

## CONCERT LIFE IN RIGA AT THE END OF THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY (1782–1800): EVIDENCE OF THE *THEATERZETTEL* COLLECTION

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### Summary

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The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a time of cardinal changes in Riga's music life. In this period, the tradition of regular public concerts was established. As in many other localities of the German-speaking cultural space, the main organizer of the concerts was the City Theatre (*Rigaer Stadttheater*). The members of the Theatre's orchestra contributed significantly to the concert life of Riga both as soloists and as chamber musicians. The concert programs and posters from that time are available in the collection *Theaterzettel* (stored in the University of Latvia Academic Library). The study of this collection will allow to answer the questions:

- which music (prevailing genres, composers, etc.) was most often performed at that time in Riga,
- did the musical taste of the Rigans reflect the all-European tendencies of that time.

The provided research shows that there were many parallels between Riga and other European cultural centres. As a common feature, the unusual (from the contemporary point of view) length of the concert programs should be mentioned; it could be explained by the fact that a public concert in its early days was not so much a place to listen to music with unabashed attention as a place to entertain and chat. A great variety of genres and styles was a characteristic of each concert program, and it was typical for the European music of the time in general. In the monograph by William Weber *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* such a variety is characterized with the term 'miscellany' (Weber 2008: 13).

Regarding the most beloved composers in Riga during the 1780s–1790s, it could be concluded that, similarly to many European cities, the works by Franz Joseph Haydn and Ignaz Joseph Pleyel were the ones most frequently performed. The name of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is only rarely found in the concert programs during his lifetime. Meanwhile, in the 1790s, this name is mentioned in the *Theaterzettel* programs more than 30 times. It correlates well with the tendency of the whole German-speaking cultural space – the interest in the music by Mozart, as it is noted by Simon Patrick Kiefe, rapidly increased during the decade after his death (Keefe 2009: 667). Considering that music criticism in Riga had not yet developed in this period, the openness of the concert organizers to the new trends of the time deserves special appreciation.

Regarding the prospects for further research, a question arises: did Riga's concert life at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century also have something unique, significantly different from

other cities? In order to find the answer, a comparative research would be valuable. It may include, on one hand, the studies of the concert programs and posters in such cities of the Russian Empire as Reval (Tallinn) where, similarly to Riga, the cultural centre of the Baltic German community was the 'Stadttheater'; or St. Petersburg which was the final destination for many guest musicians that performed here during their temporary stay in Riga. On the other hand, a comparison with the all-European and especially German-speaking cultural space in general would be helpful. It could provide the possibility of discovering the regional specifics of concert life in Riga.

## AVOTI

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