang Mozart, for example, often worked directly with the national theater's company of singers as well as its troupe of actors.

Despite these collaborative intersections, histories of Joseph II's Court and National Theater are typically narrated according to the disciplinary orientation of scholars. Theater historians tend to argue that the Austrian emperor's national institution signaled the end of the harlequin and the beginning of a theatrical era more in step with the values of the Enlightenment.<sup>219</sup> Alternatively, musicologists have examined Vienna's national theater as cultural backdrop to the rise of Mozart and his contemporaries.<sup>220</sup> I believe, much like the

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<sup>219</sup> Beate Hochholdingner-Reiterer addresses this historiographical tradition in great detail. See her essay on "Theater History" in Thomas Wallnig, Johannes Frimmel, and Werner Telesko, *18<sup>th</sup> Century Studies in Austria 1945-2010* (Bochum, Germany: Dr. Dieter Winkler, 2011), 207-226.

<sup>220</sup> Some notable studies include: Daniel Heartz's *Haydn, Mozart, and the Viennese School, 1740-1780* (New York: Norton, 1995), which documents how the city's cultural predilections influenced the work of Vienna's two most famous composers. Dorothea Link's *The National Court Theater in Mozart's Vienna: Sources and Documents, 1783-1792* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) is a documentary history that highlights the work of Mozart to bolster Vienna's contribution to the discipline and traditions of classical music. See also H. C. Landon's *Mozart and Vienna: Including Selections from Johann Pezzl's 'Sketch of Vienna' (1786-90)* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), and Mary Hunter's *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999).

historian George Winchester Stone Jr., that studies of eighteenth-century theater should look at dramatic works as part and parcel of a larger event, a varied “whole show” of performances.<sup>221</sup> An evening of theater in Vienna, for example, might have incorporated music before, after, and between performances of an opera, comedy, or tragedy; a *Vorspiel* (an introductory one-act play, typically a comedy); a *Nachspiel* (afterpiece); and/or a ballet. This “whole show” represented an eclectic program of new works and recognizable favorites, realized because of the collaborative efforts of artists.

Keeping these things in mind, I want to turn our focus from the dreaming of a German national stage in Vienna to the realities of constituting one. This chapter aims to elucidate how the co-regents Maria Theresa and Joseph II used the stage as an instrument of governing authority. It traces the evolution of their institutional decision-making as well as the structural and artistic qualities that defined the Burg as a national space. As I see it, in order to fully conceptualize this top-down approach to theatrical management, one must also consider the perceptions of those looking from the bottom up. For this reason, I too draw from evidence relating to the Mozart family. Mozart’s experiences in Vienna span from 1762, in the early years of the city’s national theater debates, to his death in 1791. I consider the experiences of Mozart, not in service to his biography, but to show that in Joseph’s Court and National Theater, music and theatricality were inextricably linked. The performers in Joseph’s national theater rehearsed these traditions to forward the future of an imperial nation-state.

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<sup>221</sup> George Winchester Stone Jr, *The Stage and the Page London’s “Whole Show” in the Eighteenth-Century Theater* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1981).

## A Look Back to Look Forward

In chapter one, I discussed how the German harlequin became a beloved and resilient figure of the Viennese stage. I also argued that in the 1750s, the comedy of Hanswurst evolved to reflect a growing sense of friction between the bourgeois and aristocratic classes. In an effort to curtail seditious activity, Maria Theresa tried to ban Hanswurst from Vienna's theaters, and in 1752, she appointed a director to oversee all theatrical activity on her behalf. During this period, two forms of theater competed for the attention of Vienna's public. In the Burg, a resident company of French actors performed a canonical repertoire of French plays. In the Kärntnertor, German players offered harlequinades and burlesques. New traditions of theater-going had essentially perpetuated a growing rift between the classes. In the following decade, this culture began to change.

In the 1760s, as bourgeois proponents such as Joseph von Sonnenfels argued that the Kärntnertor should be reformed and repurposed as a German national theater and Christian Gottlob Klemm apotheosized the German clown Hanswurst to the *Reich's* own Parnassus, the aristocracy paid little heed to the debate. The court found its own entertainments in the Burg a sufficient diversion. Though tellingly, by that time, the aristocracy's repertoire had also begun to change. In the 1750s, a French company of players occupied the Burg, but in the 1760s, they were replaced by an *opera buffa* troupe.<sup>222</sup> French theater still had its devotees. Prince Kaunitz, for example, preached the merits of Vienna's French company, even as attendance diminished. Changes to the theaters' leadership and operations, however, invited the promotion of other genres and styles. In 1764, Kaunitz stepped down as *Öberdirektor* of Vienna's entertainments

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<sup>222</sup> During the ten years prior to 1776, an *opera buffa* played approximately three times a week in the Burg Theater. See Hunter, *Opera Buffa*, 7.

and Prince Wenzel von Sporck assumed the general directorship in his stead.<sup>223</sup> Sporck promptly dismissed the French players solicited by his predecessor and gave the Burg stage to Vienna's first *opera buffa* troupe.<sup>224</sup>

Upon the death of Emperor Francis Stephen in 1765, Maria Theresa relinquished control of the imperial theaters and made them available to lease.<sup>225</sup> The first to assume this new lease was the ballet master Franz Hilverding (1710-1768). Although Hilverding grew up around practitioners of the German theater (his godfather was in fact, the famous Hanswurst-actor Anton Stranitzky), he nurtured an artistic undertaking to eradicate the German clown from the stage.<sup>226</sup> After studying in Paris with the dancer Michel Blondy (1677-1747), he returned to Vienna to elevate the city's pantomimic ballet; an art form, he thought, defamed by the harlequin. As I discussed earlier, Kurz Bernardon's comedic pantomimes were flagrantly satiric, but comedic ribaldry also reigned supreme in the serious arts. For example, between the acts of an Italian opera, audiences saw comedic ballets such as Franz Anton Philebois's "Dance of Assorted Cripples and Fools in a Leprosarium."<sup>227</sup> Hilverding played to an audience desirous of baroque spectacle but without the characteristic interludes dominated by comedic figures. He adapted mythological stories and made them familiar using both costume and narrative gesture;

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<sup>223</sup> Sporck's proper title was *Musique Cavalier und General-Direktor*.

<sup>224</sup> Rice, *Salieri and Viennese Opera*, 43.

<sup>225</sup> The directorship was a hierarchy: at the top was an *Öberdirektor*, typically a prince or special ambassador to the Habsburgs and could therefore solicit artists from abroad on behalf of the imperial family; from 1752-1764, a foreign-born *Direktor* was at the center of the hierarchy and directly oversaw activities in the theaters; and finally there was the lessee, an individual (sometimes a performer or choreographer himself) who assumed the financial burden of leasing the theaters. See Zeichmeister, *Die Wiener Theater*, 397.

<sup>226</sup> Edward Nye, *Mime, Music and Drama on the Eighteenth-century Stage the Ballet D'action* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 82-83.

<sup>227</sup> "Tanz allerlei Lahmen und Törichten in einem Siechenhaus" as cited in Brown, *Gluck and the French Theater*, 153.

thus, by extension, he supplanted depictions of the grotesque with characters of higher status. After years of choreographing and dancing on the Viennese stage, it proved an auspicious time for Hilverding to undertake a new initiative. As lessee to the theaters, he could model reforms for the German stage after his projects in the field of dance and one can see his influence imprinted upon the Kärntnertor's repertory. In 1766, works by Philip Hafner and Franz von Heufeld (1731-1795), a reformist playwright and ally of Sonnenfels, are listed several times.<sup>228</sup> These changes, however, proved fiscally imprudent. Within a year, Hilverding accrued a substantial debt from low attendance, and gave up his lease to the theaters.<sup>229</sup>

The tenuous financials of both houses prompted the co-regents Maria Theresa and Joseph II to consider retooling the leasing system. Ultimately, the emperor wished to abstain from theatrical matters, arguing that the state “leave to entrepreneurs, the nobility, and amateurs complete freedom to mount such performances within the limits imposed by public decency.”<sup>230</sup> Following the death of her husband, Maria Theresa had stopped attending the theater, but still could not resist voicing her concerns. Her son's hands-off-approach to overseeing the theaters, appeared to her, a bit too lenient. She also expressed reservations about Joseph's new choice of lessee, Count Guisippe Affligio, whose reputation left something to be desired.<sup>231</sup> In a note to Prince Kaunitz she pronounced that Affligio should maintain “full decency” in all matters and “never approach the emperor.”<sup>232</sup> Her warnings were not without reason. Affligio was a social-

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<sup>228</sup> His friendship with Sonnenfels is rumored to have ended after the critic harshly critiqued his play *Der Geburtstag* (1766). Repertory records are listed in Zechmeister, *Die Wiener Theater*, 499-501.

<sup>229</sup> A new city-wide prohibition on gambling, no doubt, also contributed to poor attendance in Hilverding's theaters.

<sup>230</sup> Quoted in Beales, *Joseph II*, 159.

<sup>231</sup> The last name Affligio is spelled in some sources as Afflisio.

<sup>232</sup> As quoted in Beales, *Enlightenment and Reform*, 160.

aspirant rumored to have won his title in a card-game.<sup>233</sup> Nevertheless, her son chose not to heed her advice. Affligio took over the theaters' management in 1767 and throughout his tenure of three years, proved a veritable nuisance to both patrons and artists of the stage, including young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791).

After a three-year tour wherein young Mozart and his sister Maria Anna performed for some of the most influential courts in Europe, the family came to Vienna in 1767 for a second time.<sup>234</sup> When the Mozarts visited Vienna for the first time in 1762, the aristocracy clamored to see the young boy play the clavier and the Habsburgs actually summoned the *Wunderkind* to give a private concert at Schönbrunn.<sup>235</sup> A success by all accounts, Leopold Mozart (1719-1787), Wolfgang's father, felt certain that their return would merit the court's attention once more and that his son, by then eleven, would find a patron to commission his first opera. Young Wolfgang could certainly ascertain a patron abroad, but his father was convinced that "a German should reserve such a feat only for his fatherland."<sup>236</sup> Therefore, when the boy's homecoming to Austria was met with rather tepid enthusiasm, Mozart could not help but express his disappointment.

In February 1768, Leopold Mozart wrote to his landlord and confidant in Salzburg, Lorenz Hagenauer to relate the family's troubling situation. The letter warranted a plea for secrecy, "for you alone," as his unfavorable critique of both the Viennese court and the emperor

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<sup>233</sup> Giacomo Casanova, *The Complete Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt*, trans. Arthur Machen, (New York: Start, 2012), Chapter X.

<sup>234</sup> The tour included a number of cities in Austria, the Southern German Empire, as well as Brussels, Paris, London, and the Hague.

<sup>235</sup> Leopold Mozart to Lorenz Hagenauer, Vienna, 16 October 1762. In Emily Anderson, *The Letters of Mozart* (London: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc.), 6.

<sup>236</sup> From "'Species facti' Given by Leopold Mozart to Emperor Joseph II on 21 September 1768" translated and transcribed in Hertz, *Haydn/Mozart*, 733.

was undeniably incriminating.<sup>237</sup> Mozart began his account, however, with an evaluation of the Viennese public. He wrote: “That the Viennese, generally speaking, do not care to see serious and sensible performances, have little or no idea of them, and only want to see foolish stuff, dances, devils, ghosts, magic, clowns, Libberl, Bernardon, witches and apparitions is well-known; and their theaters prove it every day.”<sup>238</sup> As Mozart asserted, it seemed that the harlequin and his comedic brethren remained incontrovertible, and despite several attempts to reform Vienna’s German stage, the public would not acquiesce to something different. Moreover, he noted, the Emperor and his court could not be persuaded to help.

The Emperor, Mozart wrote, renounced responsibility for all matters concerning the city’s two public theaters as “he positively abhors spending money.”<sup>239</sup> They were entrusted instead, he noted, to a lessee named Guiseppe Affligio who bore the fiscal burden of planning the companies’ repertoires alone. Affligio, charged with pleasing the court and maintaining his theaters’ economic viability hesitated to support the work of a twelve-year-old German composer. To make matters worse, as Mozart explained to Hagenauer, his once reliable patron Prince Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, refused assistance. Months earlier, Wolfgang had contracted smallpox, and although he had since recovered, Kaunitz avoided all persons who showed signs of red spots. As Mozart noted, Kaunitz instead sent a message with the reassurance that “he would look after our interests, but that just now during the carnival, the nobles could not be assembled for a function.”<sup>240</sup> These circumstances were to be considered with great care, Mozart

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<sup>237</sup> Leopold Mozart to Lorenz Hagenauer, Vienna, 30 January-3 February 1768, in Emily Anderson, *Letters of Mozart*, 80.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 81

concluded. What was the family to do until the nobles had assembled? Moreover, he added, even with financial security, there remained the damning spirit of competition. At the end of his letter, Mozart weighed the situation once more and posed a question to his friend. “What do you think? Is not the reputation of having written an opera for the Viennese theater the best way to enhance one’s credit not only in Germany but also in Italy?”<sup>241</sup> Vienna, after all, still ranked above the other courts, as capital of the German arts.

Months later, Mozart wrote Hagenauer again, and the circumstances were no better. Although he had negotiated a commission of one hundred ducats for an *opera buffa* titled *La Finta Semplice*, Affligio gave Mozart the run-around in terms of money and a timely production. During the time arranged for Wolfgang’s debut, Affligio chose to present Carlo Goldoni and Giuseppe Scolarì’s *opera buffa La Cascina* (1756) instead.<sup>242</sup> Perhaps you’d wonder, Mozart wrote, if the Emperor or Prince Kaunitz might command the opera at another time, “but it was Prince Kaunitz who, against the will of His Majesty, persuaded Affligio to bring to Vienna French players who are costing him more than 70,000 gulden a year and who are ruining him (as they are not drawing the crowds which were hoped for).”<sup>243</sup> Mozart continued:

So now Affligio is throwing the blame on Prince Kaunitz and as the latter, on the other hand, hoped to induce the Emperor to take an interest in the French theater and thus defray his (Affligio’s) expenses, His Majesty has not appeared at any performances for weeks. Now you know the annoying circumstances, all of which arose simultaneously and helped to persuade Affligio to reject little Wolfgang’s opera and keep his hundred ducats in his pocket. On the other hand, these same circumstances prevented everyone from

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<sup>241</sup> Leopold Mozart to Lorenz Hagenauer, Vienna, 30 January-3 February 1768. *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>242</sup> In Leopold Mozart’s petition to the Emperor, he argues this to be the case. As translated and transcribed in Hertz, *Haydn/Mozart*, 735.

<sup>243</sup> Leopold Mozart to Lorenz Hagenauer, Vienna, 30 July 1768, *Letters of Mozart*, 90.

speaking to Affligio in a sharp, commanding and emphatic manner for fear they should have to compensate him for 70,000 gulden.<sup>244</sup>

Mozart conceded that the prestige of writing for the Viennese court might be countered by the difficulty of negotiating for their favor. Although the Emperor and his coterie of advisors had long championed the Italian opera, rewarding composers such as Antonio Salieri (1750-1825) and Metastasio (1698-1782), it seemed that it was far more difficult for a German-born composer to garner a patron. There were exceptions of course: Johann Adolph Hasse (1699-1783), Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787), and Florian Leopold Gassmann (1729-1774) all found success in Vienna, but arguably did so by catering to the aristocratic predilection for foreign (chiefly French and Italian) musical styles.<sup>245</sup> That Wolfgang Mozart was overlooked not only for his youth, but also for his national identity, felt an unconscionable offense. “All sensible people,” wrote Mozart, “must with shame agree that it is a disgrace to our nation that we Germans are trying to suppress a German, to whom foreign countries have done justice by their great admiration.”<sup>246</sup> Finally, after submitting a complaint to the Emperor and waiting nearly a year to see *La Finta Semplice* realized on a stage in Vienna, the Mozart family found it too costly to stay there. Scholars believe that the opera *La Finta Semplice* received its first production in Salzburg.<sup>247</sup>

When Wolfgang Mozart came to Vienna for the fourth and final time in 1781, he found that the tenor of experience for a German composer had drastically changed. As I have previously noted, in the first years of the co-regency, Joseph II contended that the state abstain

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<sup>244</sup>Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Although recognized as German, Gluck’s first language was actually Czech.

<sup>246</sup> Leopold Mozart to Lorenz Hagenauer, Vienna, 30 July 1768. In Emily Anderson, *Letters of Mozart*, 90.

<sup>247</sup> Hermann Abert, *W. A. Mozart*, trans. Stewart Spencer, ed. Cliff Eisen (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007), 107.

from all theatrical matters, but within a decade he had changed his policy dramatically.<sup>248</sup> In 1776, he took control of both theaters and awarded the court-favored Burg Theater to a company of German theater practitioners. Two years later, in 1778, he endorsed a project to promote the German National *Singspiel*.

### **The Emperor Joseph Contemplates the Merits of a German National Stage**

I have argued thus far that patriots of the Austrian Empire such as Klemm and Sonnenfels contended that their emperor could garner the allegiance of German subjects by establishing a national stage in Vienna. I have also suggested that the ongoing discourse about the fate of German national character in the 1760s was considered potentially threatening to the security of the Austrian state. As we have seen from writings by Löwen, Lessing, and Sonnenfels, the theatrical stage was considered an instrument for teaching citizens political virtue, the very lifeblood of national character that could either bolster or ruin the political foundations of an existing state. By the end of the 1760s, the political philosophies of Montesquieu, Rousseau, and other French encyclopédistes had been assimilated into German dramatic criticism and dramaturgical theory. This discursive sphere of influence proved worthy of the Emperor's attention.

Joseph II considered himself an enlightened monarch, but his policies might be better understood as absolutist governance in enlightened dress.<sup>249</sup> One can still see this metaphor artistically rendered in his portrait. In 1769, the artist Pompeo Batoni painted Joseph and his

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<sup>248</sup> Joseph was crowned Emperor in 1765.

<sup>249</sup> The question as to whether Joseph was an enlightened monarch or a despot has been endlessly pursued by historians. For a summary of this debate, see Derek Beales, *Enlightenment and Reform in Eighteenth-century Europe* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005), 262.

brother Leopold during their grand tour through Italy.<sup>250</sup> The portrait shows Joseph “as the embodiment of the ‘modern ruler.’”<sup>251</sup> He rejects the rigidity of sovereign posture by leaning against a table and gazing into the distance; his acquaintance with the ideals of the Enlightenment is marked by a copy of Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws*, set on the table beside him.

