

# **Goethe and Schubert: Across the Divide**

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**Edited by Lorraine Byrne and Dan Farrelly**

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***Goethe and Schubert: Across the Divide***

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## 12 | Revisiting *Claudine*: Schubert's GoetheSingspiel

Lorraine Byrne

The consistently natural and lively prose dialogue of *Claudine von Villa Bella* is one of the Singspiel's many attractions. Thematically, scenically, and atmospherically rich and varied, lyrical, humorous, and with a lucid plot that produces one *coup de théâtre* after another and the most complex stage action in any of Goethe's plays and with musical settings by Seckendorff, Reichardt and Schubert to choose from, it deserves to be better known and more performed than it is.<sup>1</sup>

### Goethe's Composition of *Claudine von Villa Bella*

Goethe's aspiration to create a national opera in Germany occupied him for many years. His desire to elevate the Singspiel to an artistic level commensurate with the other arts in Germany, and with Italian opera buffa, inspired him to produce several works in this form. During the years 1773 and 1784 Goethe produced six ballad-opera libretti all written for the Weimar court. His first serious work, *Erwin und Elmire*, commenced in November 1773-5. Less than a month after *Erwin und Elmire* had been published in Jacobi's *Iris*, Goethe commenced work on *Claudine Von Villa Bella* in 1774.<sup>2</sup> In his correspondence with Johanna Falmer and Karl Ludwig von Knebel on 10 to 14 April,

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<sup>1</sup> Boyle, *Goethe. The Poet and the Age*, 1, *The Poetry of Desire* (Oxford: OUP, 1992), p.214.

<sup>2</sup> *Claudine von Villa Bella*, 1774-75; revised 1786-88, *HA*. 4, first working: pp.216-59; *BA* 4, original text: pp.71-119; 2nd edn: pp.120-79; *WA* I, 11, pp.197-283.

he mentions his composition of this text.<sup>3</sup> Two months later, when setting out on his first Swiss journey, he sent the manuscript to Knebel from Emmendingen, and completed it while staying with his sister, Cornelia.<sup>4</sup>

*Claudine von Villa Bella* was published in Berlin by August Mylius in May 1776 with the subtitle, 'Ein Schauspiel mit Gesang' – a term Goethe coined to indicate the literary quality of the text. Unlike its predecessor, *Erwin und Elmire*, *Claudine* appeared as a separate publication, with Goethe's name on the title page. Goethe's innovative text was greeted rather hesitantly by critics and composers. The *Berlinisches Literarisches Wochenblatt* considered, 'The plot is without anything episodic; very simple, but too precipitous and abrupt; and because of this it seems to us that the good situations are not exploited in the way the author of *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* could have'.<sup>5</sup> One Altona journalist could not believe it to be Goethe's work except that his name stood on the title page and decided that it must be a satire on operettas, for 'there are things sung that can scarcely be tolerated when spoken in the theatre such as duels, fighting with the watch, and so forth'.<sup>6</sup> A critical journal from Lemgo found the whole thing too 'novelesque' and 'unnatural' and concluded that 'Nature has not fashioned Herr Goethe to be a musical poet'.<sup>7</sup> Only Eschenburg brought sympathetic insight to the libretto. He found it incomparably better than *Erwin und Elmire*, its songs light, musical and demanding 'a lively, indeed succinct composition, especially those which are constructed in the manner of the finales in Italian operettas and are united with lively action'.<sup>8</sup> Unlike many of his fellow German critics, Eschenburg had first-hand experience with the genre he mentions, having produced Italian opera, and based his *Robert and Kalliste* on Guglielmi's setting.

The adverse reaction of critics and composers can be explained by the innovative quality of Goethe's text. Both in its unconventional subject matter and its demanding dramaturgical structures it was wholly unprecedented in earlier libretti. It is the only North German libretto with anything remotely approximating Bretzner's abduction scene in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. It is the first Sturm und Drang libretto in German opera.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the huge and impressive finale at the end of Act Two becomes the first true finale in North German opera. Most North German composers had little or no

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<sup>3</sup> *WA* IV, 2, Letter no.319, to Johanna Falmer, 10 April 1775, p.254 and Letter no.320, To Knebel, 14 April 1775, pp.254-55.

<sup>4</sup> *WA* IV, 2, Letter no.334, To Knebel, 4 June 1775, pp.265-66.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Bauman, *North German Opera in the Age of Goethe* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), p.172.

<sup>6</sup> *Beytrag zum Reichs-Postreuer*, pp.285-87 and *Neuer gelehrter Mercurius*. Repr. in Bauman, p.172.

<sup>7</sup> *Auserlesene Bibliothek der neuesten deutschen Litteratur* 10 (1776), pp.490-98. Repr. in Bauman, p.172.

<sup>8</sup> *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 31, 2 (1777), p.495. Bauman, p.172.

