

# ***Historical Opera Transcriptions for Harmoniemusik and Suggestions for Modern Performances***

based on examples from the Oberschützen Institute of the  
Graz University for Music, Austria

presented at the 2005 Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic, Chicago, Illinois

by Bernhard Habla

## ***Harmoniemusik***

*Harmoniemusik* is an wind ensemble without percussion for five to as many as 14 musicians. Hans Friedrich von Fleming mentioned the existence of an ensemble of two oboes, two horns and two bassoons in the Elector of Saxony's army as early as 1726.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1760s, the term *Harmonie(musik)* has been used for the whole ensemble. By the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, the most popular combination was the 8-piece "Classical *Harmoniemusik*" of pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this instrumentation was enlarged by the addition of a double bassoon, double bass, serpent, and/or trombone to reinforce the lower voices, and flutes and/or trumpets to strengthen the higher registers. A major characteristic is that the main instruments (oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons) were used in pairs.

## ***Repertoire***

Most original compositions for *Harmoniemusik* were divertimenti, serenades and marches, but there were also numerous opera transcriptions. This is because of the function of *Harmoniemusik* at aristocratic courts, where excerpts from operas were very popular. It was much cheaper to retain a *Harmoniemusik* ensemble than a complete orchestra. The *Harmoniemusik* also played dinner-music at the larger courts. Some of the more important opera composers from that period are Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816), François Devienne (1759-1803), François-Adrien Boieldieu (1775-1834), François Auber (1782-1871), Louis Spohr (1784-1859) and especially Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868).<sup>2</sup> A detailed catalogue is in preparation.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Hans Friedrich v. Fleming. *Der vollkommene Teutsche Soldat*. Leipzig: Johann Christian Martini, 1726.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Mozart's operas *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, and *Die Zauberflöte*, and Rossini's *La gazza ladra*, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Tancredi*, *Armida*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *La Cenerentola*, *Corradino*, *La donna del lago*, *Elisabeth*, *Il Turco in Italia* and others.

<sup>3</sup> Bernhard Habla, "Das gedruckte Notenangebot für Blasmusik. Eine Bestandsaufnahme und Übersicht des Angebots der Verleger in Deutschland und Österreich vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg." Manuscript, Oberschützen, 2004.

### ***The Arrangements***

The published arrangements for Harmoniemusik consisted of parts for every instrument, while those editions for military or Turkish music – brass, woodwind and percussion instruments – often consisted only of scores. The opera arrangements normally consisted of the overture and as much as 70% of the numbers of the original opera. The excerpts can be shortened, especially in the finales. The original sequence of arias and other excerpts is not obligatory. There were often different sequences, an indication that performances were tailored to present the most attractive numbers of the opera.

### ***Vocal parts***

There are no indications for vocal parts, not even in the arrangements for military or Turkish music. The vocal parts were either arranged for a solo instrument or as part of the whole ensemble.

### ***Key***

The parts were at times transposed to better suit wind instruments, but seldom more than a semi-tone or tone from the original.

## **Projects at the Oberschützen Institute**

### ***Operas and selected arrangements for Harmoniemusik***

***Oberon***, opera in 3 acts by Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826). First performance April 12, 1826. Arr. by Friedrich Weller (1790-1870) for Harmoniemusik (parts for 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 horns, 2 bassoons, double bassoon or double bass, trombone, 2 trumpets, flute). Berlin: Schlesinger, nr.1426, mentioned in Whistling 1827;

\_\_\_\_\_. arr. by Friedrich Weller for military music / Türkische Musik (score 491 pages), Schlesinger nr.1384, mentioned in Whistling 1827.

***Der Freischütz***, romantic opera in 3 acts by Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826). First performance June 21, 1821. Arr. by Karl Flachs for Harmoniemusik (8 parts plus 1-2 flutes). Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, 1822; new edition with transposed parts Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. Arr. for Türkische Musik / military music by Friedrich Weller, Berlin: Schlesinger nr.1134, 1823.

***Fidelio***, opera in 2 acts by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). First performance November 20, 1805, revised version May 23, 1814. Arr. by Wenzl Sedlak (1776-1851) for 8-part Harmoniemusik and double bass). Vienna: Artaria, 1815.

**Die Zauberflöte** (*The Magic Flute*) KV 620, opera in 2 acts by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). First performance September 30, 1791. Arr. by Joseph Heidenreich (1753-1821) for 8-part Harmoniemusik and double bass. First mentioned in the *Wiener Zeitung* of January 1792. London: Musica Rara, 1977.