Yet the portrait also signals a legacy of Habsburg absolutism. Joseph’s right arm rests firmly upon an allegorical statue of Rome holding the sphere of global dominion, and a map, presumably of his own empire, is draped over the table, directly beneath the statue’s feet. The symbolic juxtapositions in the painting reflect Joseph’s synthesizing of enlightened universalism into an absolutist government. His affinity for *The Spirit of the Laws*, for example, was certainly proclaimed in artistic practice, but in the imperial capital, Montesquieu’s works were highly censored, as were the works of other Enlightenment philosophers such as Voltaire and John Locke.<sup>252</sup> In fact, Joseph so strictly enforced censorial practices that when the musicologist Charles Burney entered Vienna in 1772, officers of the custom-house reviewed his books “more scrupulously than at the inquisition of Bologna.”<sup>253</sup> As Burney recounted in his journals, “I was informed that if a single book had been found in my *sac de nuit*, or travelling satchel, its whole contents would have been forfeited.”<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> The painting Kaiser Joseph II. (1741-1791) und Großherzog Pietro Leopoldo von Toskana (1747-1792) can now be found in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

<sup>251</sup> Michael Elia Yonan, *Empress Maria Theresa and the Politics of Habsburg Imperial Art* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State UP, 2011), 105.

<sup>252</sup> Oszkár Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1961), 64.

<sup>253</sup> Burney, *Musical Tours in Europe*, 72.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

Beginning in 1759, the Habsburgs took control of the State Censorship Committee, which had formally been entrusted to a separate Jesuit administration. Following that action, the severity of censorship varied across the Holy Roman Empire's various principalities, but remained definitively within the purview of the Habsburgs themselves. In 1770, after a decade of what Joseph deemed a rather lackadaisical approach to censorship in Vienna, restrictions were made quite severe.<sup>255</sup>

When the Emperor appointed Joseph von Sonnenfels as censor, the critic justified reforms such as a ban upon harlequinades and restrictions on theatrical activity as pedagogically motivated.<sup>256</sup> In a description of his responsibilities, Sonnenfels argued it his duty to banish from the theater all "that offends in the slightest against religion, the state, or good manners."<sup>257</sup> Ostensibly his argument can be viewed in line with bourgeois contentions that the stage served as a tool for learning political virtue. Yet education in the name of an absolutist state clearly finessed the meaning of enlightened universalism. Nevertheless, the Emperor Joseph's reforms (and those shared with his mother Maria Theresa prior to 1780), both locally and abroad, were decreed quite frequently as pedagogical initiatives. He believed that the function of education was to create "virtuous citizens," but bringing educational projects within his direct purview also helped to curtail radical political activity within his sovereign empire.<sup>258</sup>

These policies suggest that Joseph ambitioned to transform his decentralized feudal empire into a centralized absolutist state. Ironically enough, this strategy, famously associated

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<sup>255</sup> Franz A. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 1753-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 186.

<sup>256</sup> Sonnenfels held the position less than a year.

<sup>257</sup> As quoted. in Yates, *Theater in Vienna*, 9.

<sup>258</sup> The historian Franz Szabo notes that Joseph's interest in producing "virtuous citizens" was articulated in a memo from 1765. See Szabo, *Enlightened Absolutism*, 190.

with Louis XIV and his successors, had been faltering in France. Unlike in France, however, Joseph strove to align himself with the people rather than situate himself above them. He utilized the rhetoric of the Enlightenment to bring his subjects' resounding call for nation into the fold of his empire. At the end of the century, this nuanced strategy helped to maintain his sovereignty as absolutist peers were dethroned. As the historian T.C.W. Blanning argues, "Of all the manifold failings of the French monarchy in the eighteenth-century, the most serious was its inability to sense the growing authority of the nation."<sup>259</sup> The establishment of a national theater in Vienna marks the beginning of a bid to strengthen Austria's affiliation with the German Empire, and the imagined nation of Germany, to curtail ideas of revolutionary discord. Joseph's national theater project also represents an early attempt to Germanize his non-German subjects. Vienna was an international city and the capital of his empire. By championing the German language in the city's theaters, Joseph set an example before the Viennese court, his sovereign peers, and foreign diplomats.

Throughout the 1770s, German-speaking administrators were deployed into non-German parts of the Empire to promote unification and undercut the region's local traditions and customs.<sup>260</sup> Education reforms promoted the German language and discouraged continued study of "dead languages like Latin and Greek."<sup>261</sup> Finally, in 1784, Joseph declared that German was to be the language of government for the entirety of the Holy Roman Empire. The first lines of the decree, as translated below, evoked the universalizing and pedagogical language of the Enlightenment.

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<sup>259</sup> T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660-1789* (Oxford, UP, 2002), 4.

<sup>260</sup> Jászi, *Habsburg Monarchy*, 69.

<sup>261</sup> Szabo, *Enlightened Absolutism*, 191.

The use of a dead language like Latin in all public business shows clearly that the nation has not yet attained a degree of enlightenment, which is silent testimony that either the national language is lacking, or that no other people can read or write in that language, and that only those who have dedicated themselves to the study of Latin are able to express their views in writing, but the nation at large is governed and receives judicial decisions in a language that it does not understand.<sup>262</sup>

Joseph concluded that in Hungary as well as the sovereign realms of Transylvania and Poland this proved to be especially true. Yet his proclamation promoted feelings of discomfort as it forced the princes of his empire to conduct state business in a foreign language. Joseph thus exacerbated hostilities between the dynasty and the sovereigns of Eastern Europe.

As Joseph forwarded these modern initiatives aboard in Vienna, he adopted institutional policies in line with those of Louis XIV more than one hundred years before. During his reign as king, Louis honored French achievement and innovation by overseeing the creation of several academies.<sup>263</sup> Joseph's advisor Prince Kaunitz suggested that the same could be done in Vienna. In 1764, Kaunitz had opposed proposals to nationalize the German theater, and, as Mozart recounted, tried to resuscitate interest in French performance even as demand had dwindled. By 1770, however, he championed initiatives to improve German cultural institutions, such as Vienna's Academy of Fine Arts. He observed that France did not earn its power solely by imperial force, but by "improving taste in cultural artifacts," advising that Maria Theresa look to Louis XIV's *Academie Française* as a model.<sup>264</sup> France, at that time, was still the cultural epicenter of Europe, drawing visitors across nations who wished to get a glimpse of French arts

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<sup>262</sup> As translated by Martin Votruba, "The Law on the German Language in Administration," Slovak Studies Program, U of Pittsburgh, n.d., <[http://www.pitt.edu/~votruba/ssttopics/slovaklawsonlanguage/Austrian\\_Law\\_on\\_the\\_German\\_Language\\_in\\_Hungary\\_1784.pdf](http://www.pitt.edu/~votruba/ssttopics/slovaklawsonlanguage/Austrian_Law_on_the_German_Language_in_Hungary_1784.pdf)> (accessed 20 Mar. 2016).

<sup>263</sup> For more on Louis XIV's absolutist practices and the creation of his academies, see Blanning, *Culture of Power*, 47.

<sup>264</sup> As quoted in Szabo, *Enlightened Absolutism*, 198.

and purchase French goods. Because Germans, or Austrians for that matter, were still perceived as cultural imitators, Kaunitz emphasized that the great urban centers of German principalities, and particularly the imperial capital of Vienna, should model German cultural achievement. In this sense, Kaunitz concurred with Sonnenfels, arguing that an arts capital in Vienna would allow good taste to spread into the provinces.<sup>265</sup> Kaunitz was even instrumental in soliciting Lessing to spearhead Vienna's new cultural initiatives. In 1771, he offered him a position at the Academy; the critic declined.<sup>266</sup> In 1775, as the Emperor and Kaunitz assessed candidates who would offer prestige to the fledgling National Theater in Vienna, they presumably considered Lessing again.<sup>267</sup> Lessing avoided another invitation to Vienna with great care.<sup>268</sup>

As early as 1772, Vienna's resident German players referred to themselves as a "national company" of actors. Members of the German intellectual community, that is, Germans outside of Austria, did not take kindly to their boasts. In a Frankfurt publication headed by Goethe, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Johann Heinrich Merck (1741-1791), the company was admonished on a number of grounds. An anonymous author (thought by the historians Brandt Hogendoorn to be Goethe) offered the following criticisms:

We are of course glad that they have banned extemporizing and Hanswurst in Vienna: but to make the Viennese theater into a National Theater just for that is an insult to the entire nation. . . . We would ask him [the Viennese actor J.H.F. Müller] in the name of the nation not to bestow the title of a national company on the Viennese company of actors until further notice but rather to wait until we are

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> A minister of the Austrian Government, T.P. von Gebler petitioned to secure a position for Lessing at the National Theater. See Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, 445-446.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 447.

a nation, until Vienna has become its representative, and until the company there has taken on the character of the same.<sup>269</sup>

By that time, the Hamburg National Theater had been dissolved for close to three years and no other theater in the German Empire had risen to take its place.<sup>270</sup> The writer's argument that the Viennese company represented an inauthentic national character emphasized his own distance from Austrian identity both culturally and politically.

Despite criticism from abroad, the Austrian turn toward a German national stage continued, and by 1775, the Austrian emperor made formal plans to make his court theater a national institution. The adoption of this national stage was to serve a dual purpose: First, Joseph could exert greater control over the theater's repertoire and operating budget, and second, he could appear magnanimous before his bourgeois subjects. As we remember from Leopold Mozart's letter to Hagenauer, Joseph II was known for being exceptionally cheap and he rarely hesitated to cut artistic expenditures. Therefore, it must have been particularly frustrating to watch his theaters become sites of unbridled excess under the management of Affligio and his successors. When Affligio was exiled from the city for forgery, the emperor replaced him with the Hungarian Count Janos Koháry.<sup>271</sup>

With the appointment of Koháry to the post of Entrepreneur and Absolute Administrator and Director of Entertainments, the Emperor changed the institutional structure of the theaters, and his decision proved beneficial in terms of repertory oversight, but not in terms of finances. Koháry appointed Sonnenfels as censor and Sonnenfels's replacement Franz Karl Hägelin soon

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<sup>269</sup> From the review of J.H.F. Müller's "Genaue Nachrichten von beyden K.K. Schaubühnen in Wien" in *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen* as excerpted and translated by Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 200.

<sup>270</sup> The enterprise came to an end in 1769 when the ambition to operate without a patron proved too great a burden for the mercantile consortium.

<sup>271</sup> Casanova, *Complete Memoirs*, Chapter XIX.

after, but did very little in terms of balancing budgets and monitoring day to day operations. When called to Hungary to attend other duties, Koháry found a trustee to oversee Vienna's theaters. This approach to bureaucracy proved fiscally disastrous as there was little oversight or accountability among members of the noble class. For example, when Koháry's trustee, Count Keglevics, assumed control over the theaters, he paid no mind to cost, inviting four different companies to perform in the two spaces. And so, in the early 1770s, Vienna was home to two balletic dance companies, an *opera buffa* troupe, and the Kärntnertor's resident German players. Moreover, the count showed a proclivity for extravagant costumes and decorations.<sup>272</sup>

When Keglevics's debts acquired a level of unprecedented controversy, the Emperor was forced to intercede. In July of 1775, he wrote his *Obersthofmeister*, prince Khevenhüller-Metsch, to express his displeasure.<sup>273</sup> "Because the mismanagement in which the theatrical enterprise has indulged as regards to the decline in spectacles of every sort violates all the contracts signed by it, and by far exceeds the authority granted to it, and I am not disposed to tolerate this disorder for long."<sup>274</sup> He went on to issue an ultimatum: should Keglevics and his administration fail to set the "*opera buffa*, the ballets, and the German troupe" on a more appropriate and advantageous path, he would be forced to void the provisions of Koháry's contract without further compensation for scenery and costumes, and the whole enterprise would come to an end.<sup>275</sup> Spectacles, he contended, would thenceforth be managed differently.<sup>276</sup> In the following

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<sup>272</sup> Franz Hadamowsky, *Die Josefinische Theaterreform und das Spieljahr 1776/77 des Burgtheaters: Eine Dokumentation* (Vienna: Verb. D. Wissenschaftl. Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1978), viii.

<sup>273</sup> The *Obersthofmeister* was a high official of the Viennese court.

<sup>274</sup> "Da der Misbrauch, den die Theatral Enterprise sich anmaßet in Herabsetzung aller Art Spectaclen alle von ihr unterschriebene Contracten, und weiter ertheilte Erlaubnißen weit übersteiget, und Ich in die Länge diesen Unfug zu dulden nicht gesinnet bin. . . ." Hadamowsky, *Theaterreform*, 3.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

year, he followed through on his ultimatum and terminated Koháry's lease. He then wrote Khevenhüller-Metsch again, to discuss the logistics of changing the management of his theaters.<sup>277</sup> Joseph's correspondence from March of 1776 offers a picture of the Emperor entirely at odds with Leopold Mozart's description from 1768. By that time, he had become fully invested in his theaters' operations and showed a particular interest in the city's resident company of German players.

### **The Emperor Joseph Institutes a German National Stage**

In a letter to Khevenhüller-Metsch, Joseph ruminates on the socioeconomics of running a theater. He asks to be informed of the court's public opinion, "What of the court's connection with the propaganda?" and follows this inquiry with questions about artist contracts and costumes.<sup>278</sup> Khevenhüller-Metsch ostensibly answered in great haste. In just a week's time, the Emperor penned another letter to the *Statthalter* (vice regent) of *Niederösterreich* (Lower Austria or the N.O.) asking him to publish new legislation pertaining to the theater in both the *Wiener Diario* and the French Newspaper.<sup>279</sup> The notice, which the Emperor included in his letter, pronounced that the N.O. administration responsible for the oversight of all theatrical business would henceforth make Vienna's theaters available for public use. The introduction of this *Spektakelfreiheit* (freedom of spectacle) put an end to the formal monopoly over theater production in Vienna, and perhaps just as importantly, the tradition of leasing the Burg and

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>278</sup> "Was seynd vor Verbindungen des Hof mit der Hetze?" Ibid., 3.

<sup>279</sup> The exact name of the French newspaper is not specified.

Kärntnertor to a single individual.<sup>280</sup> Citizens and foreigners were encouraged to make use of the theaters both inside and outside of the city's walls as long as they obtained permission from the N.O. From that time forward, as outlined in the letter, the Kärntnertor could be used for recitations, singing, dancing, and pantomime in all languages for the whole of the year. The Burg Theater could also be leased for other forms of entertainment, but only when not in use by the German society of players.<sup>281</sup>

On the same day, the Emperor also wrote to his *Obersthofmeister* and outlined his plan to convert the Burg Theater into a national institution. Count Koháry's lease will not be renewed, he noted, and so new arrangements for the imperial theaters must be made. With no time to introduce his plan to the German *Gesellschaft*, Joseph emphasized a great sense of urgency. As I noted in chapter two, the German *Gesellschaft* was first chaired by Joseph von Sonnenfels in 1761, and its members devoted themselves to the advancement of German cultural and political ideals. The Emperor's acknowledgment of their interest suggests that the society, once small and on the periphery of the court, had grown in influence.

Eager to see his new theatrical undertaking realized, Joseph offered his *Obersthofmeister* the following instructions. He asked that someone cater to the demands of the court and solicited suggestions as to how the *Hetze* (masses) might be pacified in the event of an uproar. Then, he requested that the *Beamte* (officers of his theaters) be organized and accounted for, taking care to ensure that Antonio Salieri received his yearly salary of 200 ducats. In his fourth instruction, which dealt chiefly with the organization of the German players, Joseph was very specific.

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<sup>280</sup> Prior to this decree, the Burg and Kärntnertor were the only theaters permitted to present entertainments before the general public. As the historian W.E. Yates notes, "The monopoly functioned as a form of compensation for the losses sustained by the lessees as a result of the court hold over operations – allocations of free boxes, for example, and days enforced closure for reasons of state." See Yates, *Theater in Vienna*, 15.

<sup>281</sup> The entire notice is published in Hadamowsky, *Theaterreform*, 15.

Assemble the *teutschen Comedianten* (German players), he wrote, and explain to them that Count Koháry's lease will not be renewed.<sup>282</sup> He advised that the players could form their own society, but were required to choose a director responsible for the selection of plays and the delegation of roles. He added that those players with lengthy contracts issued by Keglevics, should continue to play, but if the public appeared dissatisfied with a particular actor or actress, they would be voted out of the society. The Emperor's final directions revealed his larger intentions. "The Burg Theater," he wrote, "should henceforth be called the German National Theater" and so the institution should be organized to guarantee income in addition to expenses, which he acknowledged, were numerous.<sup>283</sup> The price of illumination was of particular concern, but he also observed that other small costs seemed to quickly accrue.<sup>284</sup> Lastly, he noted that the orchestra should be paid monthly as they were assembled regularly for various events.<sup>285</sup> Institutional changes in the Burg Theater were implemented quickly to realize the Emperor's new enterprise. As a result, those singers, dancers, and orchestra members explicitly tied to the Burg's opera company were dismissed and the German company was soon assembled.<sup>286</sup> The Kärntertor, historically known for its German entertainments, became home to players of French and Italian descent.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> I have summarized Joseph's directions rather than offering a direct translation because his grammatical style is not easy for a modern-day reader to follow.

<sup>283</sup> "das Theater nächst der Burg, so hinführo das teutsche National Theater heißen solle," Hadamowsky, *Theaterreform*, 16.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> Daniel Hertz, *Mozart's Operas*, ed. Thomas Bauman (Berkeley: U of California P, 1990), 123.

<sup>287</sup> As noted in a letter from Tobias Philipp Gebler to Friedrich Nicolai, Vienna, 9 February 1778 in *Aus dem Josephinischen Wien: Geblers und Nicolais Briefwechsel während der Jahre 1771-1786* (Berlin, 1888), 92.

The first company, formed on 8 April 1776, was comprised of fourteen actors and eight actresses. In September 1776, the Emperor sent company member Johann Heinrich Friedrich Müller on a four-month mission to report on the activities of leading German companies in the German Empire and procure the nation's most talented actors for his theater in Vienna.<sup>288</sup> Of particular interest were two actors from Hamburg: Franz Hieronymus Brockmann (1745-1812) and Friedrich Ludwig Schröder (1744-1816), who managed the city's resident company after his stepfather Konrad Ackermann passed away.<sup>289</sup>

Following Müller's tour, the company expanded to twenty-six players (fifteen men and eleven women) of varied national origins. Just eight of these players came from hereditary Austria: seven from Vienna and one from Graz. Six company members arrived from the Habsburg kingdom of Hungary and what is now the Czech Republic. Two arrived from Prussia and the remaining ten came from various parts of the German *Reich*.<sup>290</sup> The diversity of the actors' national origins in Vienna's German national theater suggests that the stage represented a political entity of multiple states. Joseph's project brought together some of the greatest talent from abroad to present the German nation as the Austrian Empire.

