



NEWSLETTER OF THE

Mozart Society of America

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President's Message



Greetings! I am honored to serve as the Mozart Society of America's President. The MSA Board and various committees are hard at work planning future activities.

If you will be at the American Musicological Society conference in Denver, I hope you will attend the MSA's Business Meeting and Study Session on Friday November 10 from 12:30 to 2 p.m. We will be announcing this year's winner of the Emerson Award at the meeting as well. Please watch your email and the MSA website for more details. Other future events include sending a representative to the Mozart Communities gathering in Salzburg in January 2024. Nathan Martin will chair the MSA-sponsored panel, titled "New Analytical Approaches to Mozart's Music," at the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference in Toronto in early April. Several board members are exploring ideas and possible locations for our next MSA conference.

As I compose this message, the 2023-2024 season of *Encounters with Eighteenth-Century Music* is about to commence. This virtual forum—co-sponsored by the Mozart Society of America, the American Bach Society, the American Handel Society, the Haydn Society of North America, and

the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music—is truly a collaborative effort. I have represented the MSA on the steering committee for two years. Helping plan and organize *Encounters* has been one of the most satisfying experiences of my career. Sessions usually attract attendees from multiple countries and continents, which enriches the discussion. To learn more about this season's offerings please go to: <https://encounters.secm.org/>

If you have suggestions for the MSA, please do get in touch. One easy way to do so is via the "Contact Us" link on the website: <https://www.mozartsocietyofamerica.org/contact-us/>

To all of you who devote time and energy to the Society and to the music of W. A. Mozart, my thanks!

— Laurel E. Zeiss



Hans Ernst Weidinger (1949–2023)

I first encountered the name of Hans Ernst Weidinger around 2005 when I was working on my dissertation about the original production of *Don Giovanni*. Seeing that a dissertation about the genesis of the opera had been defended at the University of Vienna in 2002, I immediately asked my library to order a copy. And the dissertation arrived—in a hand truck. The sixteen-volume doctoral thesis, with the title *Il Dissoluto Punito: Untersuchungen zur äußeren und inneren Entstehungsgeschichte von Lorenzo da Pontes & Wolfgang Amadeus Mozarts 'Don Giovanni'*, was a veritable monument to Weidinger's encyclopedic erudition and ambition, but also to his scrupulous source criticism and unflinching sense of theatrical communication. It analyzed all known stage adaptations of the Don Juan story prior to Mozart's and Da Ponte's, in addition to situating the opera in its immediate political context. Based on a tireless examination of the historical evidence, Weidinger was able to debunk old myths that had surrounded the genesis of *Don Giovanni* for centuries. While throwing new light on the influence of theatrical censorship and of Giacomo Casanova on the writing of the libretto, he also showed that it was originally commissioned (half a year later than traditionally assumed) for a Habsburg wedding.

The results of this important research will finally appear in book form in September this year as *Don Giovanni und die habsburgische Heiratspolitik*, published with Hollitzer, the publishing house that he established in 2010. Also worth mentioning here is his article 'The "Dux Drafts": Casanova's Contribution to Da Ponte's and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*' (published in *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, ed. Michael Hüttler, Vienna, Böhlau, 2007, pp. 95–130), which sets forth another set of his discoveries relating to the genesis of the Mozart-Da Ponte masterpiece.

Hans Ernst (or, as he privately styled himself, Giovanni) Weidinger was born into affluent circumstances in Vienna on 29 July 1949, as the heir of a family firm founded in 1849: the Hollitzer Baustoffwerke, a construction supply business in Graz. This background allowed him to pursue his manifold interests and spend time and money on philanthropy and patronage of the arts and letters. He studied law, classical philology, theatre studies, and art history at the University of Vienna, but was also educated as a dancer, a singer, and a pianist, providing the foundation for his deep insights into multiple areas of arts, culture, and history.

Already as a young man, Weidinger became fascinated with the early history of the Don Juan topic, which led him to the founding of the Don Juan Archiv Wien (DJA) in 1987, coinciding with the bicentenary of Mozart's opera, and in 2000



Hans Ernst Weidinger during the very first Don Juan Days, which took place in Vienna in June 2010. Displayed on the table in the background is Weidinger's sixteen-volume dissertation "*Il Dissoluto Punito: Untersuchungen zur äußeren und inneren Entstehungsgeschichte von Lorenzo da Pontes & Wolfgang Amadeus Mozarts Don Giovanni*" (courtesy of Matthias Pernerstorfer).

to that of the Da Ponte Institut, which was devoted to the study of librettos and headed by Herbert Lachmayer. The Da Ponte Institut closed its doors already in 2008, but the DJA continues to flourish. A research institution devoted to the study of the Don Juan topic in general and of the Mozart-Da Ponte opera in particular, it has become a haven for Mozart scholars, theatre scholars, and cultural historians in Austria and beyond. Many will warmly remember the recurring symposia devoted to the opera known as the Don Juan Days, in which junior and senior, local and international scholars met under relaxed forms, and over which Weidinger presided with characteristic *Schwung* and extraordinary hospitality.