<sup>9</sup> Bauman, p.169.

practice in dealing with this or the other compositional problems Goethe posed here. Guidance was needed from Italian models and it is significant that André was one of the few composers to undertake a setting of Goethe's text, for he had directed Italian opera for performance in German in Berlin.<sup>10</sup> André's setting was never performed; an amateur production of Seckendorff's setting, planned by the Weimar Theatre for Ettersburg in the winter of 1779, was forestalled by Goethe's second Swiss journey. Significantly, the first performance was given at the Hofburgtheater in Vienna, on 13 June 1780, with music by Ignaz van Beeke, and Alosia Weber Lang as Goethe's first Claudine. A further setting was performed in Stuttgart Opera House in 1783, with music by C. G. Weber.

Ten years after the work was written, Goethe's desire to revise *Claudine* was focused by Göschel's publication of a prospectus for his collected works in eight volumes, the fifth of which was to contain *Claudine*. In a letter to his childhood friend, Philipp Christoph Kayser, on 23 January 1786, Goethe enclosed a synopsis of the Singspiel,<sup>11</sup> and in his letter to Charlotte von Stein on the 24 January 1786 he confesses his desire to revise the text.<sup>12</sup> On 26 January 1786 he tells her how conscious he is of breaking new ground in relation to *Claudine*,<sup>13</sup> yet it was not until Kayser's arrival in Rome in November 1787, that the poet was inspired to work intensely on the text.<sup>14</sup> Although Goethe sent excerpts from the text to Frau Schultheiss in Zürich on 8 September 1787,<sup>15</sup> three days later he relates to Kayser how *Claudine* is taking him longer than he expected.<sup>16</sup> Contrary to Goethe's expectations, Kayser's arrival in Rome on 3 November 1787 did not help him complete the libretto and on 8 December 1787 he admits to Karl August the difficulties he has finishing the libretto.<sup>17</sup> It was not until January 1788 that Acts One and Two were completed.<sup>18</sup> In a letter to Herder on 6 February 1788 he

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<sup>10</sup> Examples include Piccini's *La buona figliuola* in 1777, Sacchini's *L'isola d'amore* (for which he wrote the German translation) in 1779, and Anfossi's *Il geloso in cimento* in 1781.

<sup>11</sup> *Goethe Briefe*, HA 1, Letter no.396, to Kayser, 23 January 1786, pp.501-02.

<sup>12</sup> WA IV, 7, Letter no.2253, To Charlotte von Stein, 24 January 1786, p.165.

<sup>13</sup> HA 1, Letter no.397, To Charlotte von Stein, 26 January 1786, p.503.

<sup>14</sup> The *Paralipomena* to the *Italienische Reise* and the Italian Journal itself trace the poet's efforts to complete the libretto. See, for example, nos. 29 and 30 where Goethe records, 'Einwirkung der Italiänische Oper. (Influence of Italian Opera.) *Erwin und Elmire. Claudine von Villa Bella*' WA I, 32, Nov. 1787, pp.463-64 and 25 January 1787, where Goethe records 'Schwere Rechenschaft. Claudine'. (Serious Re-evaluation of Claudine); WA 32, p.473, and in January 1787 under the rubrik of 'Poetische Arbeiten' (Lyrical Works) he again registers 'Iphigenie fertig (Iphigenie complete). Claudine'. See IR, November Report, 1787, HA 11, p.436.

<sup>15</sup> WA I, 32, no.33, p.465f.

<sup>16</sup> WA IV, 8, Letter no.2607, To Kayser, 11 September 1787, p.256.

<sup>17</sup> WA IV, 8, Letter no.2626, To Carl August, 8 December 1787, p.305

<sup>18</sup> HA 2, Letter no.458, To Charlotte von Stein, 19 January 1788, p.76.

records the conclusion of the work and again remarks how he has endeavoured to create a good libretto for the composer:

Hier ist der dritte Akt *Claudine*s; ich wünsche, daß er dir nur die Hälfte so wohl gefallen möge, als ich vergnügt bin, ihn geendigt zu haben. Da ich nun die Bedürfnisse des lyrischen Theaters genauer kenne, habe ich gesucht, durch manche Aufopferungen dem Komponisten und Akteur entgegen zu arbeiten. Das Zeug, worauf gestickt werden soll, muß weite Fäden haben, und zu einer komischen Oper muß es absolut wie Marli gewoben sein. Doch hab' ich bei dieser, wie bei *Erwin* auch fürs Lesen gesorgt. Genug, ich habe getan, was ich konnte.<sup>19</sup>

Goethe's revised version of *Claudine* was published as a Singspiel by Göschen in 1788.<sup>20</sup> Reichardt, who had heard of the revised version beforehand and pestered Herder for copies, set to work with gusto and in April 1789 showed up in Weimar with his setting of the new *Claudine*. He remained eleven days, living at Goethe's home and going through the score with him.<sup>21</sup> The work saw its premiere at the National Theatre in Charlottenburg, Berlin, on 29 July 1789<sup>22</sup> to the music of Reichardt's score.<sup>23</sup> The court audience received the work coldly – a reaction duplicated at the second performance at the Theater am Gendarmenplatz in Berlin on 3 August 1789. Although a production was planned for Weimar later that year, the Singspiel was not staged until 30 May 1795. For the performance Christian Vulpius translated Goethe's dialogue from verse into prose. Despite weeks of rehearsals,<sup>24</sup> the work was ill-received and dropped after its first performance.<sup>25</sup> Boyle attributes its lack of success to Goethe's 'false

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<sup>19</sup> Goethe to Herder, 6 February 1788. The letter is included in the *IR*, *HA* 11, pp.516-17. 'Here is Act Three of Claudine; I hope that you get just half the pleasure from it that I feel from having finished it. Since I am better acquainted now with the requirements of lyric theatre, I have tried to accommodate the composer and actor by making some sacrifices. Cloth that is to be embroidered must have its threads set wide apart, and for a comic opera it must be absolutely woven like Marli. But in this work, as in *Erwin*, I have also been concerned about the reader. In a word, I have done what I could.' See also *IR*, 10 January 1788, *HA* 11, pp.476-77.