Questions regarding the repertoire and production schedule were subject to the Emperor's arbitration, but the company's day-to-day operations were run by a collegium of directors.<sup>291</sup> This *Regiekollegium* comprised actors Johann Franz Hieronymus Brockmann, Konrad Steigentesch (1744-1779), and actor/playwrights Johann Heinrich Friedrich Müller (1738-1815),

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<sup>288</sup> Yates, *Theater in Vienna*, 12.

<sup>289</sup> Schröder came to Vienna much later than Brockmann, making his debut in April 1780.

<sup>290</sup> Hadamowsky, *Theaterreform*, 35.

<sup>291</sup> Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte*, 86.

Johann Gottlieb Stephanie, also known as Stephanie der Jüngere (1741-1800), and his brother Christian Gottlob Stephanie, who was often referred to as Stephanie der Ältere (1734- 1798), the troupe's leading director.<sup>292</sup> Additionally, the whole of the company was classified by type and designated as a *Mitglied* (salaried member of the organization) or a *Wöchner*, a company member, who in addition to performing, took on the responsibilities of artistic business such as drafting reports, facilitating the choice of repertoire, and casting productions.<sup>293</sup> Records indicate, for instance, that Stephanie der Jüngere usually played soldiers or comedic elders, but as a senior company-member, or *Wöchner*, he also wrote plays and libretti. Moreover, he had the authority to scout talent and award commissions to up-and-coming writers and composers. He is, perhaps, most famous for seeking collaboration with Mozart early in his career. Accordingly, his salary of 1400 florins during the 1776/1777 season reflected this level of responsibility.<sup>294</sup> Conversely, another member of the organization, the comedic actress Theresia Maria Brockmann (1740-1793), who played many roles, including “mothers,” “farmer’s wives,” and “assorted vixens,” was ostensibly denied the opportunity to become a *Wöchner*. She earned 900 florins for her performances that year.<sup>295</sup>

The theater historian Heinz Kindermann has described the national players as a *Schauspieler-Republik* (Actor Republic), a designation that seems quite fitting in view of the minutes from the company's meetings.<sup>296</sup> Beginning in April 1776, the national players appear to

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Note that 450 florins equals approximately 100 ducats. Hadamowsky, *Theaterreform*, 38.

<sup>295</sup> “Mütter, Bauern-weiber, Zänkische Rollen.” Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte*, 38.

<sup>296</sup> These minutes were culled and transcribed by Hadamowsky from the *Haus, Hof, und Staatsarchiv* in Vienna. For further information, see Hadamowski, *Theaterreform*, 41.

have assembled weekly to discuss company business and upcoming productions. Notes from these gatherings suggest that the process of choosing a repertoire had many steps. The company needed to agree upon the various titles performed, but each piece also needed approval from the censor. By way of example, consider the following list of plays from an assembly dated 14 June 1776. Titles of the plays are italicized.

*Die Weinlese* (abgewiesen) - rejected  
*Die Maskerade* (wird zur Zensur befördert) – forwarded to the censor  
*Alcidonis* (zur Lesung ausgegeben) – distributed for reading  
Neue Stücke künftigen Monat - New Plays for Future Months:  
    *Erwin und Elmire*  
    *Die Maskerade*  
*Die Schule der Liebhaber* (zur Zensur) – at the Censor <sup>297</sup>

The process of reviewing plays, sending them to the censor, and then incorporating them into the repertoire could take anywhere from a month, as was the case with *Die Maskerade* (*The Masquerade*, a French play in German translation), to a year. According to the documentary historian Franz Hadamowsky's records, the company first performed the French comedy *Alcidonis* in translation on 10 May 1777.<sup>298</sup>

In reviewing this short list, it may already be apparent that the Viennese national players did not exclusively perform original German plays. Similar to the Hamburg National Theater a decade before, the company relied on French plays in German translation to fill the gaps in their repertoire. Although their first season opened in April 1776 with an original play by the rather obscure playwright Franz Fuss called *Die Schwiegermutter* (*The Mother-in-Law*, 1776), it was accompanied by a German translation of Nicolas-Étienne Framery's one-act comedy *L'Indienne*

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<sup>297</sup> Translations are my own. Transcribed by Hadamowsky, *Theaterreform*, 60.

<sup>298</sup> *Die Maskerade* was adapted from a work by the French playwright Philippe Néricault Destouches. Lonvay de la Saussaye's *Alcidonis* premiered at the *Comédie Française* in March of 1773. For a description of the play see Gregory Brown, *A Field of Honor: Writers, Court Culture and Public Theater in French Literary Life from Racine to the Revolution* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), 153.

(1770).<sup>299</sup> Notes recorded during the month of July suggest that the company struggled to find a repertoire that would both meet the theater's institutional guidelines and continue to please the public. In addition to listing new plays under consideration, the secretary made the notation "Old plays that haven't been played in a while," which included *Miss Sara Sampson*, *Tom Jones*, and *Hamlet*, among others.<sup>300</sup>

The Bavarian writer Johann Pezzl (1756-1823) described Vienna's German National Theater as a success, "for it is always well attended."<sup>301</sup> Given the historical demand for German performance in Vienna, this assessment should come as no surprise.<sup>302</sup> The problem, as Pezzl pointed out, was actually finding plays for a German public that hankered for variety. "We have no playwright who has written so many and such excellent pieces that one can fill a stage with his works one after another for a fortnight." He wrote further: "Lessing, Goethe, Weisse, Grossmann, etc. have each written two, at the most three excellent pieces. – The masterpieces of monstrosity by Klinger, Lenz, Schiller, etc. are (as you might expect) banned. – The mediocre pieces by Stephanie, Schröder, Bock, Brühl, Wezel, Jünger etc. can be performed quite tolerably

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<sup>299</sup> For a list of plays from the first season, see Minna von Alth, *Burgtheater 1776-1776: Aufführungen und Besetzungen Von 200 Jahren* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1979), 1-12.

<sup>300</sup> "Alte Stücke die lange nicht gemacht." Hadamowsky, *Theaterreform*, 61.

<sup>301</sup> Pezzl was a writer who took a particular interest in documenting the histories and customs of various nations. The son of a monastery baker, Pezzl was born in Bavaria, but his studies and work brought him to Salzburg, Zürich, and eventually Vienna, where he oversaw the library of the Austrian diplomat and then Minister of State, Prince Kaunitz. His *Skizze von Wien (Sketch of Vienna, 1786-1790)*, documents the cultural atmosphere of Vienna at the time of his residence. He published the work in several parts, each addressing a series of topics pertaining to the customs of the city. Some relevant examples include climate, physiognomy of the city, population, consumption, political character, moral character, gambling, and the court. He also devotes an entire section to the national theater. Pezzl's work is translated and transcribed in Landon, *Mozart and Vienna*, 53-191. The quotation above comes from his discussion on the national theater, as transcribed in *ibid.*, 109.

<sup>302</sup> In the years immediately prior to the opening of the National Theater 1772-1776, box-office reports suggest that audiences preferred German theater to Italian opera. See Rice, *Antonio Salieri*, 242.

once or twice, but that is all.”<sup>303</sup> The National players saw the problem of variety compounded by the censor.

An anthology of early drama on the national stage (1778) enumerates the rules of censorship.<sup>304</sup> The first rule is published as follows, “where the bulk of the audience is of the Catholic faith, certain plays acceptable to Protestant towns cannot be performed on the stage.”<sup>305</sup> Secondly, the censor notes, the representative theater of “the first German court” and the highest nobility demands that plays “should be more than [mere] entertainment.”<sup>306</sup> The third rule advised that an “enlightened public demands plays more perfect than those performed with acclaim some twenty or thirty years ago” and in the fourth proscriptive, the sentiments of a revolutionary age were rebuked. “It is improper to seek to spread certain libertarian sentiments in monarchical states.”<sup>307</sup>

In 1782, as part of an effort to recapture the spirit of an earlier age, the Emperor offered a prize of fifty ducats plus the receipts of a third performance, for “the best and most faithful translations” of “the foremost and finest authors namely Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire.”<sup>308</sup> Out of step with the actual demands of the Viennese public, the emperor’s agenda failed to initiate significant change to the theater’s repertoire.<sup>309</sup> He technically served as head of the German

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<sup>303</sup> Landon, *Mozart and Vienna*, 109.

<sup>304</sup> Preface to *Kaiserl. -königl. Nationaltheater* (1778) reprinted in translation in Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 205.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> As quoted in Hertz, *Mozart’s Operas*, 73-74.

<sup>309</sup> Elizabeth Manning, “The Politics of Culture: Joseph II’s German Opera,” *History Today* 43 (1993), accessed December 5, 2016), <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/ehost/detail/detail?sid=372173c5-7eaf-4203-b1fe->

national theater, though his players operated without too much interference. In many respects, the German company continued to work as they always had worked. The greater change to Vienna's culture of theater-going came when Joseph established a German opera troupe and promoted the German National *Singspiel*.

Whereas initially Joseph had entrusted prince Khevenhüller-Metsch with bureaucratic matters pertaining to his German National Theater, in 1778 he relied on his High Chamberlain Count Franz Xaver Orsini-Rosenberg to help him recruit singers for his company and oversee activities in the theaters. He served as a critical intermediary as the Emperor scouted singers that he believed to have German sounding names. In looking chiefly to Italy, the musicologist John Rice argues that Joseph desired a company that “could sing and act in German” and at the same time evoke the “pathos and vocal brilliance of Italian serious opera.”<sup>310</sup> Ironically enough, when these singers arrived in Vienna they would rarely get the opportunity to perform an *opera seria*.

As I discussed in chapter two, Vienna's German national *Singspiel* had evolved from the harlequinades of Stranitzky and his successor Kurz Bernardon who worked with the composer Joseph Haydn.<sup>311</sup> His correspondence suggests that Count Rosenberg made the German opera company's proclivity for comic works quite clear. In a letter to Antonio Salieri, Rosenberg asked that the composer make inquiries about two German singers, Valentin Adamberger and Giacomo David, a tenor whom both the Emperor and Rosenberg mistakenly believed to be German. “It is assumed,” Rosenberg wrote, “that both have sung with applause in several theaters of Italy. H.M.

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<sup>310</sup> Rice, *Antonio Salieri*, 284.

<sup>311</sup> It is important to make the distinction between the development of the German singspiel in Vienna and other German territories. For a description of popular German singspiels in the Protestant North, see Abert, *W. A. Mozart*, 643.

believes that, being German, they will be suitable for the *Nationaltheater* in which *burlette comique* are being performed.”<sup>312</sup> In April of the same year, the Archduke of Austria Leopold II wrote to his brother, the Emperor, with an update regarding Rosenberg’s inquiry. “He [Salieri] has seen the tenor David; he likes him, but he is not German and does not know the language. As for Valentino Adamberg, who is of course German, he has not been able to find him yet. I told him that he was in England, but he doubts that he would want to sing in the *buffo*.”<sup>313</sup> It presumably took some convincing to bring the *opera seria* devotee Adamberger to Vienna, but in August 1780, he made his debut in a German version of Pasquale Anfossi’s *L’incognita Perseguitata* (1773).<sup>314</sup> Giacomo David never came to Vienna.

The process of finding German composers for the National Theater seems to have followed an entirely different course. As early as January 1778, rumor had spread across Austria and the Southern German Empire, that Joseph sought a German composer for his newly formed German opera. Writing from Mannheim on 11 January 1778, Wolfgang Mozart noted, “I know for a fact that the Emperor is proposing to establish a German opera in Vienna and that he is making every effort to find a young *Kapellmeister* who understands the German language, [and] is talented and capable of striking out a new line.”<sup>315</sup> Mozart implored his father to inquire with their friends in Vienna about the post.

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<sup>312</sup> Count Rosenberg to Antonio Salieri, Vienna, 15 February 1779, transcribed in translation by Rice, *Antonio Salieri*, 284.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>315</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Mannheim, 11 January 1778, Emily Anderson, *Letters of Mozart*, 444.

Much to the disappointment of the Mozart family, the Emperor showed little interest in looking abroad for talent.<sup>316</sup> He awarded the privilege of composing the first German opera for the national house to the Austrian-born Ignaz Umlauf and the artists involved with the first production viewed the Emperor's German national *Singspiel* with skepticism. In response to Leopold Mozart's letter of inquiry, the playwright Franz von Heufeld replied with the following remarks: "In these days we are having the rehearsals of the first opera [*Die Bergknappen*], with text by Herr Weidmann and music composed by the theater violist, Herr Umlauf, and the premiere will soon follow. All this is only a trial, to see if the Germans can start something of the kind. But it is certain that no composer will be hired as long as Gluck and Salieri are in service."<sup>317</sup> As it turned out, Weidmann's original libretto, coupled with Umlauf's music, unmistakably reminiscent of *opera buffa*, made *Die Bergknappen* (The Miners) a critical success.<sup>318</sup> Moreover, it warranted the commission of another German opera, *Diesmal hat der Mann den Willen* (*The Man has the Will This Time Around*, 1778), by the Viennese composer Karl von Ordonez.

The operatic repertoire of the national theater suggests that although Umlauf eventually assumed the role of *Kapellmeister*, a varied group of musicians were invited to compose for the stage. Much like the inaugural evening of plays for the German National Theater, the premiere of the German opera company required an original work by an Austrian, but thereafter, as I have already suggested, foreign libretti were often translated into German and presented as part of the company's repertoire. It follows, then, that these open parameters allowed Joseph to encourage

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<sup>316</sup> Writing as a musicologist, Hertz suggests that Joseph set his sights on local composers to economize; see Hertz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School* 681.

<sup>317</sup> From a letter dated 24 January 1778, as quoted in Hertz, *Haydn/Mozart*, 681.

<sup>318</sup> John Warrack and Ewan West, *The Oxford Dictionary of Opera* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 725.

his esteemed Italian composer Antonio Salieri to try his hand at writing for the German stage. Salieri's attempt at a German *Singspiel*, called *Der Rauchfangkehrer* (*The Chimney Sweep*, 1781), was more Italian in style than German, but nevertheless included a German-language libretto by an Austrian named Leopold Auenbrugger. Famously, Mozart, who was once an outsider to the city, also procured a slot at the national theater.

### **The Return of Mozart**

In 1781, the opportunity to write for a German national theater wasn't particularly novel. By that time, the aristocratic interest in furthering native German artists had become somewhat of a trend. National theaters were already established in Mannheim (1777), Stuttgart (1779), and Munich (1778) where Mozart at one time had hoped to maintain residence.<sup>319</sup> In a letter to his father, Mozart wrote that he wished to draw up a contract with the *Hofmusikintendant* (Court Music Intendant) Count Anton von Seeau in Munich<sup>320</sup> Ideally, he noted, I would "compose every year four German operas, some *buffe*, some *serie*" and take a benefit performance for each.<sup>321</sup> "I am *very popular* here. And how much more popular should I be if I could help forward the German national theater?"<sup>322</sup> Mozart's confidence was soon deflated by the realities of his station. Leopold Mozart posted the following reply to his son: "I have no great hopes of anything happening in Munich. Unless there is a vacancy, the Elector is bound to refuse to take anyone."<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> The founding dates of these theaters are documented in Sosulski, Sosulski, *Theater and Nation in Germany*, 16.

<sup>320</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Munich, 2 October 1777, *Letters of Mozart*, 289.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>323</sup> Leopold Mozart to Wolfgang Mozart, Munich, 4 October 1777, *Letters of Mozart*, 294.

Leopold proved to be right. In many respects, the process of winning a salaried position at court remained arduous. Composers found themselves at a disadvantage because they were born in one German state, but wished to play in another. When Mozart failed to find a permanent post in Munich, he returned to the city of his birth, Salzburg. One needed time and connections to garner the attention of the Bavarian sovereign. This was difficult for Mozart as he wasn't especially patriotic. As a musician who wished for both money and fame, he was willing to compose for whomever offered him the resources to succeed. As he noted in a letter later in his career, "I believe that I am capable of doing credit to any court. If Germany, my beloved fatherland, of which, as you know, I am proud, will not accept me, then in God's name let France or England become the richer by another talented German, to the disgrace of the German nation."<sup>324</sup>

In coming to Vienna in 1781, Mozart showed no particular allegiance to the Austrian emperor, but he did revere the emperor's theater. Moreover, he felt inspired by the city's culture of theater-going. "My sole entertainment is the theater," he wrote. "Generally speaking, I do not know of any theater where all kinds of plays are *really well* performed. But here [in Vienna] they are."<sup>325</sup> In comparing Salzburg to Vienna, he observed to his father, "You yourself must admit that in Salzburg –for me at least – there is not a farthing's worth of entertainment. . . . Besides there is no stimulus for my talent! When I play or when my compositions are performed, it is just as if the audience were all tables and chairs. If only there were even a tolerably good theater in Salzburg! For in Vienna my sole amusement is the theater."<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Vienna, 17 August 1782, *Letters of Mozart*, 814.

<sup>325</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to his sister Maria Anna Mozart, Vienna, 4 July 1781, *Letters of Mozart*, 751.

<sup>326</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Vienna, 26 May 1781, *ibid.*, 735.

After arriving in Vienna in March of 1781, Mozart determined very quickly that he wished to be relieved of his duty to the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg and commit to working in the imperial capital. He contacted a family acquaintance, the aforementioned Stephanie der Jüngere. The actor, who also wrote plays and libretti for the national company, promised Mozart material for a new libretto.<sup>327</sup> On 28 April 1781, he noted that Stephanie was to give him a German opera to compose, correspondence suggesting that, while still in the service of the Archbishop, Mozart was most definitely making other plans.<sup>328</sup> Letters dated less than two weeks later document his struggle to resign.<sup>329</sup> The favorable outcome can arguably be attributed to an unspoken hierarchy. Mozart had procured some inherent protection in leaving the employ of an archbishop to take a commission in service to the emperor.

Immediately after, Mozart went to work and found himself within the circles of Vienna's cultural elite. Writing to his father on the 26 May, he chided himself. "As for the opera, I don't know why I should hesitate. Count Rosenberg on the two occasions when I called on him, received me most politely; and he heard my opera at Countess Thun's when Van Swieten and Herr von Sonnenfels were also present. And as Stephanie is a good friend of mine everything is progressing satisfactorily."<sup>330</sup> In fact, as Mozart noted on 9 June 1781, Rosenberg had actually facilitated a relationship between Mozart and Friedrich Schröder, when he commissioned the

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<sup>327</sup> The Mozarts befriended the Stephanies during earlier visits to Vienna. See Hertz, *Mozart's Operas*, 67.

<sup>328</sup> Emily Anderson, *Letters of Mozart*, 726.

<sup>329</sup> This was no easy task and the consequences of leaving the employ of a prince were often extreme. For example, when Johann Sebastian Bach attempted to leave the service of the Duke of Saxony-Weissenfels in 1717, he was sent to prison.