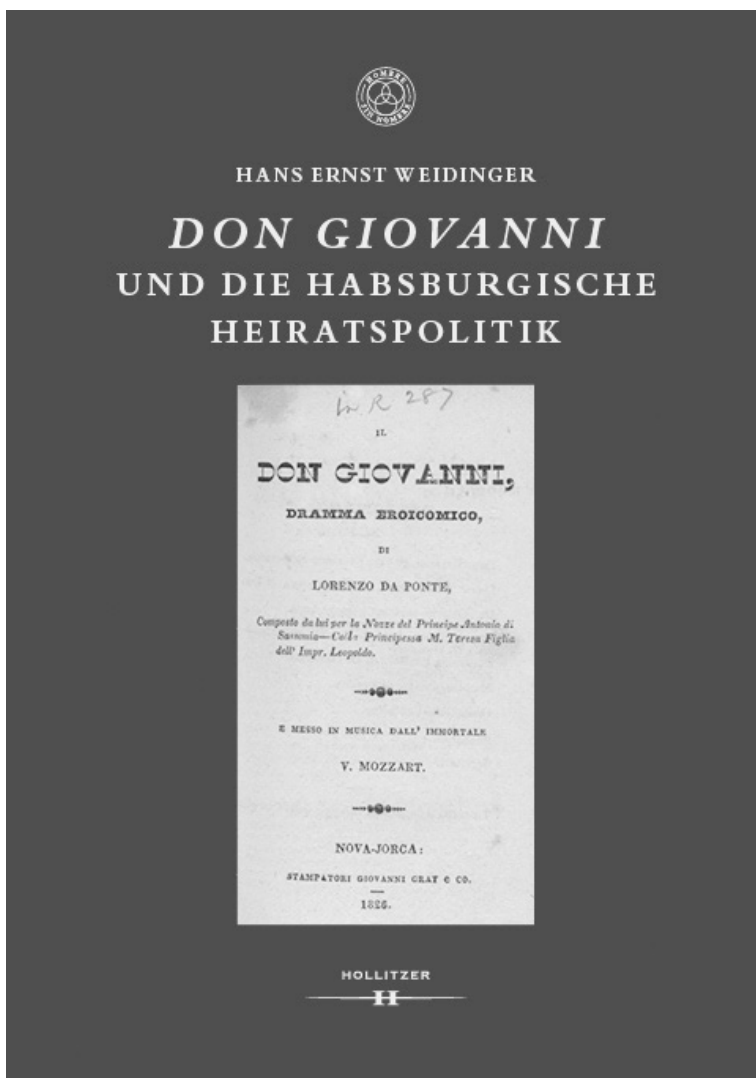
Currently headed by the theater historian Matthias J. Pernerstorfer, the DJA is located, together with the Hollitzer Wissenschaftsverlag, in Trautsongasse in the historic Josefstadt district. We are still waiting for the publication of the critical edition of all adaptations of the story of Don Juan and the stone guest from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that Weidinger envisioned, but many other important publications have been issued by the archive through the years. Together with the theatre historian Michael Hüttler, who heads the Hollitzer publishing house, Weidinger edited, between 2013 and 2019, five large volumes on the Ottoman Empire and European theater, which revealed his willingness to expand the perspective beyond the narrower focus of Don Juan philology. The same is the case with the last Don Juan Days, which took place on the premises of the DJA in the fall of 2022, and which revolved around the American pre-

miere of *Don Giovanni*, in Rio de Janeiro in 1821 (an event commemorated by the archive with a bicentennial concert the year before). A visibly weakened Weidinger had now left the reins to younger colleagues, but with its decolonial perspective and mix of European and South American musicologists, theatre scholars, and art historians, the conference bore witness to the interdisciplinary and cosmopolitan spirit of academic exchange that the founder of the archive had cultivated for thirty-five years.

Giovanni Weidinger died suddenly at his castle at Greve in

Chianti in Tuscany on 24 February 2023, aged seventy-three. (With his typical sense for historical lineage, he had chosen as his preferred abode the Castello di Sezzate that once belonged to the Bardi family whose most famous scion was Giovanni de' Bardi, patron of the Florentine Camerata.) No doubt the most colorful academic I have known, he leaves behind a rich legacy, through his research, the institutions he established, and the scholarly networks that he built up and supported.

— *Magnus Tessing Schneider*



Hans Ernst Weidinger's book, which explores the links between *Don Giovanni* and the marriage politics of the Habsburgs, has been recently published by Hollitzer Verlag in Vienna.

Hans Ernst Weidinger: An Appreciation

On a dreary grey afternoon some time in 2009, I was idly tapping on my computer to search out references for a study of *Don Giovanni* sources, when the machine came back with an unexpected reply: Don Juan Archiv. After a friendly exchange of (postal) letters, I found myself in Vienna with an appointment to enter a scholarly paradise: rich décor, comfortable seats, easily operable microfilm readers, astonishing banks of spools. But that was not the best part. Other young visitors arrived; here was a community for independent researchers and post-docs as much as for established academics—a place to belong. An air of quiet purpose filled the room. True, under the watchful eye of the friendly intendant Johannes Schweizer, the alluring scents and sounds of coffee greeted the senses, but for the serious scholar working in Vienna, this was a genuinely novel experience: the chance to put in a full day's academic study.