<sup>20</sup> Later editions were printed by Cotta in 1808, 1816, 1827 and 1828; see *BA* 4, pp.675-76.

<sup>21</sup> Rolf Pröpper, *Die Bühnenwerke Johann Friedrich Reichardts*, 1, p.83, n.18.

<sup>22</sup> See Goethe's letters to Reichardt on 15 June 1789, *HA* 2, Letter no.489, p.118 and on 20 June 1789, *WA* IV 9, Letter no.2764, pp.136-37.

<sup>23</sup> Subsequent productions of *Claudine von Villa Bella. Ein Singspiel* include a setting by Friedrich Ludwig Seidel, which was performed in a private theatre in Berlin; Eberwein completed his setting in February 1816, followed by the Polish composer, Johann Christoph Kienlen, who submitted his score to Goethe in December 1816. Kienlen's setting was performed in Potsdam on 30 April 1818 and was repeated in Berlin from 8 May to 24 June. An account of this production is given in Graf Brühl's letter to Goethe, *BA* 4, p.672.

<sup>24</sup> See Goethe's letter to Schiller on 16 May 1795, *WA* IV, 10, Letter no.3155, pp.258-59.

<sup>25</sup> See Goethe's letter to Reichardt on 21 December 1795, *WA* IV, 10, Letter no.3243, p.351.

assumption that Germany – particularly Northern Germany – Protestant Germany – possessed a theatre to put on such works as *Claudine von Villa Bella* or an audience to enjoy them. The public for which Goethe had originally written *Claudine* was real enough – the culture of modern Germany had to be a culture of the printed word.’ Goethe’s admission to Charlotte von Stein that the new *Claudine* was intended to be read as well as sung<sup>26</sup> admits his awareness of audiences’ needs. That Goethe’s objective was in direct contrast to accepted opinions of what a Singspiel should be is evident from contemporary reviews, such as that written in Berlin in 1783, where one writer claimed, ‘A Singspiel must be seen and heard, not read: if it reads excellently, then it is surely a tragedy or a comedy embroidered with songs, and no true Singspiel’.<sup>27</sup> A consideration of Goethe’s *Claudine* in the light of such reviews reveals that Goethe was well ahead of his time.

### Goethe and Considerations of Opera Buffa

The revisions Goethe made to *Claudine von Villa Bella* were clearly influenced by his experience of opera buffa. It is difficult to establish when Goethe first heard comic opera as there are no references to it in his letters of the early 1770s when opera buffa began to make its presence felt in Germany. Goethe’s first mention of Italian opera is, in fact, made in a letter to Charlotte von Stein on 25 September 1779, on his second Swiss journey, where he considers the music of Paisiello’s comic opera, *L’infant de Zamora*, as ‘ganz trefflich’. This is all we have of Goethe’s acquaintance with Italian opera until the end of 1783, when Josef Bellomo’s troupe moved to Weimar and opened their first season at the new ducal theatre with Paisiello’s *Eingebildeten Philosophen* (*I filosofi immaginari*). Goethe was rather critical of the company, and considered their performances to be mediocre; nonetheless, they widened the poet’s cultural experience through their varied performances. Unfortunately their programme of events is unknown and we mainly rely on letters to see which works were performed. On 16 October 1784 *Robert und Kalliste* was presented; on 17 February 1785 Pasquale Anfossi’s *Die Eifersucht auf der Probe* (*Il geloso in cimento*) was performed; on 31 May 1785 Paisiello’s *Der Barbier von Seviglia* (*I barbiere di Siviglia*) was produced and in the course of 1785 Paisiello’s *Infantin von Zamora* was staged – a work which Goethe had become acquainted with in Strassburg and greatly treasured.

Goethe’s letters of the 1780s are replete with admiring comments on opera buffa. His first report of the *Bellomoschen Theatergesellschaft* on 28 June 1784 reveals the enormous interest Goethe had in this form:

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<sup>26</sup> *WA* IV, 8, Letter no.2638, To Charlotte von Stein, 26 January 1788, p.336. See also *IR*, *HA*, p.516.

<sup>27</sup> *Literatur-und-Theater-Zeitung*, 6 (1783), pp.349-50. The full review is printed in Bauman, p.219f.

