

## CHAPTER 7

### THE CHEMNITZ CAST AND THE PERFORMANCE AT PRAGUE

#### The Chemnitz Cast

The list of cities visited by members of Steinsberg's company correlates closely to the performance history of both Wranitzky's ballet and Weber's early opera. Steinsberg's company had multiple residencies between early 1799 and 24 August 1800, when they arrived at Freiberg. They were at Karlsbad from May to August 1799, which was their regular summer season at that city. As already noted, Weber and his father first met Steinsberg at Karlsbad that summer. On 12 September the company began a new residency at Augsburg, and they remained there until the end of the year.<sup>1</sup> Uhlich's version of Wranitzky's ballet was performed during that residency at Augsburg. All company members' names are preserved in A. L. Dahlstedt's account of that residency. Although only last names are provided, this source establishes that most of the members of the cast of *Das Waldmädchen* at Chemnitz in 1800 had been in residence with Steinsberg at Augsburg in 1799. In addition to Steinsberg, the company was comprised of the following male performers: Braunmüller, Ernst, Haag, Hartmann, Hübner, Jungheim, Kees, Löser (who would sing the role of Ritter Wensky in Weber's *Das Waldmädchen*), Muck, Müller, Anton Schicketanz, Seebuch, Seidl (he would later play the part of Krips at Chemnitz), Spania, Truatwett, Uhlich, Wagner, Wieser, and Zilhart. The female performers are listed as: Braunmüller, Dywe, Ernst, Haag, Löser (who would sing the role of Kunigunde in Weber's *Das Waldmädchen*), Muck, Müller, Seidl, Spania

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<sup>1</sup> Dahlstedt, *Augsburg*, previously cited.

(who would dance the role of Silwana), Uhlich, and Wieser. An erratum on the last page mentions that one company member's name was omitted from the list of personnel: Herr von Harrer (who would play the role of Rechter).<sup>2</sup>

There is little extant information about these individuals. However, the names of at least a few appear in other sources. As with Steinsberg, the inconsistent spelling of names and the use of stage names tends to frustrate historical inquiry. Madame Loeser (Kunigunde), as her name appears in the Chemnitz playbill, was probably also known as Therese Leiser (née Perekop, 1771–1846).<sup>3</sup> The spelling “Leiser” was used in Goethe's *Theater-Kalendar* of 1794, where she is listed as a member of the German company of the Nationaltheater (which was the Nostitz Theater at Prague).<sup>4</sup> The name is spelled “Löser” in a letter from Franz Anton to Joseph Kirms at Weimar, written 10 December 1800 (in reference to Herr Löser, the spouse of this actress).<sup>5</sup> During the winter season 1793–94, while the Seconda company was away from Prague, this troupe also performed both German and Czech works at Prague's *Thunovské divadlo* (Thun's theater), also known as the *Kleinseitner Theater*, which was sponsored by Count Thun at the Raymann house in *Malá Strana* (in English, the Lesser Town district, on the left bank of the Vltava River, and south of Prague's Castle District).<sup>6</sup> Teuber also notes that Therese Leiser was

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<sup>2</sup> Another notable name appearing in this account is “Herr Sennefelder [*sic*],” who on 9 December made a guest appearance in the role of the father in Wenzel Müller's *Das neue Sonntagskind*. Dahlstedt, *Augsburg*, 21. Alois Senefelder was the former actor, playwright, and lithographer from Munich to whom Weber was apprenticed from 1798 to 1800. It is not known if Alois Senefelder was at Augsburg for this production, or if the guest actor was merely someone with the same last name.

<sup>3</sup> Teuber 2: 312, f. n.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* She was with the company during the winter season of 1793–94.

<sup>5</sup> Pasqué, *Goethe's Theaterleitung in Weimar*, 2: 28.

<sup>6</sup> Teuber 2: 312. From 1803, the *Thunovské divadlo* (also *Kleinseitner Theater*) was known as the *Malostranské divadlo*. From 1803 to 1811 it was the only troupe in Prague that continued to perform Czech-language stage works. Their facility at that time was the refectory of former Dominican cloister in the Church of St. Maria Magdalena.

a member of the German company of the Nostitz Theater from as early as 1790. He references her maiden name instead of her married name on one of his lists, stating that “Mademoiselle Perekop” was an actress capable of performing in spoken plays as the principal love interest, good at naïve roles and *Verkleiderollen* (disguised roles), who also sings.<sup>7</sup> Therese was likely Czech, capable of working in both German or Czech productions. Later in his history, Teuber singles her out as the “pearl of the company,” stating that she played principal love interest roles in spoken plays, comedies and tragedies, and also sang principal roles in operas.<sup>8</sup>

