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Circe: Oper mit der Musik von Pasquale Anfossi (review)

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BOOK REVIEWS

Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Christian August Vulpius, *Circe: Oper mit der Musik von Pasquale Anfossi*. Ed. Waltraud Maierhofer. Hannover-Laatzten: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2007. 58 pp.

This is a delightful book; number thirteen of twenty-four titles in the Theaterreihe series, presenting original music and libretti. This edition of a translation by Goethe and Vulpius offers a bi-lingual text for the charming light opera, prefaced by a thoroughly researched introduction. The cover features a lovely color reproduction of Circe and Odysseus painted by Angelika Kauffmann. There are also photocopies of significant arias and accurate variants, which will be helpful to scholars and interested readers alike. The footnotes provide additional scope, including particularly interesting information about the Duchess Anna Amalia and her role in bringing this playful Circe story to Weimar.

Professor Maierhofer's introduction offers many perspectives on the *opera buffa*, including illustrations that were copied before the fire in Weimar that destroyed numerous important documents. She begins with a chapter detailing the ways in which this light-hearted rendering of the Circe story traveled from Rome to Weimar. She then discusses "Die Autographen und die Weimarer Aufführung" (9-13). A further interesting part of the introduction is her discussion of Vulpius, Goethe's brother-in-law, whom she judges to be a man of indifferent gifts, "zweifelhaften, wenn nicht niederen Rangs" (13).

Maierhofer deals with the opera's content, addresses the merits of the translation, and illustrates differences between the original Italian and the German versions. These are among the most interesting remarks in the text. To reproduce one of many, she asserts: "Nuancen der Wortwahl in Goethes Übersetzung der Gesänge [lassen sich] so lesen, dass Circe mehr böse und leidend erscheint als im Original, weniger ein bedauernswertes Opfer ihres eigenen Begehrens" (25).

She offers a final segment entitled "Der erweiterte Text (das Düsseldorfer Manuskript): Nationacharakter und Situationskomik" (25-27)," which nicely broadens and completes the introduction.

The most remarkable aspects of the comparison are Maierhofer's observations about the play's denouement. "Wie der Karneval, in dem die Oper uraufgeführt wurde, setzt die Farce die Klassenschranken ausser Kraft. Nur im komischen Genre durfte ein mächtiger Charakter aus dem Mythos parodistisch behandelt werden. Nur in einer Farce darf die Dienerin die mächtige Circe überlisten. Die Zauberin wird verspottet und verlassen. Sie endet ohne Liebhaber, während die Dienerin Lindora und die beiden Fremden [both of whom are noblemen] entkommen" (20).

This book enables students of Goethe and those interested in music history to see a little-studied aspect of the adaptation of one country's light operatic production to the needs and tastes of a small German court, one in which no less a figure than Goethe played a leading role, lending his expertise not simply to translation but to cooperation with a man of lesser ability who nonetheless possessed great industry and assiduousness. This attractive volume will appeal to a wide spectrum of readers and can be highly recommended.

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Katharina Mommsen, ed., *Die Entstehung von Goethes Werken in Dokumenten. Band IV. Entstehen—Farbenlehre*. Founded by Momme Mommsen. With the assistance of Peter Ludwig und Uwe Hentschel. Berlin und New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008. XIX + 998 pp., 12 illustrations.

Of the thousand-plus Goethe works (excluding the lyrical poetry, business and official papers, and aphoristic writings) projected as articles for the complete, alphabetically arranged, EGW, volume 4 contains about fifty (nos. 276–326) between the key words *Entstehen* and *Farbenlehre*. Many of Goethe's smaller, or incomplete, works and independent drafts are categorized under the rubrics *Entstehen*, *Entwurf*, *Epoche*, and *Erklärung*—two or three pages of discoverable documents here, two or three there. Momme Mommsen's originally stated aspiration deserves repeating in light of this exhaustive plan: “der ganze Goethe” shall be accounted for in the EGW. Even for many a specialist the idea of “the entire Goethe” will acquire impressive new meaning between these covers. Are any documents missing here? No doubt, though in their effort to make a comprehensive survey the editors have drawn from some two hundred printed and manuscript sources (in a sense, to own the EGW, in which all documents relevant to the genesis of Goethe's works have been extracted, is to own that entire resource library). Included among the larger writings—more accurately, works having a lengthier genesis and consequently commanding greater numbers of documentary pages—are *Des Epimenides Erwachen* (90 pp.), *Ueber epische und dramatische Dichtung von Goethe und Schiller* (22 pp.), and *Erwin und Elmire* (19 pp.). By far the lion's share of volume 4, however, belongs to the final article, *Zur Farbenlehre* (726 pp., which accounts for the exceptional length of this volume, nearly double that of each of the previous three). Goethe's *Farbenlehre* is a huge work, after all, spanning a lifetime of his attention from the first observations on color as a child in 1755 to a letter written only a week before his death to *Polizeirat* Joseph Grüner, in which he discusses a recent university dissertation by one H. Lövy that deals in its twelfth chapter with Goethe's concept of polarity in color theory.

The richness of the EGW manifests itself not only diachronically but also, and most palpably, in the kaleidoscopic minutiae in letters from or to Goethe or between other correspondents—many of them obscure enough not to be mentioned in the *Goethe Handbuch*—concerning the respective work. To wander through the often day-by-day entries is to share the pleasure of Schubert's miller. Documentation *qua* tool proves to be a good read in itself, having beginning, middle, and end; enriched with local color, historical detail, and personal conflicts; above all, chronicling the processes of production and reception in a totalizing view that embraces author, collaborators, publishers, and critics. The EGW demonstrates that documentation, in epistolary form, may assume features of a