Ich habe seit letztem Winter ein Duzzend der Besten Produktionen dieser Gattung von einer zwar mittelmässigen Truppe gehört. Ich habe mir mancherley dabei gedacht und recht gewünscht, dass Sie in dieses Fach einzugehen Lust und Muth hätten. Leben Bewegung mit Empfindung gewürzt, alle Arten Leidenschafften finden da ihren Schauplatz. Besonders erfreut mich die Delikatesse und Grazie, womit der Componist gleichsam als ein himmlisches Wesen über der irrdischen Natur des Dichters schwebt.<sup>28</sup>

The dozen performances referred to are hard to identify, with the exception of one performance, *I filosofi immaginari*, which Goethe later refers to in a letter to Kayser on 5 May 1786.<sup>29</sup> In letters to Charlotte von Stein from Eisenach on 26 June 1784 Goethe relates how he attended performances of Piccini's *Le Cecchina ossia* and *La buona figliuola*,<sup>30</sup> and from Braunschweig on the 29 June 1784, he records his attendance at an opera by Salieri, *La scuola de' gelosi*, whose ensembles stimulated his imagination.<sup>31</sup> In a letter to Kayser on 28 June 1784 the poet admits, 'Ich bin immer für die opera buffa der Italiener und wünschte wohl, einmal mit Ihnen ein Werkchen dieser Art zustande zu bringen',<sup>32</sup> and following a performance of Sarti's *Fra i due litiganti il terzo gode*, he relates his ambition 'eine kleine Operette zu schreiben, um einen deutschen Komponisten der italiänischen Manier näher zu bringen'.<sup>33</sup> In a letter to Kayser on 25 April 1785 Goethe's reference to a performance of the comic opera, *Il re Teodoro in Venezia* reveals a special delight in Paisiello. In a letter to Charlotte von Stein in the middle of November, he remarked how Anna Amalia had sent him the score, which he, in turn, had sent to Kayser, and in a letter to Kayser on 5 May April 1786 he acclaims the strong dramatic action in this opera. Other performances include Bellomo's production of Salieri's *Die Lügnerin aus Liebe*, which Goethe mentioned in a letter to Frau von Stein on 5 November 1785.<sup>34</sup> On 5 December 1785, on his return from Jena, he attended a performance of Anfossi's opera *Il geloso in cimento*, which he already knew and recognized as 'eine gute

<sup>28</sup> *WA* IV, 6, Letter no.1956, To Kayser, 28 June 1784, pp.316-18. 'Since last winter I have heard a dozen of the best productions of this genre – admittedly from a mediocre troupe. I have had various thoughts about this and have wished you felt happy and brave enough to venture into work in this genre. Life, movement spiced with feeling, all kinds of passions find expression there. What I particularly like is the delicacy and grace with which the composer, as if like a heavenly being, hovers over the earthly nature of the poet.'

<sup>29</sup> *WA* IV, 7, Letter no.2313, To Kayser, 5 May 1786, p.216.

<sup>30</sup> *WA* IV, 6, Letter no.1955, To Charlotte von Stein, 27 June 1784, pp.316-17.

<sup>31</sup> *WA* IV, 6, Letter no.1973, To Charlotte von Stein, 29 August 1784, pp.348-49.

<sup>32</sup> *WA* IV, 6, Letter no.1956, To Kayser, 28 June 1784 p.317. 'I am in favour of the Italian opera buffa and would love sometime to create a little work of this type with you.'

<sup>33</sup> 'to write a little Operette, which will bring German opera closer to the Italian model.' Elmar Bötcher cites this undated letter as Autumn 1784, *Goethes Singspiele* 'Erwin und Elmire' und 'Claudine von Villa Bella' und die oper buffa (Marburg: Elwert, 1912), p.30.

<sup>34</sup> *WA* IV, 7, Letter no.2184, To Charlotte von Stein, 5 November 1785, p.114.



Musik',<sup>35</sup> and it is apparent from his correspondence that he already was also aware of the reception of Salieri's *La grotta di Trofonio*, performed in Vienna in 1785.<sup>36</sup>

Goethe's letters from Italy reveal his outspoken admiration for opera buffa. The first comic opera Goethe heard on the Italian stage was Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* performed in the Teatro S. Moise in Vicenza on 19 September 1786.<sup>37</sup> The libretto for this opera is in Goethe's collection of operatic texts, yet the majority of these libretti Goethe heard (saw) performed in Rome in the Teatro Valle – a small opera theatre, but one which regularly employed good basses for the buffo roles.<sup>38</sup> The first comic opera which Goethe heard in this theatre was the Sartische opera, *Fra i due litiganti il terzo gode*. The textbook is in his libretto collection, dated Autumn 1786. Goethe did not care for the performance of opera buffa in Rome,<sup>39</sup> and his first positive comment is made in letters to Kayser and Karl August in February 1787 after a performance of Anfossi's comic opera, *Le pazzie de' gelosi*, and he acclaims this opera in the *Paralipomena* to the *Italienische Reise*.<sup>40</sup> During this carnival time of 1787, Goethe also heard Giuseppe Giordani's *Le ripieghi fortunati* in the Teatro Capranica and Cimarosa's *Le trame deluse* in the Teatro Pallacorda, which he later translated for a performance in Weimar in 1794. In Naples, the true home of opera buffa, Goethe records a good new comic opera by Cimarosa in a letter to Charlotte von Stein on 25 May 1787.<sup>41</sup> In his collection there is a comic opera from Naples, namely Domenico Cimarosa's *Il fanatico burlato*, which was performed in the Teatro di Fondo at this time. In the summer of 1787 Goethe had the opportunity to become acquainted with Cimarosa's work. In the notes to the *Italienische Reise*, he mentions the *L'impresario in angustie* and *Il credulo*, two short one-act plays by Cimarosa, performed together on one evening at the Teatro Valle.<sup>42</sup> Goethe mentions them in a letter to Kayser on 14 July 1787,<sup>43</sup> and in the notes to the *Italienische Reise* on 31 July 1787, he recognizes Cimarosa's operas – and in particular the quintet of *L'impresario in angustie* – as forming a significant contribution to the development of opera buffa.<sup>44</sup> Goethe's last notes on the performance of a new comic opera date from 12 September