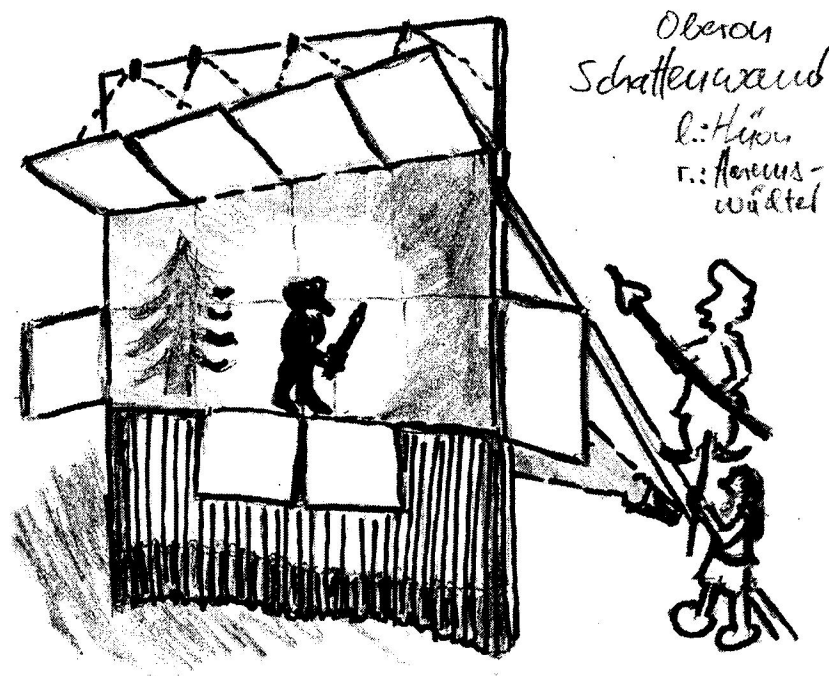
\_\_\_\_\_. *Airs de l'Opera* arr. by Johann Christian Stumpf for 2 clarinets, 2 oboes and 2 bassoons, 3 vols. Offenbach am Main: André, before 1817, mentioned in Whistling 1817.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Douze Airs* "choisie de la 'Flûte Enchantée'." Arr. for 8-part Harmoniemusik (2 clarinets, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns). Paris: Pleyel, before 1817, mentioned in Whistling 1817.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Ouverture et Airs de la Flûte enchantée*. Arr. for 8-part Harmoniemusik in two suites. Paris: Pleyel, before 1817, mentioned in Whistling 1817.

### ***The performances at Oberschützen***

Generally, the music performances were done by older students rehearsed by Hermann Ebner and conducted by Willem van Zutphen. The texts were written by Reinhard Hauer (*Oberon*) and Gernot Schönfeldinger (*Fidelio*, *Der Freischütz* and *Magic Flute*). The original editions dominated the productions and only the music of the arrangements was used. This guaranteed concentrated musical performances with the best-known music of the operas. The stories were presented by a narrator, the Harmoniemusik playing the music where it appears in the original opera. The shadow theater (*Oberon*) was created by students of the Oberschützen Evangelisches Realgymnasium with their teacher Joachim Jobst, and the performance together with the assistance of Gerti Kasper.



Stage for the shadow theatre (sketch)

**Ouverture**  
*der Oper*  
**OBERON**  
 von  
*Carl Maria von Weber.*  
 Für vollständige Türkische - Musik  
 arrangirt  
 von  
**WELLER.**  
**Partitur.** B. 2 24 1/2, groß 8 1/2  
 Eigentum der Verlagsanstalt. Leipzig 3. Ausgabe.  
 mit 250 Stück. Kiste. Preis: 1 Mark. 10 Schilling. 10 Pfennig. Derzeitige  
 Privilegien gegen Nachdruck aller Art.  
**BERLIN.**  
 In Ad. M. Schöningers Buch- und Musikhandlung.  
 Unter den Linden 27. 36.  
 22455