<sup>330</sup> The influential Countess Thun had actually requested that Mozart compose for the National Singspiel. Baron Gottfried von Swieten was at the time, President of the Court Commission on Education. Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Vienna, 26 May 1781. Emily Anderson, *Letters of Mozart*, 736.

actor to find the young composer a good libretto.<sup>331</sup> The problematic nature of this assignment was not lost on Mozart, who had already been in conversation with Stephanie about finding suitable material from which to work. It was clear that Stephanie harbored some resentment toward the emperor's favored actor and was a bit miffed that his collaboration with Mozart required Schröder's approval. Additionally, Mozart had concerns that Schröder was partial to his competitor the *Kapellmeister* Umlauf and would thus undermine the commission. At the end of his letter, Mozart reasoned that he would just need to trust the intentions of both men. He concluded that perhaps Stephanie would write his libretto. "Whether he has written his plays alone or with the help of others, whether he has plagiarized or created, he still understands the stage, and his plays are invariably popular."<sup>332</sup> A few months later, Stephanie finished a libretto for Umlauf and was free to commit himself to writing for Mozart.<sup>333</sup>

By Mozart's account, both Schröder and Stephanie had some degree of access to the emperor, suggesting that the station of German actors had conspicuously risen within a decade, a turn resulting from both actors and princes working in tandem. In 1760, Lessing argued that princes were not entirely to blame for the piteous state of the German theater; German actors also needed to hold themselves to a higher standard.<sup>334</sup> Inspired, no doubt, by the great Konrad Ekhof, actors increasingly looked to the self-regulated acting academy as a model solution. As I noted in chapter one, the critic Löwen aimed to create such an academy at his short-lived

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid.,742.

<sup>332</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Vienna, 16 June 1781, *Letters of Mozart*,745.

<sup>333</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Vienna, 1 August 1781, *ibid.*,755.

<sup>334</sup> See chapter one.

national theater. In the 1770s, the idea became a cornerstone of German theatrical training and operations under the leadership of actors like Schröder.

Schröder outlined strict rules of decorum for his company in Hamburg and presumably upheld similar standards while in Vienna.<sup>335</sup> His interest in literature and dramatic criticism guided his work as a translator of Shakespeare and a premiere actor of the stage.<sup>336</sup> In many respects, Schröder represented the kind of actor whom Lessing proposed would elevate the German dramatic arts. Yet his career reached an unprecedented degree of success *because* of the attentions of Joseph II, who not only showcased the actor's abilities, but also provided the resources that allowed him to refine his craft.

Historians are fond of pointing to Joseph's frugality as reason for his support of German drama, though the Emperor on several occasions seems to have genuinely prioritized the interests of his German company. Consider, for example, his early directive to Khevenhüller-Metsch to lease the Burg only when unoccupied by the German society of players.<sup>337</sup> Eight years after the establishment of his national company, in 1784, he wrote to Count Rosenberg inquiring as to whether it would be more advantageous to the *Nationaltheater* if they curtailed the number of foreign troupes allowed in the Kärntnertor.<sup>338</sup> Whatever the Emperor's reasons, his letters clearly suggest that his efforts to see the German company succeed were in earnest.

Still, the longevity of Joseph's reverence for the German performer did not wholly extend to that of the German playwright or composer. In the aforementioned letter to Count Rosenberg,

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<sup>335</sup> See Schröder's theater regulations (1792) in Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 108.

<sup>336</sup> Notably *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, which were performed respectively in Vienna in 1778 and 1780.

<sup>337</sup> The entire notice is published in Hadamowsky, *Theaterreform*, 15.

<sup>338</sup> Joseph II to Count Rosenberg, Vienna, 27 September 1784. Reprinted in Payer von Thurn, *Joseph II. als Theaterdirektor* (Vienna: Heidrich, 1920), 58.

the Emperor proposed that a Kärntnertor librettist should be familiar with the conventions of “deutschen Opera comique” and moreover would benefit from recycling material that had already found success with the Viennese public.<sup>339</sup> It seems that the bourgeois ambition to discover the true poets of the German nation was not shared by the Emperor and the efforts made by Sonnenfels and Vienna’s German *Gesellschaft* to support German authorship seemed to have lost their cache over time. As Johann Pezzl wrote in 1786:

Ten years ago the theater was an altar, before which everyone of good taste burned incense. This religion emanated particularly from Gotha and Hamburg. Plays and playwrights were made out to be so important that the world’s well-being depended on them. . . . Drama was the sole topic of discussion, and actors and actresses saw themselves as utterly indispensable to the state. This paroxysm is now past; nowadays the theater is judged to be no more and no less than what it really is—a pleasant, decent and tasteful amusement.<sup>340</sup>

In many respects, Vienna’s theatrical culture in the 1780s was still very much indebted to earlier traditions of performance. As in the past, several actors in the German company were also playwrights who wrote furiously to satisfy the taste and demands of the Viennese public. Stephanie der Jüngere, for example, was quite prolific, but a large percentage of his plays saw few productions outside of the imperial capital.<sup>341</sup> Conversely, plays by writers such as Schiller and Goethe, who wrote for Mannheim and Weimar, were produced more frequently and could be seen in a greater number of German cities.<sup>342</sup>

A tradition of reviving and celebrating the Viennese opera since the eighteenth century has preserved the memory of several Viennese playwrights (as librettists), who would have

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> As transcribed in translation by Landon, *Mozart and Vienna*, 110.

<sup>341</sup> For a fairly substantial production history of Stephanie der Jüngere’s works, see Veronica Richel, *The German Stage, 1767-1890: A Directory of Playwrights and Plays* (New York: Greenwood, 1988), 144-145.

<sup>342</sup> Production numbers are noted in Sosulski, *Theater and Nation in Germany*, 28.

otherwise disappeared into obscurity. As I will discuss shortly, Mozart made his debut in the German National Theater with a libretto penned by Stephanie, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio, 1782), but even before that time he had worked with material borrowed from another playwright from Vienna. In 1769, before the Mozarts left Vienna for the second time, an affluent doctor named Anton Mesmer commissioned a private staging of Wolfgang's German *Singspiel Bastien und Bastienne*. Mozart borrowed the libretto for this work almost verbatim from Friedrich Wilhelm Weiskern's translation of an *opéra-comique*.<sup>343</sup>

As I wrote in chapter two, Weiskern performed regularly as Odoardo in plays such as Christian Gottlob Klemm's *Der auf den Parnass versetzte grüne Hut* (1767), but he also wrote for the musical stage and did translation work. In 1764, he penned *Bastienne, eine französische Opéra-comique (Bastienne: A French Opéra-comique)* for the Kärntnertor Theater, which had been imported from the parodic stage of the *Comédie-Italienne* in Paris. Harny de Guerville and Marie-Justine-Benoîte's *opéra-comique Les amours de Bastien et Bastienne* (1753), burlesqued Jean-Jacques Rousseau's wildly popular French *intermezzo Le devin du village*. When the piece came to Vienna, Rousseau's pastoral tale assumed but another national identity. In Weiskern's translation of the comic opera, he replaced French mores with the German manners of his Viennese company, thus pulling the *intermezzo* further back into its proper domain of the *buffa*. As a result, Mozart's biographer Herman Abert suggests that the young composer struggled to apply the stylistic principles of the German *singspiel* to a work written in the *buffa* tradition.<sup>344</sup> At that time in Vienna, the genre remained largely extemporized and was performed by German players who were not trained to sing *buffa*. Mozart was thus forced to return Weiskern's

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<sup>343</sup> Abert, *W. A. Mozart*, 98.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

burlesque-text to a pastoral tradition of music closer to Rousseau's original intent.<sup>345</sup> From this process of stylistic adaptation, we can plainly see both the parodic nature of theatrical material performed in the eighteenth-century as well as its transnational movement.

While *Bastien und Bastienne* originally came from the French, Mozart's second singspiel, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), was inspired by European tales of the Turkish Empire, material that resonated deeply with German and Austrian audiences who neighbored Ottoman lands. In July of 1781, Stephanie der Jüngere came to Mozart with a libretto about four lovers' daring escape from the palace of a sultan named Osmin, which he borrowed from a popular Leipzig composer named Christoph Friedrich Bretzner (1748-1807). Bretzner's *Belmont und Konstanze, oder Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, set to the music of Johann André, had been performed only a few months before in Berlin, and awaited a debut in Vienna. Mozart's biographer Abert has argued that if Bretzner directly adopted his material from another work, the piece is unknown, but the subject matter was undoubtedly familiar to German audiences. Several operatic works with Turkish themes, such as Grossmann's *Adelheid von Veltheim* (1780), and Gaetano Martinelli's and Niccolo Jommelli's *La Schiava Liberata*, were in circulation.<sup>346</sup> Moreover, Louis Dancourt's and Gluck's popular opera *La rencontre imprévue* (1764), which was also set in a Turkish seraglio, had been revived in translation for Vienna's National Theater a year before Mozart's arrival in 1780.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Thomas Bauman, *W.A. Mozart, Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 30-32.

<sup>347</sup> The title of this piece was *Die unvermuthete Zusammenkunft oder die Pilgrime von Mecca*..

Mozart found Bretzner's libretto on the subject to be "quite good" and immediately set to work writing the overture "in the style of Turkish music."<sup>348</sup> Stephanie, Mozart recounted in a letter, was to adopt the libretto soon thereafter, but in the meantime, the playwright suggested that Mozart keep the project close to his chest. "Count Rosenberg is still absent" wrote Mozart "and any disclosure [of their collaboration] might easily lead to gossip."<sup>349</sup> It is difficult to discern the nature of Stephanie's and Schröder's relationship in the letter, but in Mozart's earlier correspondence, the composer suggests that Stephanie feared that Schröder and the national company would reject his choice of operatic material.<sup>350</sup>

Ten months after receiving the Bretzner-libretto, Mozart completed the music for *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and the German opera company began rehearsals. The stakes were high for Stephanie der Jüngere, who had been charged with managing the German opera in addition to writing and regularly performing for the German National Theater.<sup>351</sup> At the start of the 1782-1783 season, the premiere of two German operas garnered little enthusiasm from a public ready for the return of Italian opera. The diaries of Karl von Zinzendorf, for example, document infrequent visits to German plays and *Singspiele*, but an assiduous attendance of *opera buffa*, and an oft cited account of the Viennese Countess Mazelana's subscription request

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<sup>348</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Vienna, 1 August 1781, *Letters of Mozart*, 755.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> It is unclear as to whether Mozart is discussing Bretzner's libretto, but in a letter to his father dated 16 June 1781, he offers the following observation: "If Schröder allows us to alter it [the libretto] as we think advisable, a good libretto can be made out of it. He does not want to give it to the management in its present state, that is, until he has discussed it with Schröder, as he knows in advance that it would be rejected." Emily Anderson, *Letters of Mozart*, 745.

<sup>351</sup> Thomas Bauman notes that Stephanie was "solely in charge of operatic productions." See Bauman, *W.A. Mozart*, 99. In 1782, Stephanie der Jüngere still appears on the cast list of several plays including Heufeld's *Der Doctor Guldenschnitt* in January and a translation of Louis Sébastien Mercier's *Der Richter* in May. See *Abert* 29-33.

suggests that she “demanded entrance only to the *opera buffa*.”<sup>352</sup> Moreover, news that the Emperor wished to bring a *buffa* troupe to Vienna most likely began to circulate.<sup>353</sup> As a result of these pressures, Stephanie tried something new: for the first time, the German *Singspiel* company actually performed an *opera buffa* in Italian, forgoing the customary translation into German. The experiment, however, proved unsuccessful and so the production of *La Contadina in Corte* (1765) was dropped from the repertoire after two performances. Fortunately, Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* proved the success he had been waiting for. In a letter to his father dated 20 July 1782, Mozart reported that the *Singspiel* garnered an encore performance and that “the theater was almost more crowded [on the second night] than on the first night.”<sup>354</sup> Over the two-day period, he added, sales tallied at 1200 gulden.<sup>355</sup>

Despite Mozart's success, the *Singspiel* enterprise, as a whole, was faltering. While it may be that Stephanie's leadership was weak, it also seems that the city's cultural appetite for *opera buffa* had become so prodigious that the fledgling German *Singspiel* simply had no chance of surviving. This trend was fomented by the emperor himself. The musicologist Daniel Hertz suggests that as early as 1780, Joseph's taste for *opera buffa* became cemented.<sup>356</sup> And this taste was arguably motivated by the spirit of competition. That year, the Empress Catherine II of Russia came to Vienna accompanied by her court composer Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816) and a cadre of artists who staged the *opera buffa I filosofi immaginari* (1779). Joseph was apparently so taken with the performance that he placed an order for the composer's future comic operas

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<sup>352</sup> Hunter. *Opera Buffa*, 13.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>354</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Vienna, 20 July 1782, *Letters of Mozart*, 808.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> See Daniel Hertz's essay in Hunter, *Opera Buffa*, 48.

and soon began to consider bringing his own *buffa* company to Vienna.<sup>357</sup> Moreover, following the success of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Count Rosenberg reached out to Mozart with the suggestion that he compose an *opera buffa*, a clear indication of the changes that were to come.<sup>358</sup>

Threatened by the imminent arrival of competitors, the German troupe appealed directly to nationalist sentiments. In December 1782, they presented *Welche ist die Beste Nation? (Which is the Best Nation?)*, a comedy with musical numbers by Umlauf. Unfortunately, the work was performed only twice and, according to Mozart, was pulled from the stage for its insufferable material. “For even with the finest music,” he wrote, “no one could have tolerated such a piece.”<sup>359</sup> The work’s failure to galvanize German pride proved a harbinger of events to come. In early February 1783, Mozart reported that the German opera still failed to draw an audience. In a letter to his father, he suggested that “it really seems as if they wish to kill the German opera off before its time, which in any case is to come to an end after Easter.”<sup>360</sup>

In the spring of 1783, the German opera company was disbanded, and but for benefit performances, the Viennese rarely saw a German *Singspiel* performed for the duration of two years.<sup>361</sup> The best German singers, such as Valentin Adamberger and Johanna Sacco, joined the Emperor’s *buffa* troupe, which had been installed in the National Theater alongside the German acting company. The change, which scholars have called the demise of the national theater, might also be viewed as an accomplished transformation. Friedrich Schröder wrote to the

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Abert, *W. A. Mozart*, 796.

<sup>359</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Vienna, 21 December 1782, *Letters of Mozart*, 832.

<sup>360</sup> Wolfgang Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Vienna, 5 February 1783, *ibid*, 839.

<sup>361</sup> Abert *W. A. Mozart*, 797.

Intendant of the Mannheim National Theater Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg, that the “German opera has been abdicated here, and the comedy is being strengthened.”<sup>362</sup> German plays appear to be given equal (if not greater) access to the National stage throughout the 1783-84 theatrical year.<sup>363</sup>

Schröder’s observation begs for an assessment. To what extent did Joseph’s national theater influence theatrical culture in Vienna? On the one hand, Schröder’s comments suggest that the German national theater simply reaffirmed a tradition of German theatrical entertainments that the Viennese public had championed since the opening of the Kärntnertor Theater in 1708. Joseph’s national theater may have begun as “an altar, before which everyone of good taste burned incense,” a project that ushered in a new age of decorum and new expectations for German authorship, but it only flourished when company members satisfied the public’s predilection for comedy.<sup>364</sup> On the other hand, one could also argue that Vienna’s national theater inaugurated a new elevated genre of German comedy. This genre struck a balance between the comedic ribaldry of the early eighteenth-century, the Viennese’s love of music, and the theater espoused by Joseph von Sonnenfels. We see proof of this new tradition as it evolved in the early nineteenth century. Johann Nestroy (1801-1862), for example, rose to fame in Vienna for playing the role of Hanswurst with an air of refinement. His performances also incorporated musical acts.

While Joseph attempted to innovate theatrical production in Vienna, he actually cemented the theaters’ long-standing traditions. In 1784 the Burg or *Nationaltheater* offered many of the

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Link, *National Court Theater*, 23-39.

<sup>364</sup> Pezzl, in Landon, *Mozart and Vienna*, 110.

same entertainments as it did in 1764 when Count Sporck exchanged Vienna's French players for an *opera buffa* troupe.<sup>365</sup> And yet we must also concede that Joseph took his subjects' desire for a German national stage very seriously. After years of avoiding the administrative duties of running two imperial theaters, he claimed the dream of nation for himself. Joseph recruited a company of artists that represented the customs of his empire, and, in the case of Mozart, coopted talent from that of another German sovereign. Vienna's Court and National Theater thus represented the culminating efforts of an emperor who wished to bolster his authority over German history, as the dynastic heir of the Holy Roman Empire, and the future of a new nation.

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<sup>365</sup> Rice, *Antonio Salieri*, 43.

## Chapter 4: The Mannheim National Theater

### Rehearsing a Princely Nation

When the German prince Maximilian III died of smallpox in December 1777, Karl Theodor of the Palatinate of the Rhine (1724-1799) inherited the electorate of Bavaria. As a way to substantiate this claim to Bavaria, Karl Theodor moved his court from Mannheim to Munich. This departure took place just at the beginning of carnival, a time when Karl Theodor typically opened his theaters to the public. In his absence, all theatrical festivities in Mannheim ceased and the business of carnival was forfeited. Writing to her husband Leopold, on 3 January 1778, Maria Anna Mozart observed that the town had grown quiet. “There are no operas (for which I am truly sorry); all plays, balls, concerts, sleigh-drives, music, everything has stopped.”<sup>366</sup> By the end of the month, desirous of the theater that stimulated cultural life in Mannheim, residents mourned the loss of their prince. On 24 January, Maria Mozart wrote her husband again: “One hears nothing at all here; it is as quiet as if one were no longer in the world. People only sigh and long to have the Elector back. His absence means a great loss to the town, for no visitors come here, as there is nothing to see.”<sup>367</sup>

I begin with this account of Karl Theodor’s departure from Mannheim to stress that in the numerous courts of the German Empire in the eighteenth century, the governing prince represented theater (in all of its manifestations), and in turn, theater epitomized the sovereignty of its prince. And so, these circumstances promoted the gestation of a new imagining of Germany. In Mannheim, the elector Karl Theodor sponsored the town’s two permanent theaters,

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<sup>366</sup> Maria Anna Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Mannheim, 3 January 1778., *Letters of Mozart*, 438.

<sup>367</sup> Maria Anna Mozart to Leopold Mozart, Mannheim, 24 January 1778, *ibid.*, 451.

the electoral *Opernhaus* and the *Nationaltheater*.<sup>368</sup> This chapter first analyzes the socioeconomic dimensions of life in Mannheim to elucidate how Karl Theodor asserted his suzerainty before his subjects both inside and outside of the *Opernhaus*. The second half of this chapter documents the construction and institutionalization of the Mannheim National Theater to show how Karl Theodor represented himself prince of his own imagined Germany.