<sup>35</sup> *WA* IV, 7, Letter no.2216, To Charlotte von Stein, 14 December 1785, p.141.

<sup>36</sup> *HA* 11, p.436f.

<sup>37</sup> *IR*, November Report.

<sup>38</sup> In Goethe's *Handbibliothek* in the National-Museum in Weimar there are twenty-five libretti of Italian operas which he heard in Rome. Of these, one is a pantomime, seven are opere serie and seventeen are opere buffe.

<sup>39</sup> *Paralipomena* to the *Italienische Reise*, *WA* I, 32, p.80.

<sup>40</sup> *WA* IV, 8, Letter no.2570, To Kayser, 6 February 1787, p.174-76 and *WA* IV, 8, Letter no.2570, To Carl August, 7-10 February 1787, p.176-78.

<sup>41</sup> *WA* IV, 8, Letter no 2591, To Charlotte von Stein, 25 May 1787, p.219.

<sup>42</sup> *IR*, 14 July 1787. *Paralipomena*, 31 July 1787, *WA* I, 32, p.466.

<sup>43</sup> *WA* IV, 8, Letter no.2597, An Kayser, 14 July 1787, p.237.

<sup>44</sup> *IR*, 14 July 1787.

1787,<sup>45</sup> yet it is difficult to establish what this work is, as only two operas from the Teatro Valle appear in the Weimar collection: namely, Luigi Caruso's *Il maledico confuso* and Vincenzo Fabri's *Viaggiatore sfortunato in amore*.<sup>46</sup> Goethe attended performances of Luigi Platone's *I matrimoni per sorpresa*, Francesco Basili's *La bella incognita* and Pasquale Anfossi's, *La maga Circe* between Christmas 1787 and 5 February 1788.<sup>47</sup> As Goethe had finished revising the first two acts of *Claudine* by 26 February and completed the revisions to Act Three by the 6 February, it is unlikely that these works were very influential in Goethe's reworking. However, 'Circe' made a good impression on Goethe, for he translated the opera and arranged for it to be performed at the Weimar Theatre on 22 November 1784.<sup>48</sup>

Goethe's revisions of *Claudine* commenced during this period of his aesthetic commitment to opera buffa between the years 1784-88, during which time his correspondence with Kayser and Charlotte von Stein reveals his criticism of contemporary musical theatre.<sup>49</sup> In a letter to Kayser in the Autumn of 1784 he reveals the motivation behind these revisions: 'um einen deutschen Componisten der italiänischen Manier näher zu bringen'.<sup>50</sup> As is characteristic of Goethe's eclecticism, the libretto for *Claudine* is not Italianate in the way *Scherz*, *List und Rache* is, but Goethe allows this influence to colour his Singspiel. While Goethe's Singspiel was one of the first to show the inspiration of Italian opera, the special literary character of his first libretto in particular was characteristic of North German opera. Through Hiller and Weisse's efforts, North German opera had become a consistent phenomenon in German cultural life. Yet Weisse and Hiller's works were written as entertainment, not art,<sup>51</sup> and neither had artistic ambitions in this realm. Hiller retired from writing and producing German Ballad Opera in 1773, and it is significant that Goethe's first serious Singspiel, *Erwin und Elmire*, was begun in November 1773. Before Hiller's retirement he had begun to move towards Italianate ideas and his efforts at musical substance and seriousness earned the respect of Agricola, Germany's foremost singing master and a staunch supporter of Italian opera. Did Goethe see an opening when Hiller retired from this scene? My reading is that he saw the potential development of Hiller's work on a national level. Unlike Hiller, who was introduced to Italian opera through the scores of

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<sup>45</sup> *WA* I, 32. p.80.

<sup>46</sup> Bötcher, p.38.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *BA* 22, pp.245-60.

<sup>49</sup> *HA* 1, Letter no.397, To Charlotte von Stein, 26 January 1786, p.503.

<sup>50</sup> Bötcher, p.31.

<sup>51</sup> See Christian Felix Weisse, *Komische Opern*, 1 (Carlsruhe, 1778), p.ii; Weisse, *Selbstbiographie*, ed. Christian Ernst Weisse and Samuel Gottlob Frisch (Leipzig, 1806), p.103; Hiller, *Wöchentliche Nachrichten und Anmerkungen, die Musik betreffend*, 1 (1766/7), pp.219 and 256.