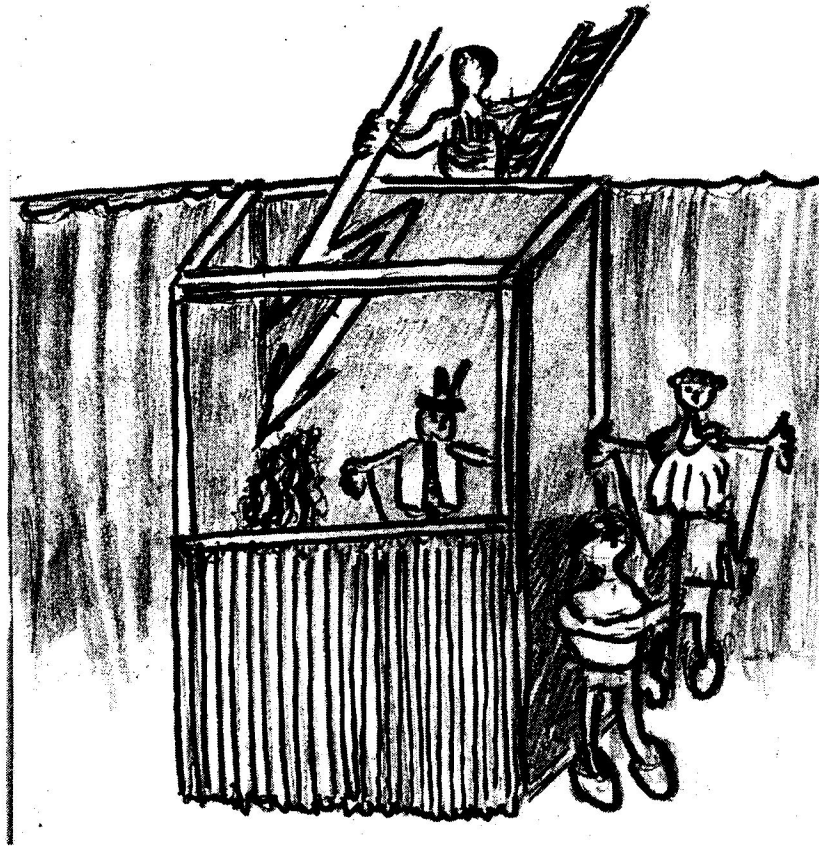
**Ouverture**  
*de l'Opéra*  
**Oberon**  
*musique de*  
**C. M. de WEBER**  
 arrangée en Harmonie  
 pour  
 2 Clarinettes, 2 Bassons, 2 Saxons, 2 Hautbois,  
 2 Cors, Serpent et Trombone  
 (Flûte et Trompette, ad libitum.)  
 par  
**FR. WELLER.**  
 N° 126. 17. année de l'édition. Prix 1 Mark.  
 avec privilège de S. M. le Roi, le Prince de Saxe et de S. A. le Grand-Duc de Saxe-Weimar  
 pour les arrangements de l'Oberon.  
 Berlin  
 chez Ad. M. SCHÖNINGER, Libraire et éditeur de musique, u. d. Lindenstr.  
 22454

Title-pages of Weber *Oberon*, left: arr. Weller for Türkische Musik / Military Music, right: Weller for Harmoniemusik

The puppet theater (*Der Freischütz*) was created and performed by students of the Oberschützen Evangelisches Realgymnasium with their teachers Joachim Jobst and Michael Frank.



Head gamekeeper Kuno, daughter Agatha, Kaspar, Ännchen, Hermit



Stage for puppets (sketch)

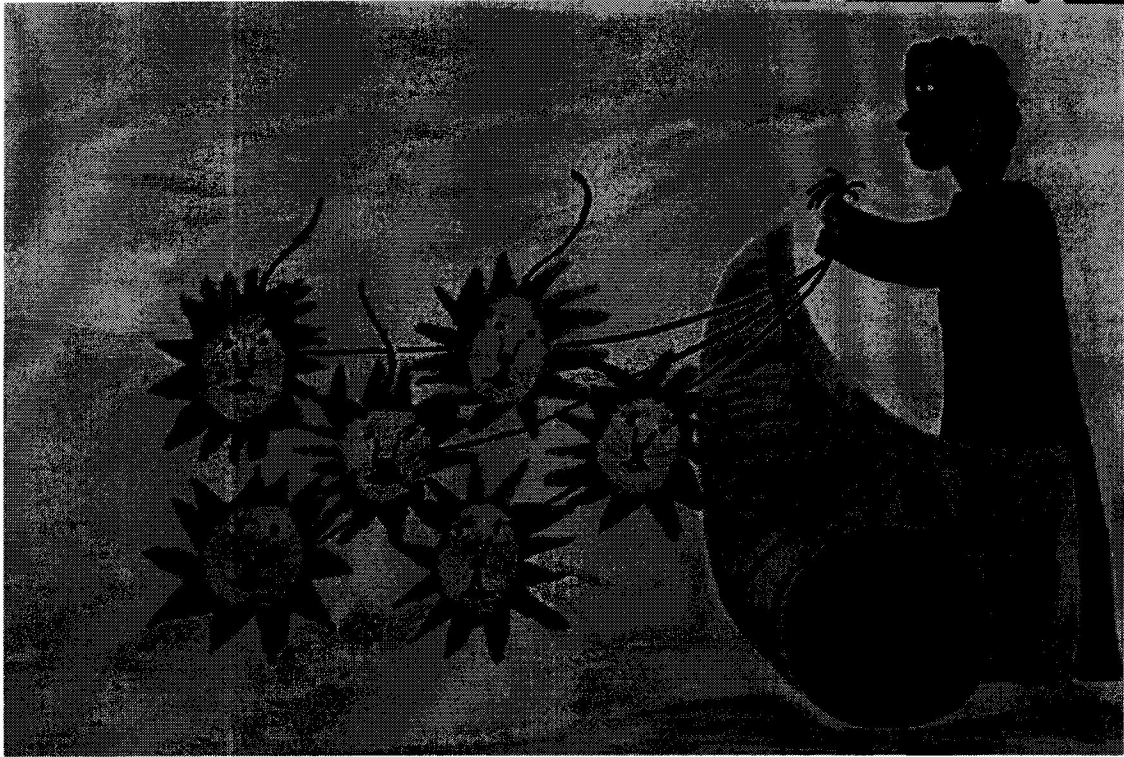
The comic book (*Fidelio*) was drawn by students (especially Stefanie Bruckner) of the Oberschützen Evangelisches Realgymnasium with their teachers Michael Frank and Joachim Jobst.