To frame this particular case study, I draw upon Kantorowicz's study *The King's Two Bodies* once more. As Kantorowicz notes medieval jurists of England and France contended, a king had two bodies: a natural body, subject to the infirmities of the flesh; and a political body, that emanated his sacred governing authority. But this political principle did not dissolve at the conclusion of the Middle Ages. Instead, it perpetuated over hundreds of years. Well into the eighteenth century, public spectacle and courtly entertainments substantiated the illusion of divine sovereignty. Princely theater didn't just reflect the law of a given state; it was an instrument of the law, "a precept for the future of obedience to the past as already constituted."<sup>369</sup>

With this paradigm of the political imagination, we can analyze theatrical customs of the eighteenth century as they manifested in two categories of evidence: both material, i.e., the physical configuration of these spaces, theatrical scenography, and repertoire; and immaterial, i.e., the intangible expression of sovereignty, asserted over and internalized by the elector's

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<sup>368</sup> All performances in the town were exclusive to these two state-sponsored theaters. Other public performances, in the town's market square, for example, required the approval of Karl Theodor. The electoral *Opernhaus* has been described by historians as an ornate baroque theater with a seating capacity of approximately 500. It was designed by the architect Alessandro Galli-Bibiena and completed in 1742. The architect Lorenzo Quaglio began designs for the Mannheim National Theater in 1775 and the space was completed in 1777. It seated approximately 1200 spectators. For further information on the architecture of the Mannheim *Opernhaus* and the *Nationaltheater* see Michael Forsyth, *Buildings for Music: The Architect, the Musician, and the Listener from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1985). See also Paul Corneilson's "Reconstructing the Mannheim Court Theater," *Early Music* 25, no. 1 (1997): 63-81 for an excellent analysis of the interior and exterior architecture.

<sup>369</sup> Burke, *Grammar of Motives*, 342.

subjects. The letters of Wolfgang Mozart's mother offer an opportunity to consider this relationship by way of two concrete examples. When residents of Mannheim took their seats in either of Karl Theodor's two theaters, they could see the natural body of their prince sitting in his royal box. Karl Theodor's physical body communicated his sovereignty over state, as represented in the electoral theater, and nation, as represented in the national theater. When Karl Theodor left Mannheim, they felt the disappearance of his *body politic*. The elector ruled as an absolutist, which meant that his person embodied the state. The desire for his return suggests that residents struggled to negotiate a kind of theatrical culture without a prince at its apex.

The Mannheim National Theater is best known for its premiere of Friedrich Schiller's (1759-1805) first work *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*), an event recounted in theater histories as a momentous expression of bourgeois anxiety and discontentment. The theater, however, did not begin as a representational space for the *Bürgertum* (bourgeoisie). It served as an expression of enlightened absolutism. After Karl Theodor left Mannheim in 1778, another company of theatrical artists moved into the national space, but struggled to articulate the guiding principles of their new theatrical endeavor.<sup>370</sup> In the absence of their prince, they asked, "What is a National Theater?" Their inquiries, however, skirted the more essential question. In the absence of a prince, *who* would constitute the German nation?

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<sup>370</sup> Many members of Karl Theodor's orchestra and resident acting company followed him to Bavaria. A prominent member of the town's German Society named Wolfgang von Dalberg petitioned to manage the Mannheim National Theater in the elector's absence. Upon assembling a new company of actors, Dalberg began to review the theater's guiding principles. He meditated on a number of questions with his actors and their discussions have been assembled and published in Max Martersteig's *Die Protokolle des Mannheimer Nationaltheaters* (Mannheim, 1890).

## A Sovereign Capital in Mannheim

Among the two hundred or so princes of the German Empire, nine were responsible for electing the Holy Roman Emperor, a privilege that placed them at the top of Germany's governing hierarchy. This imperial electorate included the prince-archbishops of Mainz, Trier and Cologne, the king of Bohemia, the duke of Saxony, the Margrave of Brandenburg, the Duke of Bavaria, the duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg (or Hanover), and the Count Palatine of the Rhine. Karl Theodor, the protagonist of this chapter, assumed the last of these sovereign titles.<sup>371</sup> In the eighteenth century, Karl Theodor's state, the Palatine Electorate of the Rhine, was an amorphous territory that stretched a short distance along both sides of the Rhine River. He thus oversaw a small domain that began just north of Mainz and ended south of the town Schwetzingen, his summer residence. Since the early Middle Ages, the official court capital of the electorate was Heidelberg, but in 1720, Karl Theodor's predecessor Karl Philipp of the Neuberg dynasty (1716-1742) moved his court to Mannheim. The circumstances of this move help us to understand why his successor, Karl Theodor, used his theaters to strictly actuate his sovereign control.

The life of a German prince in the age of absolutism was not as care-free and comfortable as one might imagine. Without a large and capable military, he faced the constant threat of imperial invasion. He formed religious, militaristic, or dynastic alliances with other princes to secure his borders from both his German peers and foreign aggressors. Yet if the sociopolitical customs that resulted from these alliances were at odds with the traditions, which defined the

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<sup>371</sup> The membership count of the Elector Council fluctuated at various times. See Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars*, 50.

civic life of his subjects, he faced the threat of insurrection. Karl Theodor's predecessor, Karl Philipp, suffered from just such a predicament.

Before Karl Philipp rose to power, the War of the Grand Alliance (1688-1697), wherein the French King Louis XIV attempted to annex the Palatine of the Rhine, was brought to a triumphant conclusion by a multi-state army of German defenders. Thereafter, Karl Philipp's electorate enjoyed a degree of security. But with these external pressures quelled, the elector, himself, instigated a challenge to his sovereign authority. In an attempt to strengthen alliances with the Catholic states of the German Empire, Karl Philipp vowed to restore Catholicism to the palatine, causing an uprising in his court capital. Heidelberg university professors asserted that his decision impinged upon a tradition of Protestantism sanctioned by the Elector Frederick III (1515-1576). For centuries, this tradition flourished in the city. Nevertheless, Karl Philipp censored the publication and use of Frederick's *Heidelberg Catechism*, declaring that the text was "contrary to the Elector's majesty, the laws of the realm, and other imperial decrees."<sup>372</sup> This declaration, wholly at odds with the traditions of his subjects, caused stirrings of insurrection. As a ruler who physically embodied the sovereignty of his city, as well as his state, Karl Philipp feared for the safety of his corporeal figure as much as his crown. He decided to relocate his court to Mannheim to ensure the security of both.

In forcing Karl Philipp from his own capital, residents of Heidelberg collectively asserted that their prince's mandates were at odds with their own history and traditions. By mid-century, the basis for this rebellion would be given concrete expression in Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748). The philosopher contended that governments should be formed according to the religion, manners, and customs of inhabitants, what he called *character* or an "*esprit general*,"

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<sup>372</sup> As quoted in J.F. Berg, *The History and Literature of the Heidelberg Catechism* (Philadelphia, 1863), 64.

and so, he gave credence to the idea that an organic political body might exist before the imposition of a governing ruler.<sup>373</sup> This expression of *character* was seen as something a government, or governing prince, would have to accept as a condition of being able to rule. Karl Philipp's flagrant disregard for the traditions of his people motivated his subjects to form their own body politic. And so, in 1720, they effectively ousted their prince from his sovereign station in Heidelberg. When the elector moved his court capital from Heidelberg to Mannheim, he made every effort to prevent a similar uprising.

Karl Philipp's decision to relocate his capital was not unusual. While documenting his experiences at the court of Ludwigsburg in 1772, the musicologist Charles Burney observed:

It is no uncommon thing, in Germany, for a sovereign prince, upon a difference with his subjects, to abandon the ancient capital of his dominions and to erect another at a small distance from it, which in process of time, not only ruins the trade, but greatly diminishes the number of its inhabitants, by attracting them to his new residence; among the princes who come under this predicament, are the Elector of Cologne, removed to *Bonn*; the Elector Palatine, removed from Heidelberg, to *Mannheim*; and the duke of Würtemberg, from Stutgard to *Ludwigsburg*.<sup>374</sup>

Burney's observations allude to a circularity of power and oppression that defined life for many subjects of the German states.<sup>375</sup> The irreconcilability of conflict between a prince and his subjects signaled an erosion of autocratic authority. Finding himself threatened by the resolve of his people, a prince abandons his city, and to some degree, his sovereignty. Yet in establishing a new capital in close proximity to the old, a prince could reassert his power without much trouble at all. His absence served as a kind of socioeconomic punishment for residents of the former

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<sup>373</sup> Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 8-9.

<sup>374</sup> The italics are as printed. Burney, Burney, *Musical Tours in Europe*, 36.

<sup>375</sup> One can argue that Louis XIV of France also relocated his court to maintain authority. As Jeffrey Merrick suggests in his essay "The Body Politics of French Absolutism," the king generally avoided Paris where his subjects were wont to rebel against him, but he would often make himself accessible to ordinary subjects at his home in Versailles. See Melzer and Norberg, *Royal to Republican*, 16.

capital. Without a court's steady demand for goods and services, they suffered a blight to their economy. And because the prince controlled the creation and promotion of artistic works, residents of the former capital also suffered a forfeiture of culture. In a sense, absolute sovereignty ensured that the prince embodied the economy of his state as well as its culture.<sup>376</sup>

Upon moving his court to Mannheim in 1720, Karl Philipp ordered the French architect Louis Rémy de La Fosse to design a baroque palace to befit his new capital. Although small, the mercantile town proved an apt locale. The Rhine and Neckar Rivers, which shaped the perimeter of Mannheim, effectively contained its inhabitants, making them easier to govern, while still facilitating the transmission of goods and services. A map of Mannheim (circa 1776), illustrates the demarcation of buildings that made occupational disciplines such as soldiering, sculpture-making, and metal casting, instruments of the state.<sup>377</sup> The construction of a national theater one year later likewise brought the German dramatic arts into the purview of the state's autocracy.<sup>378</sup>

The town projected a logical scheme of social and economic modernization, while substantiating the political interests of a prince.<sup>379</sup> In many respects, Mannheim's urban design

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<sup>376</sup> The embodiment of sovereignty has been discussed at length in several studies after Kantorowicz. Two books that draw from Ernst Kantorowicz's seminal work on medieval political theology are Eric Santner's *The Royal Remains* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2011), and also Melzer and Norberg, *Royal to the Republican*. Melzer and Norberg, examine this phenomenon particularly as it applied to representations of Louis XIV. Santner considers how these ideas manifested in the literature of authors such as Shakespeare, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Maria Rilke. See also Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World 1649-1849* (Durham NC: Duke UP, 2014), 31-96.

<sup>377</sup> John Andrews, *A Collection of Plans of the Capital Cities of Europe and Some Remarkable Cities in Asia, Africa, & America with a Description of their Most Remarkable Buildings, Trade, Situation, Extent, &c. &c.: Selected from the Best Authorities in Two Volumes by Jno. Andrews, Land Surveyor* (London, 1771), 78.

<sup>378</sup> In Part 5 of *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault elucidates how sovereign power in the eighteenth century was actualized "by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life." This culture of what Foucault terms "biopower" thus necessitated buildings and institutions for employing bodies to maintain sovereign order. Some examples include: secondary schools, barracks, and industrial workshops. The institution of theater might also be categorized in this way. Institutional decorum and the spatial dynamics of control are further explored in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995). For a discussion of these ideas within an eighteenth-century context, see in particular pages 135-169.

<sup>379</sup> This idea is considered in Blanning, *Culture of Power*, 58.

reflected a picture of sovereign absolutism. From his palace, the prince stood as the head of his government, while the people that lived in the shadow of its grand facade, served as his functioning body.<sup>380</sup>

### **Karl Theodor's Sovereign Opera House (1752-1775)**

In 1742, at age eighteen, Karl Theodor of the Wittelsbach dynasty inherited the Palatine of the Rhine. In the same year, quite incidentally, Mannheim builders completed a new baroque opera-house attached to the Mannheim palace.<sup>381</sup> Karl Theodor thus inherited a proper space to make the town of Mannheim a capital for the arts. Considering the small size of his sovereign domain, his efforts were uniquely received by the elite of Europe. Tales of an inspired orchestra and sumptuous fêtes brought curious visitors such as Voltaire, the Scottish biographer James Boswell, and the English musicologist Charles Burney to a rather small and inconspicuous German principality.<sup>382</sup> Voltaire wrote of his trip to Mannheim in 1753, “French and Italian comedies, Italian *opera seria*, *opera buffa*, ballets, expensive food, conversation, hospitality, grandeur, simplicity.”<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> There is, perhaps, no better illustration of absolute government than the frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). At the top of the page, rendered in perfect perspective, is the figure of a man who appears to emerge from the outskirts of a pastoral landscape. He wears a crown atop his natural head, but his body, visible only from the waist up, appears wholly unnatural. A confluence of faces decorate the sovereign's torso and shape the arms that wield both sword and crosier. These faces are his subjects and as members of the *body politic*, they must function in congruence with their sovereign head.

<sup>381</sup> When Karl Philipp first arrived in Mannheim, he erected a temporary opera house in his palace. In 1737, plans were made to replace the temporary space with a permanent baroque opera house built off a wing of the palace. Builders constructed the theater between 1737 and 1741. Michael Forsyth notes that the opera house was completed in 1742; see Forsyth, *Buildings for Music*, 334.

<sup>382</sup> For accounts of these eighteenth-century travelers, see the following: James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland, 1764*, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (Melbourne: W. Heinemann, 1953); Roger Pearson, *Voltaire Almighty: A Life in Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2005); and Burney, *Musical Tours in Europe*. Other travelers' diaries include: *Collini's Lettres sur l'Allemagne, Mannheim* (1784) and Johann Kaspar Riesbeck's *Travels Through Germany, vol 2*. (1787).

<sup>383</sup> As quoted in Paul Cornelson, *Opera at Mannheim, 1770-1778*, diss., U of North Carolina, 1992, 454.

Karl Theodor understood the merits of industry and entrepreneurship. His approach to governance encouraged citizens of Mannheim to serve their own interests by laboring for the good of the state. Common occupations included court service and entertainment, working in one of the elector's factories, or providing military protection for the elector and his palace.<sup>384</sup> Residents spent their free time in institutions once restricted to the upper class. In 1763, Karl Theodor made his library accessible to a public readership. He funded a public natural history museum and a renowned hall of antiquities. He also invited the public to enjoy productions in the electoral *Opernhaus*, the town's only permanent theater.

Karl Theodor sponsored these public projects to secure the affections of the local townspeople and to forward a national discourse abroad. His public enterprises ensured his preeminent place in discussions among the educated bourgeoisie, whose opinions on theater, art, and literature, had begun to assume political significance.<sup>385</sup> Consider, for example, a letter from an advisor to Karl Theodor's princely competitor, the Austrian emperor Joseph II, to the writer and editor of the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* (*German General Library*) Friedrich Nicolai in Berlin. In May of 1776, Tobias Phillip von Gebler boasted that the Emperor Joseph II granted the Viennese "an embarrassing choice of entertainment" including plays, fireworks, and bear-baiting, but also "two public parks, holding many thousands of people." Gebler added, "Every patriot must rejoice that our German *Joseph* has designated the national stage as his *Court*

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<sup>384</sup> One of Karl Theodor's more famous entrepreneurial endeavors was the establishment of a porcelain company in Frankenthal. In 1756, he invited Paul Hannong, who had trained in France, to lay the foundations for a factory and in 1762, he bought the factory to exert greater control over its production of goods.

<sup>385</sup> Jürgen Habermas describes how this practice facilitated the transformation of the public sphere. The accessibility of culture in the reading room, museum, and theater, sparked critical debate among members of the educated bourgeoisie and their private discussions on culture and cultural accessibility assumed political exigencies over time. As Habermas argued, "the public sphere in the world of letters (*literarische Öffentlichkeit*) was not, autochthonously bourgeois; it preserved a certain continuity with the publicity involved in the representation enacted at the prince's court. The bourgeois avant-garde of the educated middle class learned the art of critical-rational public debate through its contact with the 'elegant world.'" See Habermas, *Public Sphere*, 29.

theater. He will certainly employ no Frenchmen until German plays are performed at Versailles.”<sup>386</sup> Gebler’s letter suggests that by 1776, the princes of the German states sensed the growing demand for sociopolitical recognition among members of the *Bürgertum*. Perhaps instinctively, Karl Theodor knew to adapt some of these initiatives even before the 1770s. He used his public institutions to foster a sense of paternal kinship with the residents of his German capital, state, and the collective German nation.

It was not enough, however, to simply allow the *Bürgertum* to enter aristocratic spaces. This new class also desired to be recognized for their achievements; thus, it was critical that Karl Theodor and other princes also sponsor German artists to generate German cultural artifacts. The German petty courts adapted to this demand, ironically enough, by looking to the French King Louis XIV. Here are the reasons why.

During the course of his seventy-two-year reign, Louis XIV embodied the myth of divine kingship, a feat that was only achieved with the assistance of his court artists. In virtually every form of representational artefact — statuary, fine art, print material, and performance — they crowned Louis their absolute prince.<sup>387</sup> This kind of baroque aggrandizement, however, was characteristic of numerous rulers in the seventeenth century. But Louis was unique because, in making himself the center of spectacle and the reason for its creation, all of the great French artists of the seventeenth century owed success to the same patron. Moreover, by championing the French arts rather than foreign works, Louis propagated the belief that French culture was the premiere culture that the rest of Europe should follow.

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<sup>386</sup> Italics are as printed. Tobias Phillip von Gebler to Friedrich Nicolai, Vienna, 26 May 1776. Transcribed in Beales, *Joseph II*, 233.

<sup>387</sup> One of the most comprehensive studies of Louis XIV’s baroque self-fashioning is Peter Burke’s *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992). See also Nancy Mitford’s *The Sun King* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) and W.H. Lewis’s *The Splendid Century* (New York: William Sloane, 1953).

The princes of the German Empire loathed the French king for his imperial ambitions and glorified him as an idol. They built their own courts in imitation of Versailles and commissioned entertainments that promoted their splendor in a similar fashion. They spoke French at court, rather than German, and when they could, imported French goods and French artists. But by the eighteenth-century, they also recognized that the cult of the baroque, promulgated by Louis, had also lost much of its mystique. The semiotics of absolutism could not singularly thwart a burgeoning bourgeois revolution. For this reason, the baroque spectacle, which typically transformed royal patrons into mythic heroes, was largely discarded. Alternatively, the tradition of hiring native-born artists actually became fashionable late into the eighteenth century. In Mannheim, Karl Theodor adopted this strategy much earlier. As a young man, he commissioned composers and musicians born in the German territories before those of foreign birth. Critically, though, he requested that they work mostly within the French and Italian styles.