Hasse and Graun at Dresden, Goethe had direct experience of the opera buffa in Italy. Through his experience Goethe was in a position to take up this strand, and the multi-faceted character of *Claudine* reveals this development.<sup>52</sup>

### Goethe's Revised Libretto for *Claudine*

The central theme of Goethe's *Claudine* affirms the validity of love without exploring its depths. In *Claudine* the poet shows how love is attainable by men and women and that it produces the greatest happiness available to them. Goethe's finale performs the traditional function of the closing number as purveyor of the moral in the story. His Singspiel ends with the promise of sexual harmony, a hope for happiness, and, as with Shakespeare's comedies, the idea of married love is celebrated at the end.

The characterization in Goethe's *Claudine* unveils the poet's eclectic and innovative approach to music theatre. In his revision of *Claudine* Goethe turned his back on the stronger character types of the German lyric stage. The characters are less fully rounded, the long narrative with details of Crugantino's youth and Gonzalo's speech in praise of *Claudine* are shortened, while moralizing scenes such as Pedro's sermon on his brother's misdeeds are omitted. The characters, independently of what Schubert does with them, have shifted towards the types who receive their stamp not from moral sentence and dramatic episodes but from a confrontation with one another which invites musical participation. Goethe's types take their starting point from the personae of opera buffa, which is traditionally made up of five to seven persons. Goethe's Singspiel, contains six characters: Alonzo, the comic father, is characteristically cast in the role of a buffo bass, the mother, as with all roles for older women, does not appear, and the sets of lovers in the Singspiel: Claudine and Pedro, Lucinde and Rugantino, offer familiar pairings. The characters of Pedro, a court official, and Rugantino, a bandit and Don Juan, can be linked with the motif of inimical brothers, which was not common to Italian libretti, though it was a popular motif in Italian spoken comedy – a more common source for German opera at this time. In the history of music theatre, *Claudine von Villa Bella* is extremely significant through its presentation of the romantic bandits, which was the precursor of an entire series of Robber plays. In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* of 1816 Goethe relates how he coaxed this theme onto the musical stage:

*Claudine von Villa Bella* war früher fertig geworden, als ich, im Gegensatz von den Handwerks-Opern, romantische Gegenstände zu bearbeiten trachtete und die Verknüpfung edler Gesinnungen mit vagabundischen Handlungen als ein glückliches Motif für

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<sup>52</sup> Upon retirement, Hiller devoted himself to training German singers to a degree of competence equalling that of the best Italian singers. One of Hiller's successes was Corona Schröter, whom Goethe invited to be resident artist of the Weimar court for the productions of his early Singspiele.

die Bühne betrachtete, das zwar in spanischen Gedichten nicht selten ist, aber uns neu war zu jener Zeit; jetzt aber oft gebraucht, ja verbraucht worden.<sup>53</sup>

Goethe's identification of *Claudine* with Spanish literature was recognized as early as 1777 when Eschenburg suggested that the strong element of adventure in the plot may have been derived from a Spanish novella,<sup>54</sup> but a principal literary source for the drama has yet to be found. Some have suggested the Don Juan legend, and indeed *Claudine von Villa Bella* does share elements with versions of this legend by Tirso de Molina, Molière, and Goldoni. Among other North German operatic predecessors only one has a Spanish setting – Grossmann's adaptation of Beaumarchais's *Le Barbier de Séville* – and it differs in every other respect from Goethe's libretto.

Goethe's libretto contains a tincture of the confessional: namely the poet's connections with Weimar, and his former relations with Lili Schönemann and her circle. Goethe sent his *Schauspiel* to Karl Ludwig von Knebel in June 1775 with the instructions to show it to Karl August, and in a note to Karl August on 26 December 1775, Goethe went as far as to identify himself and his fellow hell-raisers as Crugantino and Basco, the two vagabonds in the story.<sup>55</sup> Crugantino's desire for an unbridled life is commonly connected with Goethe's broken engagement to Lili Schönemann.<sup>56</sup> However, it is clear from the notes to *Dichtung und Wahrheit* that Goethe did not want to be identified with Crugantino and, against Kayser's wishes, he altered the character in the second edition. Other scholars recognize the rebellious-poetic (Crugantino) and the bourgeois-social (Pedro) as embodying conflicting sides of Goethe's personality.<sup>57</sup> The most convincing reading of this motif is Boyle's consideration of *Claudine* as one of four works of this period which express 'the tragic potential' of Goethe's experience,<sup>58</sup> and he discerns the 'Mozartian depths' in Goethe's adventuresome romance.<sup>59</sup>

In tracing the influence of opera buffa on *Claudine von Villa Bella*, the question of Goethe's intention for the dialogue arises: whether it should be spoken in iambic verse, as in Hiller's Singspiele or treated as secco recitative. It appears as if the poet himself

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<sup>53</sup> *Paralipomena* to *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, *WA* I, 29, p.217. '*Claudine von Villa Bella* was finished earlier when – in contrast to the usual operas – I was trying to work on romantic subjects and considered the linking of noble feelings with the actions of brigands as an apt motif for the stage. This is not uncommon in Spanish texts, but it was new to us at that time. Now it is often used, even over used.'

<sup>54</sup> *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 31, 2 (1777), p.494.

<sup>55</sup> *WA* IV, 3, Letter no.374, To Carl August, 25 & 26 December 1775, p.11.

