

Special Exhibition „The Musical World of the Youthful Beethoven. Beethoven's Publisher Heinrich Philipp Boßler“

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Heinrich Philipp Boßler (1744-1812), publisher of important composers such as Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart and Pleyel, is recognized even today as a significant figure in music history. His anthologies and musical magazines with works of the greatest, but also the least of composers were widely disseminated and highly regarded by his contemporaries. Especially the „Blumenlese für Klavierliebhaber“ (this „flowery“ title can be translated approximately as „Bouquet of the Finest Flowers for Lovers of the Piano“) was an influential publication in bourgeois musical circles at the end of the 18th century. For the young Ludwig van Beethoven, whose earliest works were almost all published for the first time by Boßler, the compositions which appeared in these collections were a source of inspiration, but also something he consciously set himself apart from. The exhibition shows important examples from among Boßler's publications and thus offers a glimpse into the musical world into which Beethoven was born as well as into the context of the actual composition and publication of his first works. Only when these aspects are taken into consideration does it become possible to judge his early works adequately and understand properly his development as a composer.

The special exhibition begins in **Room 7**: The first publications of the youthful works of Beethoven by Boßler (**Cases 1-2**):

In the fall of 1783 Boßler published Beethoven's first larger opus, the three Piano Sonatas, WoO 47, dedicated to his employer, the Prince Elector of Cologne, Maximilian Friedrich. The initiator of these publications was certainly Beethoven's teacher, Christian Gottlob Neefe, who himself knew Boßler well and who made active efforts to have his student's works published (see Neefe's silhouette on the left wall - also published by Boßler). The elaborately engraved titlepage shows it to be the most beautiful of all of Beethoven's first editions. Boßler's most important anthology, the „Blumenlese für Klavierliebhaber“, appeared in weekly installments for five years and reached the unusually high printing run of about 1,500 copies from which, of course, also handwritten copies were made for private use (**see the example in Case 2**). Beethoven knew numerous subscribers to the „Blumenlese“ as a young man. His early immature works, the song „Schilderung eines Mädchens“, WoO 107, and the Rondo in C Major for Piano, WoO 48, were published here the year they were written (1783). Two further early compositions by Beethoven were included in the „Blumenlese“ of 1784: the Rondo in A Major, WoO 49, and the song „An einen Säugling“ („To an Infant“), WoO 108.

Music Published by Boßler - A Source of Inspiration for Young Beethoven (Cases 3-5)

In the „Blumenlese für Klavierliebhaber“, the publisher included mostly those musical genres which were especially suited to music-making in the home, namely piano pieces and songs. For the latter Boßler liked to pick up-to-date topics. Boßler's anthologies, which included also works by average composers and even dilettantes, thus became compendia from which the young composer, curious and perhaps still without his own fully-developed personal style, could get to know the newest trends. He could

learn from them or be inspired by the texts to try his own settings.

An example of one such inspiration is the setting of the poem „An den Mond“ („To the Moon“) by Ludwig Hölty which was probably composed by Johann Christoph Walther, an organist from Ulm. It was published in the „Blumenlese“ in 1782 (**Case 3**). The version of the poem which is set here was used by Beethoven for his own song „Klage“ („Complaint“), WoO 113, composed in 1790. A comparison of the two songs (Walther's setting strictly strophic, Beethoven's through-composed and supplied with a piano part which is independent and musically ambitious) emphasizes the artistic progress of the youthful Beethoven in comparison to the minor composers of his day. The same is true for the remarkable pastoral symphony by Justin Heinrich Knecht which came out in Boßler's publishing house in 1785 (**Case 4**). As can be recognized by the movement titles, this symphony anticipates the program of Beethoven's 6th Symphony. It is also the case here, however, that Beethoven outdid his predecessor not only qualitatively but also that he placed the imitation of nature here on a new and different plane.

The last product of Boßler's publishing house included J. F. von Dalberg's Goethe song, „Neue Liebe, neues Leben“ („New Love, New Life“) (1796) which Beethoven first set two years later. The autograph of Beethoven's second setting of this Goethe poem, his Op. 75, No. 2, is to be seen beside Dalberg's song. In October 1783 Friedrich Schiller visited the publisher in Speyer in the company of Boßler's close associate, J. F. Christmann. Surely one result of this meeting was the publication one year later for the first time of Schiller's early poem „Die Entstehung der roten Rosen“ („The Creation of the Red Roses“) in a setting by Daniel Steibelt. The poem has survived only in

the textbook of the „Blumenlese“ of 1784. The copy exhibited here is the only example of this Schiller first edition known to have been preserved.