She appears to have been quite talented and in demand in the mid-1790s, for on 18 February 1795 she was employed at Vienna’s Burgtheater, although there is no indication of that she remained at that venue for any length of time.<sup>9</sup> Her affiliation with theater companies in Prague and Vienna makes it likely that she worked with Steinsberg’s troupe at Augsburg from September to December of 1799, and later at Freiberg and Chemnitz from August to December 1800. Notably, Therese Leiser was married to Franz W. Leiser (b. 1759), who specialized in military roles. He could have been the Herr Loeser who played the role of Ritter Wensky in *Das Waldmädchen*, and the Löser that Franz Anton mentioned in his letter to Kirms.

Herr Krüger, the actor who portrayed Conrad Witzlingo, was probably Karl Friedrich Krüger (1765–1814), hereafter Karl Krüger. Many aspects of his biography are unclear, but there is convincing evidence that he had worked at both Weimar and

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Alena Jacobcová and Jitka Ludvová, “Deutschsprachiges Theater in Prag: Spielstätten und Quellen,” in *Deutschsprachiges Theater in Prag*, Alena Jacobcová, Jitka Ludvová, and Václav Maidl, ed. (Divadelní Ústav: Prague, 2001), 499. Hereafter, Jacobcová and Ludvová, “Prague Theater Companies.”

<sup>7</sup> Teuber, 2: 255.

<sup>8</sup> Teuber, 2: 255.

<sup>9</sup> Teuber, 2: 312.

Prague before joining Steinsberg's company.<sup>10</sup> Karl Krüger was born in Berlin, where he made his stage debut in 1785.<sup>11</sup> He studied mime with J. J. Engel and stage direction with K. T. Döbbelin before joining theater companies in Hanover (1788–89), Amsterdam (1789–91), and Weimar (beginning on 12 May 1791), where he remained until 1795.<sup>12</sup>

Franz Anton probably knew Karl Krüger at Weimar in 1794, when Genovefa von Weber had also been employed at the Weimar Hoftheater. Daughter Jeannette von Weber, and her husband, actor Vincenz Weyrauch, had also been employed there since the early 1790s, so it is likely that they also knew Karl Krüger. Franz Anton specifically mentioned that Herr Krüger had performed in Carl Maria's new opera when he wrote to Joseph Kirms (Intendant at the Weimar Hoftheater) on 10 December 1800.<sup>13</sup> He explained that Krüger had experienced success at Prague. He also specified that Krüger was not the "Directeur Krüger" who earlier in 1800 had brought an inferior troupe to Freiberg and Teplitz.<sup>14</sup> This affiliation with Weimar's theater community in the 1790s

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<sup>10</sup> Ludwig Eisenberg, "Karl Friedrich Krüger," in *Grosses Biographisches Lexikon der Deutschen Bühne im XIX. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Paul List, 1903), 554–55. Hereafter, Eisenberg. This seems the most likely identification. However, Krüger is a common surname that appears in several sources, often without a first name.

<sup>11</sup> Eisenberg, 554.

<sup>12</sup> Pasqué, *Goethe's Theaterleitung in Weimar*, 2: 30.

<sup>13</sup> Pasqué, *Goethe's Theaterleitung in Weimar*, 2: 28.

<sup>14</sup> According to Max Maria von Weber, someone named Krüger had been the director of a troupe in residence at Freiberg's Buttermarkt Theater from 17 January to 18 May 1800. Apparently the director had programmed overly ambitious works, such as Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (as *Don Juan*) and *Die Zauberflöte*, Winter's *Des unterbrochenen Opferfest*, and also *Hamlet*, all of which were beyond the scope of his company's dramatic, musical, and technical capacity. Rather than heroic or inspiring, the performances were laughable productions, causing city officials to terminate the contract with Krüger's company. MMW, 54. Mention must also be made that the name Krüger (with no first name) appears on Teuber's roster of the German company that performed in Prague at both the Nostitz Theater and *Kleinseitner Theater* (or *Thunovské divadlo*) during the winter season of 1793–94. Teuber, 2: 312. That Krüger is described as

lends support to the conclusion that Karl Friedrich Krüger sang the role of Witzlingo in Weber's *Das Waldmädchen* at Chemnitz in 1800.