<sup>56</sup> See Willy Krogmann, 'Die persönlichen Beziehungen in Goethes Singspiel mit Gesang *Claudine von Villa Bella*', *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift*, 19 (1931), pp.348-61.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Alfred Einstein, *Schubert. A Musical Portrait* (London: Panther Books, 1951), p.89.

For a contrary opinion, see Bauman, p.170.

<sup>58</sup> Boyle, 1, p.212.

<sup>59</sup> Boyle, 1, p.215.

had no definite answer. One could argue that Goethe created a compromise through the iambic feet: a form that would prove suitable for both, and yet the considerable shortening along with Goethe's designation of the opera as a Singspiel suggests he wanted it set in recitative.<sup>60</sup> From Goethe's correspondence it appears he wished initially to have the entire dialogue treated in recitative. His letter to Kayser on 18 October 1789 carries a tone of resignation as he relates how 'Scherz, List und Rache' could possibly be declaimed:

Über die Oper bin ich mit Ihnen gleicher Meinung. Wie das Werck jetzt liegt, geht die ungeheure Arbeit verloren [...] Vielleicht liess man gar die Recitation weg und die prosaischen Deutschen möchten den sanglosen Dialog deklamiren wie sie könnten<sup>61</sup>

and consequently, he was not very hopeful of fulfilling his desire to see *Claudine* composed with recitative. According to Jörg Krämer, Reichardt did apparently compose *Claudine* with recitative,<sup>62</sup> but for first performance of Reichardt's setting in Weimar on 30 May 1795 Christian Vulpius set the entire dialogue in prose. Though Goethe accepted Reichardt's desire to have the dialogue spoken rather than sung, his correspondence with the composer on 29 June 1789 suggests that he had hoped to have at least some of the dialogue set:

Glück zu Claudinen. Die Arie ist zu dem Endzweck recht gut, ich getraue mir nicht, da die Worte sehr bedeutend sind, andre unterzulegen. Das ist der Vorteil des metrischen Dialogs, dass der Componist leicht eine harmonische Stelle herausheben und sich zueignen kann.<sup>63</sup>

Later, in a letter written on 24 May 1814 to the music director Polzelli, who had enquired about setting *Claudine*, Goethe confirms his original desire to have *Claudine* set in recitative:

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<sup>60</sup> Wieland introduced the term 'Singspiel' as a designation for his recitative opera *Alceste* (set by Schweitzer) and this association of the term Singspiel with a 'drama per musica' of a more or less Italian nature remained.

<sup>61</sup> *WA* IV, 9, Letter no.2785, To Kayser, 18 October 1789, p.157. 'I agree with you about the opera [*Fun, Cunning and Revenge*]. In the state the work is in at the moment the enormous amount of work is being wasted. [...] If we were to leave aside the recitative, the prosaic Germans could declaim the dialogue as they pleased.'

<sup>62</sup> Jörg Krämer, *Deutschsprachiges Musiktheater im späten 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998, 1998), 1, p.505, n. 123. I am indebted to Robert Meikle for this reference.

<sup>63</sup> *WA* IV, 9, Letter no.2764, To Reichardt, 29 June 1789, p.136. 'Good luck with *Claudine*. The aria suits the purpose very well. Since the words are very significant I don't feel confident about supplying others. The advantage of metrical dialogue is that the composer can easily highlight an harmonious passage and make it his own.'

[...] indem ich den Dialog von *Claudine* rhythmisch behandelte [ist] allerdings meine Absicht gewesen, dem Composition Gelegenheit zu geben, nach italiänischer Weise recitativisch zu verfahren. Vielleicht möchte ich jedoch, wenn dieses ihre Absicht ist, der Dialog hie und da zu verkürzen und nur das beizubehalten seyn, was zum Verständniss der Handlung nötig ist und zugleich der Musik Vortheile bietet; welches ein einsichtiger Componist am besten beurtheilen kann.<sup>64</sup>

Goethe's early text was clearly influenced by the metrical freedom in Hiller's Singspiele – which was never found in opera buffa. It is clear from his revision that the strict treatment of metre in the Italian model guided his rewriting. In a letter to Kayser on 23 January 1786, Goethe responds to Kayser's request to observe the rhythmic regularity in *Claudine*, by disclosing his awareness of Italian conventions and at the same time explaining that his own deviation from this form was usually done for dramatic reasons – to accentuate suffering or strife. There are only two examples of rhythmic irregularity in the text: namely in verses 704-12 (where the fight between Pedro and Rugantino breaks out in the garden on Villa Bella) and verses 1115-39 (where Rugantino holds a dagger at Claudine's breast). By giving the text recitative/declamatory qualities, Goethe differs from the Italian tradition where the librettist normally leaves it up to the composer to interrupt the rhythm as he pleases. Apart from these two passages, Goethe composed the text in iambic pentameter and the arias in trochaic tetrameter, which is the metre most frequently employed in opera buffa which Goethe saw and whose texts he had read. Goethe also followed the conventions of opera buffa by juxtaposing various metres in ensembles, above all in the finale. In opera buffa, trochaic metre is used at the closing of the finale – in the tutti – and it is no coincidence that this metre is used in *Claudine*.