This is not to say that by the mid-eighteenth century, baroque theatrical practices had ceased entirely. For the German prince lacking a large and capable military “the main currency of imperial competition was cultural achievement,” and so displays such as fireworks, pageants, ballets, and operas, substantiated “a constitutive element of power itself.”<sup>388</sup> By making the court theater “public,” however, Karl Theodor, and other princes, were required to be mindful of their bourgeois spectators. Entertainments presented in the electoral *Opernhaus*, for example, needed to be fiscally responsible, carefully-chosen, and offer the illusion of inclusivity.

If Karl Theodor ignored these prescriptions, he ran the risk of appearing a tyrant, like his contemporary, Duke Karl Eugen of Württemberg (1728-1793). In 1752, the Württemberg duke agreed to provide six-thousand infantrymen to France in the event of a war, and in exchange

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<sup>388</sup> Blanning, *Culture of Power*, 59.

received a sum of 290,000 florins. Following this transaction, he used his payment to commission an elaborate series of operas, and did little to develop an army.<sup>389</sup> When in 1756, France returned to the duke to procure men for a war with England, only two thousand Württemberg-men were trained for battle. The remaining four thousand were pressed into service against their will. The playwright Friedrich Schiller, who spent his youth in servitude to the duke, dramatized the despotic whims of a tyrannical prince in *Kabale und Liebe (Intrigue and Love, 1784)*, a critique of tyranny, which he amplified by alluding to the American Revolution. In Act 2, scene 1, the old valet reports to his sovereign mistress that “seven thousand sons of the land left for America.”<sup>390</sup> When asked if these soldiers willingly volunteered for service, the valet replies:

Every one of them volunteers! A few saucy lads or so stepped up front and asked the Colonel how the sovereign was selling a yoke of human beings. . . . But our most gracious ruler had all regiments march out on the parade ground and had the loudmouths shot down. We heard the rifles crack, saw their brains splatter the pavement, and the whole army shouted: ‘Hurrah! Off to America!’<sup>391</sup>

Here, Schiller exploits the tyranny of a German prince who presses his subjects into military service. And his critique is especially damning because the soldiers must fight against the dream of popular sovereignty, which they surely aspired for themselves. Obviously, this kind of play proved quite threatening to a German prince.<sup>392</sup> Therefore Karl Theodor desired not to censor these kinds of representations, but prevent them from ever happening.

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<sup>389</sup> See Hertz, *Music in European Capitals: The Galant Style 1720-1780* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 448. This story is also recounted in Charles E. Passage’s introduction to Friedrich Schiller’s *Intrigue and Love: A Bourgeois Tragedy* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1971), xiv.

<sup>390</sup> Schiller, *Intrigue and Love*, 30.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>392</sup> The works of Schiller were banned, for example, from the imperial theaters of Vienna (see above, Chapter 3). *Kabale und Liebe* premiered in the free city of Frankfurt in 1784. The play was also presented in Mannheim after Karl Theodor moved his court to Munich.

For this reason, we might call Karl Theodor an absolutist ruler, but not a despot. He employed German artists and paid them fairly.<sup>393</sup> In fact, when the German composer Ignaz Holzbauer (1711-1783) felt himself mistreated by the Duke of Württemberg he fled for Karl Theodor's capital. There, the elector made him *Kapellmeister* of his *Opernhaus*. In addition to supporting Holzbauer, Karl Theodor commissioned other German composers, such as Christian Cannabich (1731-1789) and Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782). He also attracted some of the best orchestral musicians in all of Germany. "I cannot quit this article without doing justice to the orchestra of his electoral highness, so deservedly celebrated throughout Europe," Charles Burney wrote when he came to Mannheim in 1772, "I found it to be indeed all that its fame had made me expect: power will naturally arise from a great number of hands; but the judicious use of this power, on all occasions, must be the consequence of good discipline; indeed, there are more solo players, and good composers in this, than perhaps in any other orchestra in Europe; it is an army of generals, equally fit to plan a battle, as to fight it."<sup>394</sup> Karl Theodor knew the value of staying at the forefront of German cultural politics. Because he paid his musicians generously, they upheld a social status in Mannheim unmatched in other German cities. They too shared a stake in preserving and protecting the common good of their prince's state.

Burney's description of Karl Theodor's disciplined orchestra-army appropriately describes the dutiful composure of Mannheim's other musical and theatrical artists. In private correspondence, composers, playwrights, and actors often expressed a desire to experiment with

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<sup>393</sup> A fact known to many German musicians including Leopold Mozart, who noted that the "elector values people of talent" in correspondence with his son Wolfgang. Leopold Mozart to Wolfgang Mozart, Salzburg, 1 November 1777, *Letters of Mozart*, 353. Daniel Hertz notes that musicians were able to purchase property in town and thus enjoyed a higher social standing in Mannheim than in other principalities; see Hertz, *Music in European Capitals*, 497.

<sup>394</sup> Burney, *Musical Tours in Europe*, 34-35.

artistic forms, styles, or ideas, yet these ambitions were governed by an implicit sense of restraint. For example, as I noted in the previous chapter, despite private frustrations, Wolfgang Mozart catered to the Austrian Emperor's fondness for comedic opera. Mannheim composers, on the other hand, catered to Karl Theodor's love of the *opera seria*.<sup>395</sup>

As Martha Feldman notes in her book *Opera and Sovereignty*, *opera seria* was the preferred genre in the public court theaters of the eighteenth-century, for it served as a "floating signifier" of sovereign absolutism.<sup>396</sup> In form and content, *opera seria* flourished in "a world endlessly marked by the reiteration of social hierarchies."<sup>397</sup> This description suggests that the genre affirmed the values espoused by the baroque spectacle, but tempered the spectacles themselves. In practice *opera seria* continued using detailed perspective scenery, theatrical machines, and elaborate costumes, but these productions ultimately emphasized the musical virtuosity of singers and composers before the dazzling qualities of the commissioning prince.

Composers of *opera seria* relied on libretti that circulated across the court capitals of European nations, as far east as Russia, and as far west as England. They shared stories of political strife such as contests of state, the perils of tyranny, intrigues at court, and the demands of loyalty to one's country.<sup>398</sup> The presentation of these themes normalized and reaffirmed a sociopolitical order with a sovereign prince at its head. But Karl Theodor recognized, like other German princes, that presenting these Italian operas using Italian customs would alienate his German audience. His librettists thus modified foreign conventions to appeal to German national

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<sup>395</sup> For a list of operas performed in Mannheim, see Friedrich Walter, *Geschichte des Theaters und der Musik am Kurpfälzischen Hofe* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1968), 362-368.

<sup>396</sup> Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 2007), 38.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>398</sup> These themes are enumerated in Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 24.

sentiment and German sovereignty. Consider, for example, a production of John Christian Bach's *opera seria Temistocle* given at the elector's *Opernhaus* in November 1772. Borrowing a libretto from the Italian composer Metastasio, the elector's court poet and private secretary Mattia Verazi offered a story of the ancients that also heralded the leadership and national identity of Karl Theodor.<sup>399</sup>

The story of the libretto is as follows.<sup>400</sup> In a fit of jealousy, a number of prominent Athenians call for the ostracization of the famed Greek hero and politician Themistocles. In the opera, Temistocle leaves his home, only to find refuge at the court of the Persian monarch, Serse, a sworn enemy of his homeland. When Serse declares that the hero must defy Athens and fight on behalf of Persia or die, Temistocle finds himself torn by allegiances. Should he serve the man that saved his life or the city-state that sent him to exile? Temistocle dies for the happy fate of Athens. This display of duty to the state encouraged Mannheim spectators to imaginatively align the city-state of Athens to the capital of the Palatine of the Rhine. Verazi's libretto saluted two great politicians, the Athenian hero Temistocle and the Elector Karl Theodor.

The decision to showcase a hero of Athens might at first appear antithetical to the interests of an absolute prince, but the choice, in fact, nurtured the illusion of inclusivity and egalitarianism in the capital of the electorate. This illusion was also fostered in the rituals of theater-going. Although Karl Theodor made his private theater accessible to the masses, the price of entry and the formalities of attendance, such as the allocation of boxes and the doors of entry,

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<sup>399</sup> The term ancients in this context alludes to the "*Querelle des Anciens et Modernes*," which began in France at the conclusion of the seventeenth-century. In 1687, Charles Perrault delivered a poem to the *Académie Française* boasting that the culture of contemporary France equaled the accomplishments of antiquity. In German dramatic criticism the tenets of the dispute transformed, but the terms ancients and moderns still prevailed in the discourse.

<sup>400</sup> Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 234-236.

catered to the aristocracy. In a diary entry recounting the aforementioned premiere of *Temistocle*, an electoral administrator described this dynamic in vivid detail:

At four o'clock the court assembled in the antechamber of the elector's wife; from there they proceeded to the opera house. Many visitors preferred to remain incognito, among them the margraves of Baden with their families and retinue. They were given the grand box in the third tier. The hereditary prince and princess of Hessen-Kassel occupied the *loge grillee* on the main floor's right side. The corresponding box on the left went to the prince and princess of Naussau-Weilburg and to Countess von Neippberg; next to them were the three Radziwill princes. Many visiting ladies of high social standing had come incognito; they were assigned the third-tier boxes formerly belonging to the Jesuits. The other boxes were completely full, so that many townspeople were unable to obtain admission and had to console themselves for a repeat performance.<sup>401</sup>

The attention paid to seating arrangements suggests an unusually strict social hierarchy. And indeed, the spatial dynamics that defined the elector's theater glorified the nobility to such an extent that even visitors accustomed to the theaters of court, found them to be overzealous. When the Viennese actor Johann Friedrich Müller drafted his report on the elector's theater in Mannheim (circa 1776), he wrote that the *Opernhaus* had six tiers of boxes and "under the electoral box located in the middle" there was also a "gallery up to the theater," which, he added, "oddly functions as a *parterre noble*, where all the court cavaliers and officers are found."<sup>402</sup> In Charles Burney's description of the elector's theater, the musicologist observed that when the comic opera *La Contadina in Corte* summoned the Elector, Electress, and the Princess Royal of Saxony to the theater, the house filled "with a greater number of attendants and figures than even I saw in the great opera, either of Paris or London."<sup>403</sup> Judging from Burney's account, Karl Theodor's presence among the theater's collection of nobles and servants (and a seemingly

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<sup>401</sup> Quoted. in Reinhard G. Pauly, *John Christian Bach: Mozart's Friend and Mentor* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1994), 285-286.

<sup>402</sup> Quoted in Corneilson, *Opera at Mannheim*, 20.

<sup>403</sup> Burney, *Musical Tours in Europe*, 34.

invisible *bürger* class) emphasized his position as head of state, as seated within the royal box and as his subjects' royal benefactor.

In order to exert further control over this governing hierarchy, the elector managed the timing of theatrical activity in his capital. The most important period for theater in Mannheim was carnival.<sup>404</sup> Within the feudal societies of the Middle Ages, carnival marked a brief period of license where commoners could play as feudal lords and participate in festivities such as fairs, pageants, and feasts. And, as Mikhail Bakhtin has argued, the theatrical spectacles of Medieval carnival, were not only seen but also lived. "While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom."<sup>405</sup> Yet as Bakhtin also points out, this version of carnival came to a halt in the latter half of the eighteenth-century.<sup>406</sup> Obviously, there are a number of causes that motivated this cultural shift, but two are particularly relevant to this discussion.

Eighteenth-century reforms instigated the cultural assault of the German clown *Hanswurst*, who, by virtue of his carnival origins, embodied the grotesque manners of a peasant-fool. At the same time, leading authors of critical theory such as Johann Christoph Gottsched, Johann Elias Schlegel, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing argued that the theater and its various manifestations served as an inherent platform for the distillation of social mores. As members of the bourgeoisie aspired for both cultural and political recognition, they advocated for a theater to model the customs of a higher socioeconomic class. And so, the anxiety about assimilating the

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<sup>404</sup> In both the courts of Germany and Italy, sovereigns marked the start of carnival by opening their theaters to the public.

<sup>405</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1984), 7.

<sup>406</sup> Bahktin argues that the licensure of carnival pre-dated German Romanticism and Johann Gottfried Herder's interest in *Volk* history and identity; see Bahktin, *Rabelais*, 4.

qualities of a lower class remained pervasive.<sup>407</sup> The theatrical genres of carnival had to change. However, efforts to realize a middle-class theater were complicated by a two-tiered system of cultural production. When German theater audiences relocated from market squares into permanent theaters, they moved into court theaters. As a result, carnival became a vehicle of control for the governing prince and the genres of representation reflected his interests and taste. The highlight of carnival in Mannheim was often the presentation of a new *opera seria*.<sup>408</sup>

Karl Theodor used the interiority of the theatrical space to manipulate the extent of his subjects' imaginations. Sitting in the *Opernhaus* during carnival, commoners could imagine themselves as nobility, although they still sat in a section of the theater devoted to their class while the real aristocracy occupied the boxes. The presentation of an *opera buffa* or *opera seria* further affirmed the values of an unchangeable sociopolitical structure where *das Volk* would forever remain subservient to *der Adel* (the nobility). This order, naturally, was celebrated rather than scorned. For example, when Burney attended the aforementioned *opera buffa La Contadina in Corta*, he noted that the Italian carnival scene from Niccolò Tassi's original libretto was represented as a German fair. "There were upwards of a hundred persons on the stage at one time," he observed.<sup>409</sup> A party of commoners reveled in the temporary freedoms of carnival, but danced for the pleasure of the elector and his court. Yet as the call for nation began to grow louder, the elector recognized that the temporary freedoms afforded in his *Opernhaus* were not enough to sustain the future of his suzerainty.

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<sup>407</sup> For more on this discourse, see above, chapter two.

<sup>408</sup> A list of operas performed in Mannheim can be found in Walter, *Geschichte des Theaters*, 362-368.

<sup>409</sup> Burney, *Musical Tours in Europe*, 34.

## The Construction and Institutionalization of the Mannheim National Theater (1775-1777)

As I noted in the introduction, the term *nation* in eighteenth-century discourse alluded to the bond or unity of a people as separate from the governing powers of a state.<sup>410</sup> The German grammarian Johann Christoph Adelung defined nation as “the native inhabitants or a country in so far as they have a common origin and speak a common language, whether they constitute a single state or are divided into several.”<sup>411</sup> What is striking about this comparative definition is that nation is essentially apolitical. The term *state*, on the other hand, emerged from a medieval construct of artificial sovereignty, the *estate*. Michael Oakeshott has observed that two major claims facilitated the politicization of nation in European discourse during the mid-eighteenth century. The first claim was that “over and above the unity with which a ruler or government might endow a ‘state,’ it had another, ‘natural’ unity – that of being a ‘nation.’” And the second claim was that because communities of Europeans were naturally organized as nations, “by virtue of their being ‘nations’ they ought to be ‘states.’”<sup>412</sup> These articulations forwarded a new sovereign paradigm, predicated on the belief that the laws of nations derived from a natural order (because nations themselves were natural communities) and that a government could either flourish by honoring those natural laws or eventually come to an end.

This paradigm also brought a new trial. A national community needed to understand the bond that made them a nation, i.e., their character, before they could adopt a proper sovereign government.<sup>413</sup> The challenge demanded that one “*go back* from appearances to principles, from

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<sup>410</sup> Oakeshott, *Political Thought*, 407.

<sup>411</sup> As quoted. in Blanning, *Culture of Power*, 17.

<sup>412</sup> Oakeshott, *Political Thought*, 408.

<sup>413</sup> As Montesquieu argued in *The Spirit of the Laws*, 8-9.

the diversity of empirical shapes to the forming forces.”<sup>414</sup> In other words, a German nationalist needed to examine history to determine the sovereign future of the German nation.<sup>415</sup> As Montesquieu asserted, by surveying history one could determine the future and past of all governments, which essentially fell into one of three categories: republican, monarchical, or despotic. In sum, he argued that while a despotic government was inherently destructive, a republic or monarchy could optimally function if governed according to natural principles.<sup>416</sup> Therefore champions of a republican imagining of Germany needed to show their nation’s history as tied to traditions of democracy. Champions of monarchical sovereignty subscribed to a different narrative of the past. Their aim was to remind Germans that Germany had thrived, and would continue to thrive, under the watchful leadership of German princes.

As I discussed in chapter one, the Hamburg National Theater was one of many national theaters established in the mid-eighteenth century, but its institutional structure was novel. The enterprise operated without a sovereign patron and prioritized the development of German authorship in addition to elevating the social status of actors. Plays (excluding musical entertainments) were performed in German by German actors. The Hamburg enterprise also championed a new imagining of German sovereignty. In a prologue performed on the first day of the theatrical season, for example, the national players championed the principle of virtue, a

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<sup>414</sup> Italics are my emphasis. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 210.

<sup>415</sup> Voltaire wrote in *On Manners and the Spirit of Nations* (1756) that history should reveal the customs of civilizations rather than the cult of heroes, effectively displacing the centrality of individuals’ stories to reveal “the spirit of the times” and the “spirit of nations.” This historiographical paradigm freed a nation from monarchical or imperial history by emphasizing the natural bond of a nation’s people as something separate and immutable. National character might *appear* to be altered or changed by historical circumstance but could continue to exist. Cassirer argues that Voltaire’s observations helped forward this new historiographical paradigm across Europe; see Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 216.

<sup>416</sup> As the reader may recall from chapter one, Montesquieu contended that the governing principle of a republic was virtue. The governing principle of a monarchy, he argued, was honor; see Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 27.

source of sovereign power that could sustain the government of a popular state or republic.<sup>417</sup> The speech, as delivered by the actress Elisabeth Löwen, aligned the ancient city-state of Athens with the free imperial city of Hamburg, a historical antecedent that might determine the fate of Germany's sovereign future. Madame Löwen declared that, after years of searching, the Greek muse Thalia had finally found a home. She called out, "In Hamburg she found protection: here is her Athens!" and looking to her audience, concluded her speech with a challenge to the citizens of Hamburg, "All Germany looks to you!"<sup>418</sup>

Despite these lofty aspirations, the Hamburg National Theater operated for only two years. Without a noble patron, the institution could not monetarily sustain itself. The call for a republican nation, however, continued to reverberate. It therefore became necessary for the autocratic rulers of the German nation to forward their own vision of national sovereignty. Each man crowned himself prince of this new imagined Germany. In the mid-1770s, Joseph II of Austria, Maximilian III of Bavaria, Karl Eugen of Württemberg, and Karl Theodor of the Palatine of the Rhine all established national theaters in their respective capitals.

At that time, Karl Theodor was renowned for his German orchestra and company of German singers, but he embraced the fashion for German-language theater with some reluctance.<sup>419</sup> He retained a company of French actors until 1771, and after their departure favored a German troupe famous for their renditions of French *opéra comique*.<sup>420</sup> It took another

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>418</sup> Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 6.

<sup>419</sup> Although German *Gesellschaften* (Societies) were integrated into the social fabric of several German capitals, Mannheim only came to sponsor one in 1775 and Karl Theodor took credit as founder.