Boßler as an Engraver in Copper, a Maker of Silhouettes and as an Engraver of Coins (Cases 6 and 8)

The selection of etchings made by Boßler as a young man as well as the coins which he designed at the request of the Landgrave of Hessen-Darmstadt in the 1770s give us a glimpse of the beginnings of his professional activities. Beside them is the series of silhouettes which he published between 1784 and 1790, which are his most important pictorial works. Some of the silhouettes in the collection „Schattenrisse berühmter Tonsetzer“ („Silhouettes of Famous Composers“), displayed here on the walls, were even signed by him. Silhouettes were published even in the musical series „Bibliothek der Grazien“ („Library of the Graces“), which was begun in 1789, the „great patronesses of music“ being presented on single decorative pages. They clearly show the connection to the portrait-medals which Boßler designed in his youth. As other music publishers of his day, Boßler retained his double interest in music and art. He gained an exceptional capability in designing the decorative titlepages for his musical productions. They show his talent for connecting decorative writing styles with ornamental framing element and were praised highly by his contemporaries for that reason.

Beside musical editions, Boßler published the „Musikalische Real-Zeitung“, beginning in mid-1788, which was the most important musical magazine of the day. Christmann and other important contemporary musical figures contributed to it, among them Justin Heinrich Knecht, music director in Biberach and

Friedrich August Weber, a physician in Heilbronn, and in later years even Ernst Ludwig Gerber, the author of an important musical dictionary. With every number of the magazine the reader received four pages of engraved music, which resulted in a „musical anthology for connoisseurs and amateurs“.

Boßler and Mariane Kirchgeßner (Case 7)

In 1790 Boßler began playing the role of impressario to the internationally famous, blind glass harmonica virtuoso Mariane Kirchgeßner, an activity which eventually replaced his publishing activity entirely. He undertook concert tours with Mariane, visiting Mozart in Vienna and Goethe in Karlsbad, among others, and gaining for himself a reputation as an exemplary impressario.

Continuation of the special exhibition at the end of the tour in **Room 12**

Boßler's Friend and Colleague, J. F. Christmann (Case 1)

In 1782 Boßler published the „Elementarbuch der Tonkunst für Lehrende und Lernende“ („Book of the Elements of Music for Teachers and Students“) by Johann Friedrich Christmann, who was in close contact to Boßler as co-publisher of the „Blumenlese“, to which he contributed numerous compositions, and of the „Real-Zeitung“. The accompanying volume with practical examples includes among other works a fantasy on the name Bach and a fantasy passing through all the keys. Beethoven composed his Two Preludes through All Major Keys, Op. 39, seven years later.

Schiller's Ode „An die Freude“ („Ode to Joy“) in its First and Most Important Setting (Case 2)

Beethoven's path to Friedrich Schiller may also have been prepared by Boßler, among others. Christmann was one of the first who set Schiller's „Ode an die Freude“. The poet himself first published his ode in 1786 in his anthology „Thalia“ together with its first setting, by Christian Gottfried Körner. In Bonn at that time Schiller's works were received with great enthusiasm. Thus it is not surprising that Beethoven also took up this work before his move to Vienna. A comparison of the simple strophic songs of Körner and Christmann with Beethoven's setting in the finale of the 9th Symphony - which was, however, composed 26 and 37 years later - makes the artistic development and the musical genius of Beethoven more than clear.

Music Published by Boßler (Haydn, Pleyel etc.) (Cases 3 - 4)

Boßler was the original publisher of almost 30 works by Joseph Haydn, among them the first edition of the Three Piano Sonatas, Op. 37. After 1785 Ignaz Pleyel also played an important role in Boßler's publication list.

In the lecture room adjoining Room 12 it is possible to hear songs and piano works by Beethoven and other composers published by Boßler. The artists are Ingrid Schmithüsen, Soprano, and Gerald Hambitzer, Piano (playing on a copy of a Hammerclavier made by Anton Walter, Vienna, 1795). In the case with the Boßler catalogues, the music performed can be viewed.

Hans Schneider / Silke Bettermann / Michael Ladenburger / trans. Joanna Cobb Biermann

In the Museum Shop an illustrated brochure about the exhibition (28 p., DM 2,00) and a comprehensive monograph about H. Ph. Boßler (388 p., DM 125,00) can be purchased.