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Aspekte der Opernlibrettistik am Hofe Max II. Emanuels von Bayern 1685–1688

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English Summary

Political message and aesthetic staging

Aspects of the opera libretto at the court of Max II Emanuel of Bavaria 1685–1688

In 1685 a dynastic wedding takes place at the court of Emperor Leopold I in Vienna, which is of a special political dimension. The young and promising Elector Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria marries Archduchess Maria Antonia, the Emperor's daughter and heir to the powerful Spanish Hapsburg Empire. Through this union Emperor Leopold I wins a powerful military son-in-law, who supports him in his role as commander in the fight against the Ottomans. Max Emanuel also gains from his marriage, achieving a rise in rank of his dynasty, fame as commander of the Emperor, and the prospect of the post of governor in the Spanish Netherlands. This new status, however, proves challenging for Max Emanuel.

At the European courts of the early modern period, court opera performances were staged on important occasions, such as that of a princely wedding. Thus, wedding operas were also performed in Vienna and Munich. While music and stage spectacles were subject to the ephemeral character of the event and lasted only for the moment, the text structure of the opera, the libretto, was often skillfully printed and bound, kept for posterity and sent to other courts at the same time. The present work is devoted to political semantics in the librettos at the Munich court, under the Wittelsbach Elector Max Emanuel. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between the role of the opera libretto as a medium of political representation and its function as a linguistic work of art, and in its representation of textual memory. Based on precise analyses of selected works, the relationship between political statements and the aesthetic speech in libretto texts is to be shown.

The body of the work consists of the librettos of three Italian operas set by Agostino Steffani for the Munich court: *Servio Tullio* (1686, text: Ventura Terzago), *Alarico Il Baltha* (1687, text: Lodovico Orlandi) and *Niobe Regina di Tebe* (1688, text: Lodovico Orlandi). This is preceded by *Il Palladio in Roma* (music: Antonio Draghi, text: Nicolò Minato), a Viennese court opera from 1685. Detailed analyses of the libretto prints reveal a more complex relationship between political messages and aesthetic speech than is commonly assumed. It also becomes evident that a political dialogue was taking place between the houses of Hapsburg and Wittelsbach in the medium of the court opera.

The Viennese musical drama *Il Palladio in Roma* from the year 1685 reveals important information on the subject of political subtexts in musical dramas. The wedding opera essentially deals with a fundamental political theme of the early modern period – the need for loyal allies in the fight against the Ottomans. A short panegyric dedication is followed by a descriptive *argomento*. The subject was deliberately chosen by the librettist according to the ceremonial *casus*, the appropriate political meaning was applied to it by means of comparative panegyric. The allegory given by the librettist serves to depict the superiority of the Emperor and reference the loyalty and subordination expected of Max Emanuel. The libretto of the Munich opera *Servio Tullio* (1686) is also tailored to the representative case of a dynastic marriage. While in the dedication the suitability of Max Emanuel as a young ruler is proved with various arguments, the elaborate prologue contains explicit allegoric instructions, which concern Wittelsbach's hereditary charisma. Max Emanuel lets himself legitimise as a young ruler and candidate for governorship in the Spanish Netherlands. Overall, the greatest congruence between paratexts and main text can be found in this libretto. Here the performing situation reveals the difference between the two operas: Leopold I concerns the opera for his daughter as a matter of routine – he even devotes it generously to the bridal couple –, while for Max Emanuel the performance of his wedding opera is an important step. This is reflected in the contrasting nature of the librettos: while the Emperor allows himself to be portrayed as paternal ruler and saviour of Rome, the Bavarian Elector is essentially concerned with depicting and defending the claims to power resulting from his political marriage. In doing so he formulates an affirmative answer to the Viennese opera, in which he responds to the demands of the Emperor, but also makes discreetly contrasting messages. While *Servio Tullio* is still heavily influenced by the occasion, Max Emanuel emancipates himself from his father-in-law just one year later in the allegorical terrain of *Alarico Il Baltha* (1687). The eponymous hero represents a type of daring and superior military commander. By the subject of the fall of Rome he is distinguished as a new Germanic hero, as *Alcide Norico*. This supports the claim of the Wittelsbachs to a continuation of the imperial dignity by Bavaria. The final libretto to be examined is *Niobe Regina di Tebe* (1688) which is characterised by its tragic subject matter and controversial characters. Its central theme consists of the abuse of ruling power and its consequences, and in the delimitation of the pagan space to the divine sphere. Presumably, in this libretto Max Emanuel did not intend a portrayal of himself with the figure of king Anfione, but instead a criticism of his now-hated father-in-law, who up to this point had withheld from him the supreme command of his troops and the longed-for governorship in Brussels. This example shows the possibilities of interpretation resulting from the plurimediality of the libretto. Allegorical aspects, working apart from the librettist's intended main allegory, do not reinforce each other to produce totalising allegories, but rather stand out like scattered allusions. Furthermore, the apparently intended *funesto fine* was mitigated by a final scene, which reinforced the didactic effect.

The analyses of the librettos show that only the synopsis of paratexts and the main text can provide information about political subtexts. Even with a strong paratextual framing, the semantics of the main text prove to be partly uncontrollable, rather marked by vagueness and complexity and more discrepant than congruent. The topic is mainly dominated by the legitimacy of early modern lordship, among them ideologemes from the areas of inherited charismatic and historical-dynastic legitimacy, divine right, as well as the ideal of the Christian ruler.