Der Gouverneur versucht Rocco mit Geld zur Ermordung von Florestan zu überreden

The Governor tries to persuade Rocco with money to assassinate Florestan

The picture book (*Magic Flute*) was painted by residents of the *Wohnheim Dornau* with teachers Ilse Kainz and Brigitta Schürgerl and also nurse Maria Doppelhofer.



Sarastro in a Roman triumphal wagon pulled by six lions



The old woman becomes Papagena

### **Summary**

This project preserves an important function of the Harmoniemusik, to continue the performance of operas far away from the great urban centers and opera houses. But our productions were not for the greater and minor aristocracy of 200 years ago, but rather for large audiences who often had their first contact with these operas and also learned a good deal about important works such as *Fidelio*, *Oberon*, *Der Freischütz* and *Magic Flute*.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Bauer, Wilhelm A. and Otto Erich Deutsch, eds. *Mozart. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, 7 vols. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962-1975, especially vol. 3, 1963.

Deutsch, Otto Erich, ed. *Mozart. Die Dokumente seines Lebens*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1961.

Habla, Bernhard. "Carl Maria von Webers *Oberon*-Ouverture in gedruckten Bearbeitungen für Bläser- und Blasorchesterbesetzungen." In *Kongreßbericht Abony / Ungarn 1994*. Alta Musica 18, ed. Wolfgang Suppan, 205-244. Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Nineteenth-Century Publishing Houses and Band Music in Austria and Germany." *Journal of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles* 3 (1996): 56-65.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Opern-Bearbeitungen für Harmoniemusiken und größere Bläserbesetzungen. Gedrucktes Notenmaterial aus dem zweiten Viertel des 19. Jahrhunderts." *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 38/1-2 (1997): 53-64.

Hellyer, Roger, "Fidelio für neunstimmige Harmonie." *Music & Letters* 53 (1972): 242-253.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Harmoniemusik. Music for Small Wind Band in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries." PhD diss., Oxford University, 1973.

Suppan, Wolfgang. "Die Harmoniemusik. Das private Repräsentations- und Vergnügensensemble des mitteleuropäischen Adels- zwischen Kunst- und gesellschaftlichem Gebrauchswert." In *Musica Privata. Die Rolle der Musik im privaten Leben: Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Walter Salmen*, 151-165. Innsbruck: Helbling, 1991.

Whitwell, David. "The Incredible Vienna Octet School." Part I: "The Work of Johann Wendt." *Instrumentalist* (October 1969): 31-35; Part II: "A Case for the Authenticity of Mozart's Arrangement of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* for Wind Instruments." *Instrumentalist* (November 1969): 40-43; Part III: "Joseph Triebensee and the Second Period (1790-1811)." *Instrumentalist* (December 1969): 42-46; Part IV: "Wenzel Sedlak and the

Third Period (1812-1837." *Instrumentalist* (January 1970): 38-40; Part V:  
"The Contributions of Beethoven." *Instrumentalist* (February 1970): 31-  
36; Part VI: "Ritter von Seyfried and the Minor Transcribers."  
*Instrumentalist* (March 1970): 31-33.

***Addresses for Editions of Harmoniemusik:***

*Florincor Editions:* [www.floricor-editions.com](http://www.floricor-editions.com)

*Musica Rara:* [www.musicarara.com](http://www.musicarara.com) (look for "Wind Ensemble" 6, 8 or more  
winds.

Contact:

Dr. Bernhard Habla

Kunstuniversität Graz

Institut 12 Oberschützen / Pannonische Forschungsstelle

Hauptplatz 8

A-7432 Oberschützen, Austria / Europe

tel (from US): +43-3353-6693-3313

fax (from US): +43-3353-6693-3121

[berhard.habla@kug.ac.at](mailto:berhard.habla@kug.ac.at)