That evening I presented myself at the Vestibül in the Burgtheater for an appointment with the Don Juan Archiv's founder. Was I, with my trademark jersey, slightly under-dressed? No need to worry! Hans Ernst entered, informally attired, greeting me with his characteristic warmth, and a very friendly if penetrating gaze. My *Così fan tutte* study duly presented and gratefully received, the serious business of discussion began. Hans Ernst was the most erudite man I have ever encountered. No matter how far and wide our explorations of the textual minutiae of *Don Giovanni* might range, he would never lose sight of the wider humane con-

texts: language, theatre, music, religion, life itself. Many hours later—you never counted—we emerged, and he escorted me back to the Kaiserin Elisabeth, demonstrating *en route* an encyclopaedic knowledge of the architecture and historical occupancy of the buildings of Vienna.

That meeting marked the start of several years of *Don Giovanni* events at which a small group of 'regulars' pursued our obsession. First, there were the 'Don Juan Days' instituted by Hans Ernst himself. Venues were imaginatively chosen. We assembled (appropriately for our subject) in Joseph II's 1783 Lusthaus in the Prater and the following year in the splendid new premises of the Archiv itself on Trautsonsgasse, opposite the row of houses purchased by Prince Adam Auersperg near the private theatre in which *Idomeneo* received its Vienna première. We assembled in Stockholm for a day's conference to mark the Drottningholm's production of our opera, conducted by Mark Tatlow. Accommodation in a naval-themed guesthouse (portholes and bunks!), a brief series of papers, and then the leisurely boat trip to the opera house, a tour of its amazing inner workings, and the opera itself.

Hans Ernst's generosity when entertaining guests was legendary. Stamina was required. He arrived late at the memorable Mozart in Prague conference. I had already partaken of the substantial evening meal offered to delegates when word arrived: Hans Ernst is in town! Down to the city centre to a Hungarian restaurant where, unfamiliar with eastern European cuisine, and enjoying some friendly ribbing on that count, I consumed my second meal. Onwards and upwards to where I know not! About half-way up the considerable hill between the centre of town and our accommodation stood



Hans Ernst Weidinger with Ian Woodfield during the Don Juan Days 2012 in Vienna. Woodfield has dedicated his pathbreaking study *Performing Operas for Mozart: Impresarios, Singers and Troupes* to Weidinger (courtesy of Matthias Pernerstorfer).



Hans Ernst Weidinger, his colleagues from the Don Juan Archiv, and other friends strolling through the streets of Brno, Czech Republic, in 2013. From left to right: Martin Nedbal, Tatjana Markovic, Jana Perutková, Hans Ernst Weidinger, Alison Dunlop, Michael Hüttler, Marcel L. Molnár, Reinhard Eisendle, and Vladimír Mañas (courtesy of Jana Perutková).

an unassuming doorway. Upon entering, and after quite a hike, upstairs and down, the inner sanctum was reached, where Hans Ernst was already in full flow. Around 1.00 a.m., my looming conference slot in mind, I staggered to the exit and was pointed uphill. Next morning, to the eyes of a pale and fragile scholar, Hans Ernst looked outrageously fit and ready to go! Then in New York, there was a day conference devoted to Da Ponte and his revision of *Don Giovanni* for an American audience. Hans Ernst was unable to attend in person, but there was the unusual opportunity to talk to the direct descendants of the librettist.

My final meeting with Hans Ernst is now tinged with sadness. An event in Florence having fallen through, a select conference was convened at short notice in Sezzate near Greve in Chianti, the Italian residence of ‘Baron’ Giovanni—his other identity. Papers were read in an unheated part of this impressive edifice—a genuine castle—with blankets liberally supplied. Any nocturnal scratching on the outer doors, we were informed, would only be the wolves! I slept in a room on the top floor. It felt a signal honour. A fine, deep, old bath took some time to splutter into action and keep going, but was worth the prolonged wait. The dark stairwells leading up to these heights—the lift was a bit claustrophobic—at times took on a ghostly blue hue, emanating from the multiple computer screens in Hans Ernst’s scholarly lair. Among the participants at Sezzate was Queen’s University student Alison Dunlop, whose recent thesis was on Georg Muffat, but who had just discovered the attractions of late-eighteenth-century scholarship. Acting as a PhD child-minder in her beloved Vienna, the Don Juan Archiv offered her a much-appreciated next step.

On the last morning, Hans Ernst drove me to Pisa airport, at times an alarming experience. Our conversation rehearsed the political circumstances surrounding the 1787 première of *Don Giovanni* in Prague. We reviewed this subject before, but the repetition did not matter. This time round, a new seed was planted, one that decisively changed the direction of my research for years to come. We arrived in Pisa in very good time, because, I soon discovered, Hans Ernst had organised a surprise tour of the cathedral for me. At the airport, he waited for half an hour while the check-in queue slowly edged towards the desk. A few weeks later, there came the shocking news of Alison’s untimely death. I owe Hans Ernst a lasting debt as a scholar and look back on the times I spent in his company with great affection.

— Ian Woodfield