Eisenberg states that Karl Krüger went to Amsterdam to direct a theater company in 1795, but did he not remain in Holland for long. Instead he took an engagement at Prague, where in 1798 was hired to direct a touring company.<sup>15</sup> Karl Krüger's whereabouts between 1798 and 1800 are unclear. He may have been touring with Stentzsch's troupe, or perhaps was working with other colleagues in the area, including Steinsberg.<sup>16</sup> The only thing certain, thanks to Franz Anton's letter, is that he was not the inept director of the troupe that was in Freiberg during the spring of 1800.<sup>17</sup>

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an actor who played love interest (*Liebhaber*) and character roles in spoken plays, and also sang.

<sup>15</sup> “. . . nach Amsterdam lenkte ihm 1795 auf kurze Zeit abermals nach Holland, er blieb jedoch nicht lange, nahm Engagement in Prag, übernahm 1798 die Leitung einer reisenden Schauspielergesellschaft. . .” Eisenberg, 554; Teuber, 2: 319. Teuber identifies someone named Krüger (again, no first name) as the stage director of Stentzsch's combined touring company (with members from both Prague and Karlsbad), but the year was 1797. Teuber, 2: 319. See Table 3.3. It will be remembered that Steinsberg officially became the director of the *vaterländische Gesellschaft* at the Hibernium in 1797–98, when Stentzsch began negotiating the sale of the Nostitz Theater to the Royal Bohemian Estates in 1797. A confusing situation developed because Stentzsch did not fully relinquish his post to Steinsberg, and Steinsberg maintained his post as the director of the German company at the Nostitz Theater. Stentzsch managed a traveling troupe of members from both the Hibernium and the Karlsbad theaters during the 1797–98 season, and hired a stage director named Krüger, probably Karl Friedrich Krüger, to work with that company. In 1798, after Steinsberg's contract at the Nostitz Theater ended and was not renewed, Steinsberg took members of the *vaterländische Gesellschaft* to Karlsbad, where they were in residence from May to August 1798. Steinsberg's stage director during that residency was Karl Währ. Refer to Table 3.4. Teuber, 2: 321, f. n.

<sup>16</sup> Eisenberg states that in 1800 Karl Krüger traveled to Leipzig to direct a theater there, but financial difficulties forced him to leave in 1801. He went to Brünn next, where after only six months he was invited to join the German company at Vienna's Burgtheater. In 1802 he married Karoline Spengler (née Giranek, b. 1753), an actress from Prague who was employed at the Burgtheater from 1802 to 1822. She was the widow of Franz Spengler, the former director of Prague's *Thunovské divadlo* from 1793 to 1794, and the German company at the Nostitz Theater from 1793 to 1796. Eischenburg, 554; Jacobcová and Ludvová, “Prague's Theater Companies,” 496.

Dahlstedt's chronicle of the residency at Augsburg in 1799 provides additional information about Steinsberg's other company members who were not directly involved with Weber's new opera in 1800. The details of their careers help establish a link between Steinsberg's libretto and Wranitzky's ballet. Dancers Jungheim and Uhlich, who were in Steinsberg's company at Augsburg, had worked at Prague's Nostitz Theater in 1796. Their colleagues there included Madame Spania, who would eventually dance the role of Silwana in Weber's new opera, and a fourth dancer named Heiß. Madame Spania, Heiß, Jungheim, and Uhlich had all been traveling with Steinsberg's troupe since May 1798. Jungheim, Uhlich, and Heiß were also choreographers, and it is in this capacity that Uhlich played a particularly significant role at Augsburg, and possibly at the venues they visited prior to that residency. Specifically, Dahlstedt's chronicle notes that Steinsberg's company performed Uhlich's new version of the ballet *Das Waldmädchen* in that city on 16 September 1799.<sup>18</sup> Additional performances took place on 24 September, and 2, 5, 16, and 24 December, 1799. This makes it clear that although Steinsberg was in Karlsbad when Brunetti's version of *Das Waldmädchen* premiered at Prague on 28 May 1798, he was familiar with the ballet, knew its plot, and had produced at least one version of the ballet prior to writing his libretto to *Das Waldmädchen*.