<sup>420</sup> In October of 1770, the Saxon diplomat Count Andreas von Riaucour wrote that the elector had expressed his dissatisfaction with the court's resident company of French actors. Perhaps, in an attempt to justify their dismissal, the elector suggested that the French players neglected their duties and had become prohibitively expensive. He dismissed the French troupe in 1771 and articulated plans to retain a company at a lesser cost.

four years before he designated a space for the presentation of German plays.<sup>421</sup> Finally, in 1775, the elector recruited his court architect and scenographer Lorenzo Quaglio (1730-1804) to design a public theater detached from the Mannheim palace.<sup>422</sup> He then charged his finance minister Franz Karl von Hompesch to find a director to manage the space and recruit new talent.

Hompesch solicited the expertise of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. As one of the most popularly-performed German playwrights and author of *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (*Hamburg Dramaturgy*, 1767-1768), Lessing was the foremost authority on German national theater.<sup>423</sup> As such, Hompesch offered Lessing a directorial appointment and a generous salary. Lessing agreed instead, to serve as an advisor.<sup>424</sup> In September 1776, he became a sworn member of the Mannheim Academy, and in less than a month's time began recruiting actors for the theater.<sup>425</sup> We will never know exactly how Lessing imagined the institutional structure of the Mannheim National Theater, nor will we know what went on in mind the mind of Karl Theodor, but we can assume that their visions were antithetical to one another. Ten years before taking a post in Mannheim, Lessing served as in-house critic and company dramaturg to the Hamburg National Theater. In 1767, a theater devoted to German authorship and performance was a novel idea. But it was also unique because the founder Johann Friedrich Löwen was particular about the kinds of plays performed in his national house. The majority of plays presented during the theater's two

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<sup>421</sup> Originally called the *Comödien – und Redoutenhaus*, a space for comedies and masquerade balls, by 1777, the building assumed a new moniker as the Mannheim National Theater.

<sup>422</sup> Quaglio had only recently completed designs for a national theater in Munich and a permanent theater in the free city of Frankfurt.

<sup>423</sup> Tobias Phillip von Gebler, for example, petitioned Emperor Joseph II to bring Lessing to the Austrian capital of Vienna. When he failed to attain the Emperor's approval, Hompesch saw an opportunity.

<sup>424</sup> Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, 528.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*

seasons were tragedies—many translated from the French.<sup>426</sup> Löwen eliminated ballet from the repertoire, and because the theatrical company operated without aristocratic sponsorship, he could not afford to retain an orchestra.<sup>427</sup> Karl Theodor, on the other hand, had a vested interest in appearances. Known for his orchestra and repertoire of fine operatic entertainments, it was imperative that he continue presenting opera. He desired a national theater that maintained the traditions of Mannheim court culture.

The ideological conflict between the values of a “German national theater” and a “German court and national theater” in Mannheim is reflected in the early stages of the theater’s planning. In 1773, the German writer Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart noted that the elector’s Palatinate could “be regarded far more readily as a colony of Frenchmen than of German provincials.”<sup>428</sup> This affinity for French custom is reflected in Lessing’s correspondence from the fall and early winter of 1776. For example, in a letter to the Mannheim bookseller Christian Friedrich Schwan (1733-1815), Lessing confided that the elector’s demands for service were far from apt. The Theater Commission, he wrote, “requests, namely that the actors [in the employ of the elector] maintain seemly *Theaterkleider* [theatrical clothing] of their own.”<sup>429</sup> This custom, he concluded, might be applicable to the French, but not to Germans.<sup>430</sup> He argued further that few German actors had the money to spend on costumes and so it was customary to provide them. If the Mannheim Theater Commission wants the actors to procure their own costumes, he

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<sup>426</sup> See above, chapter one.

<sup>427</sup> See above, chapter one.

<sup>428</sup> As quoted in Abert, *W. A. Mozart*, 388.

<sup>429</sup> “Sie verlangt nemlich, das die Schauspieler ihre ordentlichen Theaterkleider selbst halten sollen.” Lessing to Christian Friedrich Schwan, Wolfenbüttel, 10 November 1776. In Lessing, *Briefe von und an Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Zweiter Band*, ed. Franz Muncker (Leipzig: 1907), 206.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

advised, then they must provide them with a monthly stipend.<sup>431</sup> These observations suggest that Karl Theodor may have placed monetary value upon his German musicians, but his generosity did not extend to German actors.

Lessing also took exception to the elector's desired length of service, arguing that the proposed contract's short period of engagement would, in fact, deter talent from coming to Mannheim.<sup>432</sup> The prestige of performing on the elector's stage was not enough to counter the actors' financial burden of moving across the country and procuring costumes. Still, perhaps out of duty or optimism, Lessing utilized his contacts in service to Karl Theodor. In a communication to his brother Karl, Lessing wrote that Mannheim has "a beautiful new theater; but still no actors" and inquired as to whether he knew of any looking to leave Berlin.<sup>433</sup> He also sent a letter of inquiry to Abel Seyler in Dresden, a long-time associate from his days at the Hamburg National Theater.<sup>434</sup>

When Seyler and Lessing joined the Hamburg National Theater in 1767, neither had experience with the practical demands of running a theater, though both men surely recognized the monetary burdens that plagued the institution.<sup>435</sup> After the company's finances proved untenable, Seyler accompanied the Hamburg actors twice to the court of the Hanoverian Elector;

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> The theater opened in November and typically operated through the winter. In the summer, the elector retired to his palace in Schwetzingen.

<sup>433</sup> "Ein schönes neues Theater; aber noch keine Acteurs." Gotthold Lessing to Karl Lessing, Wolfenbüttel, 26 September 1776, *Briefe von und an Lessing*, 198.

<sup>434</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing to Abel Seyler, Wolfenbüttel, 16 December 1776, *Briefe von und an Lessing*, 212.

<sup>435</sup> Lessing recounted to his brother Karl that the theater lacked leadership because operating decisions were consensus-based. See Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory*, 26.

this arrangement sustained their careers after the company's collapse.<sup>436</sup> In the spring of 1769, Seyler became intendant of the court theater in Hanover and was granted permission to tour his actors throughout the electorate. With the financial security of a court patron, Seyler added *Singspiel* to his repertoire and hired the German composer Anton Schweitzer (1735-1787), as well as a small group of actors with some talent for singing. Once Seyler's aspirations exceeded the opportunities afforded in Hanover, he took his company to the prestigious courts of Weimar, Gotha, and Dresden.

At the time of his renewed correspondence with Lessing in 1776, Seyler was distressed to report that his residency at the Dresden court had become tenuous. He confided to Lessing that the Dresden nobles had acquired a company of Italians and so the German players were being pushed out of the theater.<sup>437</sup> Lessing sympathized, but advised that there were some obstacles in bringing the Seyler Company to Mannheim. With the theater finished, there was some urgency in recruiting actors for the space, "but no *Musikalischen* [musical works] – since now people are even staging the German operas that have commenced there, the musical pieces remain entirely for the *Operntheater*."<sup>438</sup> Perhaps Lessing thought that the two theaters would serve two different genres: the electoral *Opernhaus* would continue to present opera and the national theater would present German plays. Thus, Seyler's arm of musical entertainments might deter the Theater Commission from bringing him to Mannheim.<sup>439</sup> Lessing requested that Seyler further

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<sup>436</sup> Seyler engaged actors Konrad Ekhoff, David Borchers, and his wife, the leading actress Sophie Friederike Seyler (née Hensel) from Hamburg and negotiated the new company's terms of service himself.

<sup>437</sup> Abel Seyler to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Dresden, December 1776, *Briefe von un an Lessing*, 148.

<sup>438</sup> "Denn da man nunmehr auch da angefangen deutsche Opern aufzuführen, so blieben die Musikalischen Schauspiele gänzlich für das Operntheater," Gotthold Ephraim Lessing to Abel Seyler, Wolfenbüttel, 16 December 1776, *Briefe von un an Lessing*, 212.

<sup>439</sup> Seyler began producing German comic operas, or *Singspiele* in 1769, after hiring the musical director Anton Schweitzer. At that time, Schweitzer and his librettist Johann Georg Jacobi (1740-1814), supplemented a

communicate his interest in coming to Mannheim and cautioned him from making any definitive plans.<sup>440</sup>

A day after writing to Seyler, Lessing drafted a proposal to the Mannheim Finance Minister Hompesch. In summation, Lessing wrote that the court of Dresden retained one of the finest troupes of actors in Germany, but they were being supplanted by a cabal of Italians. He suggested that the elector consider the troupe for his new theater in Mannheim.<sup>441</sup> Presumably after further negotiations and much thought, Lessing then followed this proposal with the advisement that Hompesch grant the Mannheim Academy purview over policies regarding the German theater and anoint one academy-member as the director. He recommended that Seyler aid with further managerial business and three actors from Seyler's company might assist with actor training; one of these actors, David Borchers, had been with Seyler since the dissolution of the Hamburg National Theater.<sup>442</sup>

It is hard to know exactly when these negotiations went awry, but in the following year, Lessing found his advice no longer desired and remuneration for his services to the academy

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repertoire of *Singspiel* already in circulation. For instance, between 1769 and 1771, the company performed *Die Verwandelten Weiber* (*The Wives Metamorphas'd*) twenty-four times; a number that outpaced any other count from the repertoire. *Die Verwandelten Weiber* came to the German stage via a translation of Charles Coffey's *The Devil to Pay, or The Wives Metamorphas'd*, (1731). Like so many *Singspiel* in the mid-eighteenth-century, when Seyler got ahold of the piece, the translation and musical score had already undergone several iterations in German. Seyler's rendition from 1766, had a new libretto by the popular German playwright Christoph Weisse, who incorporated conventions from the French *opéra comique*, to appeal to largely bourgeois audiences in the northern part of the German Empire. Over the years, the company's musical repertoire took on, what might be characterized as a more authentic German aesthetic, which I discuss later in the chapter. For more on the Seyler company and their early repertoire see Thomas Bauman, *North German Opera in the Age of Goethe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 91-102.

<sup>440</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing to Abel Seyler, Wolfenbüttel, 16 December 1776, *Briefe von un an Lessing*, 213.

<sup>441</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing to Finance Minster Hompesch, Wolfenbüttel, 17 December 1776, *Briefe von un an Lessing*, 214.

<sup>442</sup> Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, 529.

unpaid.<sup>443</sup> After a local newspaper falsely reported that the esteemed playwright received a gold medal and several gifts from the elector, Lessing wrote Hompesch to express his irritation and to sever ties to the national theater project.<sup>444</sup> He concluded his correspondence with the following advisement: “At the first syllable which anyone prints concerning my involvement in the Mannheim theater and which does not reflect the truth as it happened, I shall directly reveal everything to the public.”<sup>445</sup>

The biographer H.B. Nisbet describes Hompesch as “an evasive diplomat” who undermined Lessing by kowtowing to popular factions of the Mannheim court.<sup>446</sup> It is probable that his administrative style did, to a certain extent, sabotage the negotiations taking place. But it is also likely that Karl Theodor’s Theater Commission never communicated their mission for the Mannheim National Theater. Although Lessing advised Seyler that the new theater would be used for non-musical German plays, the elector opted to christen the space with an opera. And even after this inaugural production, Karl Theodor gave his national theater to Theobald Marchand, a *Prinzipal* renowned for his German translations of *opéra comique*. Perhaps Hompesch never intended to take Lessing’s recommendations, but hoped that Lessing’s prestige among the *Bildungsbürgertum* might lend the elector’s national theater an air of authenticity.

There is also evidence that suggests another factor facilitated this turn of events. In correspondence dated 31 December 1776, the Saxon diplomat Andreas von Riaucour notes that the court engaged Lessing to procure a troupe of actors for the start of carnival, but his “late

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 529.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 530.

<sup>445</sup> “Auf die erste Sylbe, die sich jemand über meinen Antheil an dem Manheimer Theater gedruckt und anders entfallen läßt, als es sich in der Wahrheit verhält, sage ich dem Publico alles rein heraus.” Gotthold Ephraim Lessing to Finance Minister Hompesch, Wolfenbüttel, April 1777, *Briefe von un an Lessing*, 236.

<sup>446</sup> Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, 529.

arrival” proved a huge embarrassment. As a consequence, he wrote, the court assembled a troupe of people already in service.<sup>447</sup> Karl Theodor traditionally opened his theater to mark the start of carnival and perhaps he did not wish to wait for Lessing’s arrival to Mannheim from Wolfenbüttel. He opened the Mannheim National Theater on 5 January 1777 with a production of an *opera seria*.<sup>448</sup>

Although the decision to christen the Mannheim National Theater with an opera was at odds with the spirit of the first national theater in Hamburg (est. 1767), it was not out of step with the national theater movement of the mid-1770s. In Vienna, the Austrian emperor championed the national *Singspiel* and retained a company of German singers to share the stage with his national players, and, across the German Empire, princes seemed to favor musically inclined German theater practitioners above French performers. This new trend appealed to noble patrons, such as the Duke of Weimar, who enjoyed opera, but had no desire to invest in an Italian company of singers.

When Abel Seyler (1730-1801) brought his actors and resident composer Anton Schweitzer (1735-1787) to Weimar in 1771, the company performed musical, dramatic, and balletic works for the ducal court. During this residency, Seyler’s composer Schweitzer also collaborated with the German writer Christoph Wieland (1733-1813). In approximately a year, the two men composed *Alceste*, an original German *Singspiel* based on the Euripidean tragedy *Alcestis*. After its premiere in 1773, bourgeois critics and noblemen alike declared the work to be a national success. The composer Schweitzer received praise for assimilating the musical dramaturgy of the great Italian composer Metastasio using a small company of German singers.

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<sup>447</sup> Lessing resided in Wolfenbüttel and planned a visit to Mannheim to help organize the theater’s opening. See Corneilson, *Opera in Mannheim*, 390.

<sup>448</sup> According to Daniel Hertz in *Music in European Capitals*, 579.

In an act of cunning self-promotion, Wieland claimed that *Alceste* marked an achievement in the history of German music.<sup>449</sup>

Yet as Goethe argued in *Götter, Helden, und Wieland (Gods, Heroes, and Wieland)*, Wieland also imposed the values of his modern audience onto the figures of classical Greece. This stylistic convention forwarded a discourse antithetical to the spirit of German Idealism.<sup>450</sup> In other words, Goethe believed that Wieland's dramaturgy undermined the Greek character of Greek tragedy. As a poor reflection of ancient Greece, the opera supplied no entry for contemplation. It reaffirmed the values of its own age. Consider, for example, the entrance of *Herkules* in Wieland's text.<sup>451</sup> He enters the stage-world seeking guidance, and so appeals to the allegorical muses. "I bear your name on my brow," he intones, and "for you, I do everything."<sup>452</sup> "Oh Virtue, guarantee me one wish – guide me on the course of honor."<sup>453</sup> This speech hybridized the classical traditions of *opera seria* and bourgeois tragedy to make the values of a sociopolitical movement predicated on *virtue*, commercially viable and politically palatable.

Played first for the ducal court of Weimar, *Alceste* also reflected a representative economy that honored a prince as cultural benefactor, which helped the work earn favor in the petty German courts. The Seyler Company revived *Alceste* at the courts of both Weimar and Gotha twenty-five times between 1773 and 1775. In August 1775, Theobald Marchand and

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<sup>449</sup> Wieland, "Briefe an einen Freund über das deutsche Singspiel, *Alceste*" [Letter to a Friend on the German Singspiel *Alceste*], *Der Teutsche Merkur* (1773), accessed March 20, 2016, <http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/cgi-bin/navtif.cgi?pfad=/diglib/aufkl/teutmerk/065731&seite=00000038.TIF&scale=6>

<sup>450</sup> For more on idealism and the German tragedy see Joshua Billings, *Genealogy of the Tragic* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2014), 1-16.

<sup>451</sup> Wieland, *Alceste: Ein Singspiel in Fünf Aufzügen* (Leipzig, 1773), 35.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

company took *Alceste* to Karl Theodor's Schwetzingen palace. The Saxon diplomat Riaucour described the production as exhibiting "the genius of the nation."<sup>454</sup> The success of the opera over the summer, prompted at least three more productions in the following two years.<sup>455</sup> Karl Theodor finally found a palatable genre of German theater.

In 1776, as builders finished Karl Theodor's national theater, his *Kappelmeister* Ignaz Holzbauer and the librettist Anton Klein (1748-1810) prepared their *opera seria*, *Günther von Schwarzburg*, to christen the space. In keeping with the fashionable *Singspiel*, it was written in German and featured the same singers who had only recently performed in *Alceste*. For the composer Holzbauer, who had made his career writing in the Italian style, the stakes were especially high. He took the unusual step of engraving the full score of *Günther von Schwarzburg* at his own expense. Unsurprisingly, he dedicated the publication to his patron Karl Theodor.<sup>456</sup> Still Holzbauer and Klein did not follow every convention that defined *Alceste*. In fact, they chose to eschew the tragedies of ancient Greece as well as the sparse conventions that innovated the *Singspiel* genre. Instead, they chose to reintegrate spectacle, pantomime, and ballet into the opera to champion a new vision of German history to forward the future of autocratic sovereignty in Germany.<sup>457</sup>

Klein argued in the preface to *Günther von Schwarzburg* that the German fixation with heroes of the classical age had led the German people to forget their own history. "German

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<sup>454</sup> Much of Riaucour's correspondence has been transcribed as an appendix in Corneilson, *Opera in Mannheim*, 372-394.

<sup>455</sup> According to Riaucour's records. Corneilson, *Opera in Mannheim* 386.

<sup>456</sup> Hertz, *Music in European Capitals*, 591.

<sup>457</sup> As noted in the published libretto (1777), the elector's architect and scenographer Quaglio designed the stage decorations and ballet master Etienne Lauchery choreographed the opera's ballet. Anton von Klein, *Günther von Schwarzburg: Ein Singspiel in Drei Aufzügen für die Kuhrpfälzische Hoffingbühne* (Mannheim, 1778), Preface.

heroes” he wrote, “who earned this much, that their image might be held up amongst the human race; should they be forgotten by their fatherland? Are only the ashes of Rome and Athens precious and worthy of our adoration? . . . We eye foreign models of virtue, virtues which perhaps never existed, and in so doing we see not our own.” Appealing to his readers’ sense of German pride, he demanded, “What is our choice?”<sup>458</sup> At the conclusion of the preface, Klein evoked a portrait of Günther von Schwarzburg, the hero of his opera. He wrote, “For the love of the fatherland he accepts a crown, and for the love of the fatherland he casts it off again.”<sup>459</sup>

The story of *Günther von Schwarzburg* takes place in the Middle Ages, a setting characteristic of another popular genre of the late eighteenth century, the *Ritterstück* (knight play). Inspired by the history of the Holy Roman Empire, Klein crafted a parable of princely leadership that also paid tribute to the legacy of the German Electorate. At the start of the opera, the German Empire is afflicted by war and the electors learn that they must crown a new emperor. They are presented with two contenders: Count Günther von Schwarzburg, a skilled and valiant soldier born of Germania, and the Bohemian King Karl, a son of Luxembourg.<sup>460</sup> The German people wish to crown their soldier, and their petition is supported by none other than the palatinate Count Rudolf, Karl Theodor’s forefather. He is opposed, however, by the Bohemian elector and his wife, the Dowager Queen of Bohemia, who wants nothing more than to see her son rise to power. The conflict among members of the electorate only exacerbates strife in war-

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<sup>458</sup> “Deutsche Helden, die verdienten, dass ihr Bild mitten unter dem menschlichen Geschlechte aufgestellt würde, sollten die in ihrem Vaterlande vergessen werden? Ist uns die Asche Roms und Athens allein kostbar und verehrungswürdig? Und sind dies auch noch Römer und Griechen, die auf unsern Schaubühnen erscheinen, oder hören wir nur ihren Namen nennen? Wir werfen Augen auf fremde Tugendmuster, die vielleicht niemals gewesen sind und sehen nicht, was in unserm Schosse ist.” Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> “Aus Vaterlandsliebe nimmt er eine Krone an, und legt sie wieder aus Vaterlandsliebe ab.” Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> The real Günther von Schwarzburg fought for the House of Wittelsbach. The King of Bohemia, Karl, was modeled after Charles IV, who later became Holy Roman Emperor.

torn Germany. As the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) drags on, they must decide the fate of an empire. Would they award their territories to the man of foreign character or to the man who represented the Germanic people? The two men are depicted as opposites in another way as well. Whereas Günther, though a soldier, yearns for peace; Karl shows little interest in bringing the war to an end.

Günther's call for peace is met with derision from some members of the nobility. For example, Karl's mother, the Bohemian Queen sings, "So just how grand is this fancy/ Only Günther wants peace?"<sup>461</sup> To which Günther replies "Grand? Peace, Freedom, All Hail to the People/ These are the thoughts, / That glow in every German soul."<sup>462</sup> With these lines Klein rather pointedly offers the German nation, that is *das Volk*, a national hero in Günther. Yet despite Günther's obvious kinship with the German people, and his overwhelming appeal, Klein *did not* rewrite history to crown the valiant soldier, a Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>463</sup> When Günther is poisoned by the Queen of Bohemia, the crown is awarded to Karl. Klein thus alludes to the real Karl XIV, who cemented his legacy by buttressing the electorate's powers in accordance with the constitutional structure of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>464</sup>

As I noted earlier in the chapter, the circulation of texts such as *The Spirit of the Laws* gave credence to the idea that the character of a nation (the shared manners and customs of a nation's people) should be understood as a condition for sovereign rule. A monarchical ruler, who rose to power by birthright, therefore needed to substantiate his sovereign claim to a nation.

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<sup>461</sup> "Wie groß ist dies gedacht? Nur Frieden wünscht Günther?", von Klein, *Günther von Schwarzburg*, 16.

<sup>462</sup> "Groß? Frieden, Freiheit, heil der Völker,/Dies sind Gedanken, die/ In jeder deutschen Seele glühen." Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> The real Günther von Schwarzburg did, however, become King of Frankfurt in 1349.

<sup>464</sup> This decree is referred to as "the Golden Bull" of 1356.

In *Günther von Schwarzburg*, Klein suggested that a prince, who once embraced foreign customs (like Karl Theodor), could *learn* the proper customs of the German Fatherland.<sup>465</sup> And so, as Günther dies of poisoning, he blesses a union between the Palatine countess Anna, Rudolf's daughter, and his opponent Prince Karl. Günther also calls for peace among warring factions of the empire and a plea for German pride: "Pride in being German," he intones "is your greatness!"<sup>466</sup> The last lines of the opera are uttered by the chorus: "The hero of the fatherland dies!"<sup>467</sup>

Klein promoted an alternative imagining of a German nation by placing his opera in a feudal era. This technique allowed him to champion a national history of German feudal lords. But, in using this technique, he also suggested that a prince of the German nation had an obligation to be German – to demonstrate his pride and model the natural qualities of strength and manliness to the German people. This alternative picture of national identity, propagated a kind of sovereign imagining that sustained the fragmentation of Germany during the French Revolution. "If the German princes had remained attached to foreign, and especially French, cultural models," as T.C.W. Blanning has argued, "a gulf would have opened up between them and the intelligentsia. In the event, enough of them made the necessary adjustment to allow the image of a common pursuit to be sustained."<sup>468</sup> Karl Theodor might therefore be considered a leader of a new form of nationalism, rooted in the fatherland and devoted to the sovereign legacy of German princes.

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<sup>465</sup> I emphasize Fatherland (*Vaterland*) because the term is repeatedly employed as a synonym for Germany in the opera.

<sup>466</sup> "Stolz- Deutsch zu seyn – ist -eure Größe!" von Klein, *Günther von Schwarzburg*, 83.

<sup>467</sup> "Der Held des Vaterlandes stirbt!" Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Blanning, *Culture of Power*, 263.

After its production, the opera elicited mixed reviews, especially among members of the *Bürgertum*. Wieland reported in a letter to Johann Heinrich Merck, that Klein's dramatization of *Günther von Schwarzburg* had caused "a great noise" in Mannheim. "As monstrous as the thing is," Wieland added, "I still fear the Mannheimers will take it for envy or resentment on my part, if the *Merkur* gives the production the review it deserves."<sup>469</sup> Conversely, an anonymous critic in the *Mannheimer Zeitung* wrote: "Germany may be proud of the general and enthusiastic applause that today greeted *Günther von Schwarzburg*, the first opera on the electoral stage that is German not only in language but also in subject. . . . A crowd of visiting and local spectators was all ears, all sentiment; in every eye one read a glowing, patriotic refutation of the former taste for foreign operas."<sup>470</sup> In the end, the opera's pronounced success helped to substantiate the continued production of German-language opera in the electoral capital of Mannheim until Karl Theodor's departure in 1778.<sup>471</sup>

## Epilogue

After Karl Theodor left for Bohemia in early January 1778, theatrical entertainments in Mannheim were canceled. When some time had passed, Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg (1750-1806), a member of the Mannheim Academy, petitioned Karl Theodor for control of the Mannheim National Theater. With the permission of the elector, he assumed the role of intendant and began the task of recruiting a troupe of actors for the space. He solicited Abel Seyler, who,

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<sup>469</sup> "So monströs das Ding ist, so fürcht ich doch, die Mannheimer möchten's mir für Neid und Missgunst aufnehmen, wenn der Merkur davon spräche, wie sich's gebührt." Christoph Martin Wieland to Johann Heinrich Merck, Weimar, 13 January 1777. From *Briefe an Johann Heinrich Merck, von Göthe, Herder, Wieland und andern bedeutenden Zeitgenossen* (Darmstadt: Johann Philipp Diehl, 1835), 100.

<sup>470</sup> As quoted. in Heartz, *Music in European Capitals*, 581.

<sup>471</sup> This tradition came to an end in 1778 when Karl Theodor departed for Bavaria.

despite a distasteful experience with the Mannheim enterprise three years before, agreed to join the company as director. With the assistance of Seyler, Dalberg also attracted a pool of talent, including actors August Wilhelm Iffland (1759-1814) and Heinrich Christian Beck (1760-1803). Famously, the playwright Friedrich Schiller also began a career at the Mannheim National Theater.

For the duration of his tenure as intendant, Dalberg ruminated over the guiding principles of his national institution. He facilitated an ongoing conversation with his company and the local German Society about the nature of theater and the mission of the Mannheim stage<sup>472</sup> In 1785, he also established a contest to entertain these questions. The last questions posed as part of this missive are as follows: “What is a National Theater in the truest sense? How can a theater become a National Theater? And is there really any German theater which deserves to be called a National Theater?”<sup>473</sup> The answers were not readily apparent, but the desire for a space to institutionalize an imagined national identity only continued to grow.

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<sup>472</sup> See Max Martersteig’s *Die Protokolle des Mannheimer Nationaltheaters* (1890).

<sup>473</sup> As translated and transcribed in Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theater*, 207.

## Conclusion: A Decorous Bow and a Defiant Turn

### Acknowledging the Prince in the History of German National Theater

In 1839, the writer and composer Bettina Brentano von Arnim (1785-1859) published a series of letters from Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) addressed to herself, in the monthly publication *Athenäum für Wissenschaft: Kunst und Leben*. One of these letters, dated August 1812, depicts an event that transpired when the composer and the famed literary figure Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) walked through a park in the Bohemian town of Teplitz. As transcribed from Arnim's publication, Beethoven writes:

On the way home yesterday, we met the entire imperial family. From a distance we saw them approaching, and Goethe slipped away from me to stand to one side; say what I would, I could not induce him to advance a step further. I pulled my hat down on my head, buttoned my overcoat, and with folded arms pushed through the thickest part of the crowd. Princes and sycophants drew up in line; Archduke Rudolf took off his hat; the Empress was the first to greet me. Persons of rank know me. To my great amusement, I saw the procession file past Goethe; hat in hand, he stood at the side, bowing deeply.<sup>474</sup>

Readers could not verify the authenticity of the letter, as both Goethe and Beethoven had died before its publication, but the "Incident at Teplitz" nevertheless captivated their imaginations.<sup>475</sup>

Two icons of German culture walked side by side in a public park. As a result of their musical and literary accomplishments, Europe viewed the nation of Germany with greater esteem, but in their homeland, the two men were expected to pay their respects to those who achieved status by birth, rather than accomplishment. In a pictorial rendering of the story (circa 1887) by artist Carl

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<sup>474</sup> As quoted. in Alessandra Comini, *The Changing Image of Beethoven: A Study in Mythmaking* (Santa Fe NM: Sunstone P, 2008), 16.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

Rohling, Goethe bows decorously while Beethoven storms through the crowd, his back turned away from the imperial family.

In a recent article in *The New Yorker*, the literary critic Adam Kirsch described the meeting thusly: “Here was a contrast of temperaments, but also of generations. Goethe belonged to the courtly past, when artists were the clients of princes, while Beethoven represented the Romantic future, when princes would clamor to associate with artists.”<sup>476</sup> His analysis of the “Incident at Teplitz” marks a break from the old way of thinking to the new. Tethered to the past, Goethe bowed to an old world, while Beethoven charged into a new revolutionary era. Kirsch’s description echoes a tradition of literary criticism and historiography that attributes political agency to the artist, who succeeds or fails to alter a political paradigm.

I suggest that we read this moment differently. Goethe and Beethoven, whose cultural contributions engendered the socioeconomic and political aspirations of their class, suddenly encountered the obstacle of their ambitions in the flesh. Readers who imagined this confrontation surely felt conflicted about the actions taken by both men. But this incident, which may or may not have taken place, did not initiate any real political change. The political implications of the “Incident at Teplitz” can be found in the imagining of the event, rather than the event itself.

The imagining of a nation led by artists is the defining feature of every national theater explored in this study. Collectively, these theaters do not wholly fit within Habermas’s theory of the bourgeois public sphere, nor the armature of baroque spectacle that dominated courtly stages of the late-seventeenth century. The movement straddles both. Theater artists who dreamed of nation as a precept for popular sovereignty never fully disengaged from the representational conventions of regional princely power. Therefore, proponents of German national theater

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<sup>476</sup> Adam Kirsch, “Design for Living,” *The New Yorker* (1 Feb. 2016). Web.

forwarded a discourse that simultaneously championed the sovereign will of the people and the sovereign will of princes. To conclude, I would like to briefly summarize how each of the case studies treated in this dissertation exemplifies this national paradox.

### **The Hamburg National Theater, est. 1767**

The founder of the Hamburg National Theater, Johann Friedrich Löwen, used the stage to promote the virtues of republicanism. But the question still lingers: Did Löwen really wish to excise the prince from his national institution? His early writings on the German theater suggest that he did not. In *History of German Theater* (1765), Löwen analyzed the theatrical culture of several German cities, and concluded that Hamburg was not an ideal place to establish a theater. Instead, he envisioned a German theater as underwritten by a prince, who would rule in the spirit of republicanism. He admired Prussian Berlin, and he applauded Frederick II for his “taste and inclination to see his people happy,” concluding that his people enjoyed “a republican freedom of thought and of writing,” and were “the fittest for the recording of German literature, and drama in particular.”<sup>477</sup> As a cameral servant of the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Löwen likely considered the benefits of serving his prince there. In the end, he eschewed patriotic sentiment in favor of logic. Presented with an opportunity to seize control of the Hamburg Theater, he took it, and adapted his ideal to suit the realities of his situation.

Inside of the Hamburg National Theater, Löwen invited an audience of German citizens to envision their German states united as one singular national landscape. But to see unity, one must imaginatively remove the causes of disunity. Löwen faced many obstacles. For one, the

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<sup>477</sup>“Wir kommen also immer wieder auf Berlin zurück. Ein mächtiger König, ein Fürst, der selbst Geschmack und Neigung hat, sein Volk glücklich und vergnügt zu sehen, eine republikanische Freiheit, zu denken und zu schreiben, ein Zusammenfluss von Männern, die entweder als Kritik, oder als Schriftsteller bewiesen, dass sie die würdigsten zur Aufnahme der deutschen Litteratur, und der Bühne insonderheit wären.” Löwen, *Geschichte des Deutschen Theaters*, 69.

interior of the Hamburg National Theater emulated that of a court theater. Recall the Corinthian pillars on each side of the proscenium, painted to resemble marble and the ceiling's two allegorical murals.<sup>478</sup> The interior ornamentation, though shabby, imitated courtly theaters in nearby principalities. Moreover, Löwen's program of plays, incorporated a repertoire of French works in translation. These dramas, in content and form, signaled a monarchical order, which constituted a prince as the head of the body politic. The discrepancies between theory and practice suggest that Löwen was constrained not only by his budget, but also by the limits of his own theatrical imagination. His enterprise sought to define a national character "of the people" using a medium that represented the nation as constituted by the prince.

### **The Court and National Theater of Vienna, est. 1776**

In Vienna, the Emperor Joseph II exploited this paradoxical relationship. During the 1760s, as bourgeois proponents quibbled over the proper genre of German national theater, Joseph lent a deaf ear. His Viennese subjects, nevertheless, continued to dream of their national stage. As they vacillated between an institutional model that was possible and one that was probable, they evoked the sovereign paradox of German nationhood. They wondered how they would integrate the courtly theatrical customs that already defined their city into a stage that promoted the values of their class. In the 1770s, as the call for nation grew more politically significant, the emperor Joseph brought the idea of German national theater into the fold of his empire. Performers of Joseph's Court and National Theater presented an imperial vision of the German nation to bolster the authority of the Holy Roman Emperor in the minds of the court, the public, and visiting foreign dignitaries.

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<sup>478</sup> Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory*, 14-15.

## **The Mannheim National Theater, est. 1777**

In Mannheim, the elector Karl Theodor maintained control of his sovereign domain using his two theaters. His electoral *Opernhaus* communicated his sovereignty over state and the Mannheim National Theater represented his authority over the German nation, a political domain that his subjects identified as separate from the governing aristocracy. The Mannheim National Theater's inaugural evening of performances sought to change this imaginative construct. With the presentation of *Günther von Schwarzburg*, the librettist Anton von Klein urged the German people to look back at their medieval German heroes. In so doing, he argued, one could see a natural leader emerge to forward the interests of Germany. Klein evoked the fatherland and a sense of German pride, to crown Karl Theodor prince of his own imagined nation. While the mission of a national theater is often assumed to be both egalitarian and democratic, the guiding principles and repertoires of the theaters in this study suggest that this assumption is false. In eighteenth-century Germany, theater practitioners espoused both popular and autocratic principles.

## **Looking Forward into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

In imagining Beethoven's gusto during the legendary "Incident at Teplitz," it is disappointing to think that the composer led a life not unlike Goethe's. He too relied on the patronage of wealthy sponsors to create his body of work.<sup>479</sup> Indeed, much like several figures of Germany's theatrical past such as Johann Friedrich Löwen, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Abel Seyler, Beethoven recognized that the ruling class was both a burden and a necessity. For this reason, among others, I suggest that we might reflect

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<sup>479</sup> The Elector of Cologne, the Bohemian aristocrat Joseph Franz von Lobkowitz, Prince Lichnowsky of the Austrian imperial court, and the Baron Gottfried von Swieten can all be counted as patrons of Beethoven.

upon the work of eighteenth-century national theater proponents, to comprehend better the work of theater artists who lived during the Second and Third Reich. In both of these national empires, German artists forwarded new imaginings of their nation while still bound to the traditions of imperialism and autocracy. As a final touchstone of this investigation, I briefly consider the career of Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and offer a few thoughts on the study of German theatrical nationhood in the twentieth century.

Following the German Revolution of 1848, Wagner became preoccupied with the proper place of artistic experience in German society. His writings during that period, rallied for a socio-cultural revolution that would fundamentally reform the politics of his nation.<sup>480</sup> In keeping with numerous pioneers of the national theater movement, Wagner too, looked to classical Athens for a model. He also confronted a question that haunted the theater artists of an earlier century. How does one build a democratic theater in Germany without a prince? In 1864, Ludwig II of Bavaria offered his patronage to the composer. With this assistance, Wagner accomplished many of his ambitions, but naturally, was unable to eliminate the prince from his theatrical vision of Germany.

Some years later, in 1880, Wagner vowed to his patron, King Ludwig that he would never permit his great German opera *Parsifal* to be performed outside of the Bayreuth Festival Theater. But in 1913, when his copyright restrictions had expired, a huge number of producers clamored for the right to present the work. The debate over whether to honor Wagner's wishes and commemorate the legacy of Bayreuth and his patron prince, or to offer up his work to the German nation, erupted in the press.<sup>481</sup> The nuances of the discourse echoed the sentiments of

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<sup>480</sup> Frederic Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival* (New Haven CT: Yale UP, 1994), 31.

<sup>481</sup> Anthony J. Steinhoff, "Embracing the Grail: Parsifal, Richard Wagner and the German Nation," *German History* 30, no. 3 (2012): 382.

the eighteenth-century national theater movement. Practitioners struggled to honor the values of a people's nation while honoring the will of a composer and his German prince.

These examples suggest that the German national theaters of the eighteenth century reflected and promoted a "future Germany" that espoused the principles of both republicanism and autocracy. This tension influenced the politics of unification in the nineteenth century and the cultural debates that continued. I suggest that for this reason, productions in these early national theaters also offer a critical starting point for studies of imperial nationalism in German performance before the collapse of the Third Reich.

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