For artistic reasons alone Steinsberg could have borrowed the plot from the ballet *Das Waldmädchen* as the basis for his new opera libretto. He might also have needed to address a more practical concern, especially if his productions of the ballet had been popular with audiences. If the ballet required a large cast of dancers, for example,

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<sup>17</sup> Herr ABmann, who sang the role of Fürst Hartor, is also mentioned in Franz Anton's letter to Kirms on 10 December 1800. Pasqué, *Goethe's Theaterleitung in Weimar*, 2: 28. His former affiliation with Prague's theater community, if any, is unknown. Similarly, I was unable to find any information about Herr Gromann, who sang the role of Fürst Arbander.

<sup>18</sup> Dahlstedt, 12, 20–22.

Steinsberg would have needed a sizeable ballet corps. When he had left Prague with the *vaterländische Gesellschaft* in 1799, the entire corps of dancers from the German company of the Estates Theater had gone with him. However, Steinsberg's dancers had gradually begun returning to the Estates Theater in 1799.<sup>19</sup> The movements of Steinsberg's company members can be tracked by comparing the personnel listed in Dahlstedt's chronicle with personnel rosters from Prague in 1800. Heiß had already returned to the Estates Theater before Steinsberg's residency at Augsburg in 1799. Uhlich returned to Prague shortly afterward, for he is listed as a "Grotesk-dancer" on the roster of the Estates Theater in 1800.<sup>20</sup> Having lost at least two principal male dancers by 1800, Steinsberg had to reconsider his company's repertoire, relying less on ballet, perhaps, and more on spoken plays and opera. By using the plot of *Das Waldmädchen* as the basis for a new opera libretto, he could continue to produce a stage work depicting the popular and mysterious forest maiden. But to do so would require a score. Six months after the Augsburg residency ended, Steinsberg promised Freiberg's city officials that his newest opera libretto would be presented in their city for the first time. Perhaps to ensure that audiences would be drawn to the performance, he kept the original title of the ballet and named the new opera *Das Waldmädchen*.

#### A Performance at Prague in Czech

Weber's early opera can now be studied within this fuller historical context. It was a sequel, a stage work that had been inspired by the popularity of Wranitzky's original Viennese ballet. As in the ballet, its title character is a strange young woman who cannot speak, whose identity is shrouded in mystery, and whose bizarre actions both confound and enchant the other characters. This character and plot apparently

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<sup>19</sup> Teuber, 2: 351.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* Heiß had been with Steinsberg's troupe at Karlsbad in 1798. Teuber, 2: 340.

intrigued Weber sufficiently to become the subject of another operatic version (*Silvana*) eight years later. Given the public's continuing interest in the topic of feral children, it is not possible to overstate the lengthy reception of Wranitzky's original ballet.<sup>21</sup> Naturally, Weber, like Steinsberg, would have hoped to capitalize on the popularity of this topic when, using Steinsberg's libretto, he collaborated with poet F. K. Hiemer to produce another version of the *Waldmädchen* story.

The fact that there were several versions of the ballet *Das Waldmädchen* before Steinsberg incorporated its plot into an opera libretto would not have been unusual at the time, for in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries librettists and theater directors commonly revised popular stage works to suit the requirements of a particular stage and to appeal to the taste of the public.<sup>22</sup> Weber's decision to compose a second opera (*Silvana*) based on the characters, events, and settings of *Das Waldmädchen*, even reusing some of the music for his earlier version, merely reflects that practice. Occasionally titles were also changed in subsequent productions, but not always. The title of the opera when it premiered at Freiberg was *Das Waldmädchen*, but the title was *Das stumme Waldmädchen* for the second performance at Chemnitz. Both the title and substantial portions of the score were modified for Wenzel Müller's three-act version of Weber's opera, *Das Mädchen in Spessarterwald*, at the Leopoldstadt Theater in 1804–5. And the extensive revisions to the St. Petersburg score, too, can be attributed to the practice of modifying a popular work to suit local needs.

Given these methods, which were used by Czech troupes as well as German companies, there is no reason to doubt that *Das Waldmädchen* was translated into Czech for performances at Prague, as Weber claimed. But did such a performance actually take place? If so, in what theater? It could not have been directed by Steinsberg, for in

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<sup>21</sup> The *Allgemeine deutsche Theaterzeitung* records that Stentzsch's touring group was in Mannheim in January and February 1799, and that a ballet called *Das Waldmädchen* was among the repertoire they performed. *Das Waldmädchen* was presented on 10 and 29 January.

<sup>22</sup> Gubkina, "Notizen," 44.

November 1802 he went to St. Petersburg and became the stage director at that city's German theater company.<sup>23</sup> He remained in Russia for the rest of his life.<sup>24</sup> Other members of his company at Freiberg and Chemnitz probably did return home, however.

Between 1803 and 1806 there was a renaissance of Czech theater productions in Prague.<sup>25</sup> This was possible because the original privilege that had been awarded to the *vaterländische Gesellschaft* in 1786 was still owned by Antonín Zappe (c. 1748-23 November 1824), a founding member of the patriotic troupe. During Steinsberg's absence Zappe had continued to work with the *Kleinseitner Theater (Malostranské divadlo)*, the company that had employed Therese Leiser, and possibly her husband and Karl Krüger also, during the 1793-94 season.<sup>26</sup> With the authority of Zappe's concession, the director of the *Malostranské divadlo*, named Zohrer, was able to lease a former Dominican cloister at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in the Mala Straná district. That facility was converted into a small theater. The troupe readied itself to present a series of Czech-language works from fall 1803 to Easter 1804.<sup>27</sup> Only one month into their new season, however, Steinsberg's former colleague at the Nostitz Theater, impresario Domenico Guardasoni, began negotiating with the *Malostranské divadlo* about the possibility of presenting Czech stage works at the Estates Theater instead.<sup>28</sup> Guardasoni

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<sup>23</sup> Gubkina, "Notizen," 35.

<sup>24</sup> Gubkina, "Notizen," 36.

<sup>25</sup> Arthur Prudden Coleman, *Kotzebue and the Czech Stage* (Schenectady: Electric City Press, 1936), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Teuber, 2: 255, 369. Adolf Scherl, "Zappe, Antonín," in *Národní Divadlo a jeho předchudci: Slovník umelcu divadel Vlastenského, Stavovského, Prozatímního, a Národního*, Vladimír Procházka, ed. (Prague: Československá Akademie Ved, 1988), 589. As stated previously, Joseph II had awarded this concession to Zappe and his Czech-born colleagues F. Höpfler, F. X. Sewe (or Seve), and V. Anton, in 1786.

<sup>27</sup> Teuber, 2: 369.

<sup>28</sup> Teuber, 2: 369-70.

knew the capabilities of the Czech-born actors, singers, and dancers, many of whom had worked with his successful German company in the 1790s.<sup>29</sup> He indicated to Prague's Theater Commission that Czech-language productions could provide a new source of revenue for the somewhat beleaguered Estates Theater. His efforts were successful.

On 23 December 1803 the Theater Commission purchased Zappe's privilege in exchange for the promise of pension rights and an agreement to employ members of the *Malostranské divadlo* and the Estates Theater on a regular basis.<sup>30</sup> A royal decree was issued on 5 March 1805, proclaiming that the *Malostranské divadlo* would be the new *Volkstheater* of the Estates Theater. Once again the public could enjoy Czech stage works at the Estates Theater on Sunday afternoons and holidays.

An extant register of receipts from the Estates Theater is preserved in the newly reordered Central State Archives at Prague.<sup>31</sup> This document was the *Kassabuch*, or cashier's accounting records, of the Estates Theater from 1804 to 1806, including the titles and amounts earned at each performance of the *Malostranské divadlo* at that venue. Of particular interest are two performances of the Singspiel *Nemá dívka* (*Stummes Mädchen* or Mute Maiden) that took place on Sunday, 9 March 1806, and Sunday, 13 April 1806.<sup>32</sup> There is little reason to doubt that this was the Czech version of *Das Waldmädchen* that Weber wrote about in his autobiographical sketch of 1818.

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<sup>29</sup> Czech theater scholars consistently agree that Domenico Guardasoni supported efforts to continue presenting Czech-language works in the early nineteenth century and that he negotiated with Prague's Theater Commission on behalf of the Czech-born performers.

<sup>30</sup> The commission also agreed to give Zappe a pension in exchange for his own lost income. Teuber, 2: 370, f. n.

<sup>31</sup> "Auszug aus dem . . . Kassabuch über Empfang und Ausgaben bei den . . . böhmischen Spektakeln im Altstädt. Nationaltheater pro Ao 804, 805, 806," Fond RZ 1196.5 Rukopis, Státním archive v Praze. For a transcription of this source, see Miroslav Laiske, *Pražská dramaturgie: Česká divadelní představení v Praze do otevření Prozatímního divadla DÍL [1] 1762 /?/ - 1843* (Prague: Ústav pro Českou a Svetavou Literaturu Csav, 1974), 86-87.

<sup>32</sup> Adolf Scherl directed me to this source.