In Goethe's new recitative version of *Claudine* the changes in character and action were too drastic to permit the salvaging of more than three arias without alteration. Of the ten arias and Lieder of the first edition, only three are taken up in the new edition, four are newly composed, so that *Claudine* has only seven arias. Goethe did not model these revisions on the elaborate *da capo* or *dal segno* arias of opera buffa or the strophic Lieder of Hiller's operas, but composes his solos independently of either form. A good example of this is the popular 'Liebliches Kind' from Act Two where the form is very freely composed. In Act One, Lucinde's Arietta, 'Hin und wieder fliegen Pfeile', is composed in strophes and it is also noticeable that the newly composed strophic songs have a very simple form – usually four quatrains – such as Claudine's arietta, 'Liebe schwärmt auf allen Wegen' and Pedro's aria, 'Langsam weichen mir die Sterne'. In this way Goethe deviated from opera buffa, which hardly ever has songs with less than eight verses, which shows that he did not want to Italianize his Singspiel.

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<sup>64</sup> *WA* IV, 32, Letter no.6847, To Polzelli, 24 May 1814, p.288. See also *HA* 11, p.436.

In the six ensembles of *Claudine* (two duets, two terzetti, two choral songs with solos), Goethe includes more ensembles than are usual in opera buffa and characteristically, the finale forms the high point of each act. Whereas the influence of opera buffa cannot be felt on the solo songs, it can be felt in Goethe's ensembles. The ensembles in Hiller's operas are different from opera buffa. In Hiller you had a *Wechselgesang* (where you have antiphonal singing) whereas in opera buffa you had a *Zwiegesang* (where the voices sing together). The influence of Hiller's *Wechselgesang*, with its 'Parallelismen der Worte'<sup>65</sup> is evident in the duets and larger ensembles of *Claudine*. In the revision of his ensemble pieces Goethe rarely included a duet, and the ensemble pieces are made up of individual voices. A good example is encountered in the opening terzetto, 'Das hast du wohl bereitet', where Lucinde's and Alonzo's duet only lasts for seven bars. Further examples include 'Ein zärtlich Herz hat viel' for Lucinde and Claudine in Act Two and the duet for Claudine and Pedro in Act Three, 'Mich umfängt ein banger Schauer', which opens as a *Wechselgesang*, and it is only in the second half that the voices come together. In the revision of *Claudine*, Goethe broadens Rugantino's Lied 'Mit Mädeln sich vertragen' into a type of *Wechselgesang* at the end of Act One, where Rugantino's solo is answered by the Bandits' refrain.

In the ensembles of *Claudine* Goethe moves away from North German practice towards the Italian tradition through his use of music to progress the dramatic action on stage. The introductory ensemble introduces Claudine's birthday celebrations and the relationship of Pedro and Claudine begins to develop. Later, in Aria No.4, 'Alle Freuden, alle Gaben', Claudine sings to the bouquet which Pedro has given her in the opening scene. In contrast to Goethe's opening and closing ensembles, Claudine's and Pedro's arias, the ariettas sung by Lucinde and Claudine and Rugantino's 'Räuberlied' are more typical of North German opera, where characters are drawn within the dimensions of poetic structures and arias lack all but trace elements of dramatic development.

Goethe's main musical enrichment of *Claudine*, which is found in the introduction and finales, reveals the influence of the conventions of opera buffa and dramatically alters the character of his Singspiel. The opening ensemble in *Claudine* has special characteristics. It sets together two pieces, the second of which is a reworking of the introductory choral song of the first edition. In Goethe's reworking the Singspiel opens with a terzetto: Alonzo begins, Lucinde answers him; from a *Wechselgesang* emerges a duet, which Pedro joins and it becomes a terzetto. Then the chorus enter and expand the terzetto into a full sentence. This revision brings us closer to the typical form of opera buffa, which never begins with a full ensemble but with one or two voices and gradually adds musical forces until it unfolds into a full ensemble. By linking the two

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<sup>65</sup> WA IV, 7, Letter no.2252, To Kayser, 23 January 1786, p.167.

opening songs the traditional introduction to the opera buffa is changed, but the intensification of voices is maintained. The second of these pieces, the opening ensemble, 'Fröhlicher, seliger, herrlicher Tag', is like the *divertissement* of Hiller's operas. The choir begins, then the soloists enter one by one; the choir answers with a refrain, and the song concludes with everyone. This form is reminiscent of the Hiller/Weisse *divertissement* that closed the opera – but Hiller never used them as an opening piece. His operas normally begin with prose or a simple song (like 'Die Fischerin' which opens with Dortchen singing 'Erlkönig'). Similarly, the idea of an introductory terzetto sung between Pedro, Lucinde and Alonzo, never occurs. In the first edition Goethe's opening ensemble observes the German tradition of sharing the verses equally: the child sang verse 6, Alonzo (verse 8) Lucinde (verse 12), while Claudine and Pedro had six verses to sing. In the second edition Goethe was not concerned with the agreement of voices in terms of length and the revision of the solo parts was done on musical grounds.

One of the main differences between opera buffa and Hiller's Singspiele is that the closing song of opera buffa culminates in a musical number divided between soloists and ensemble. At the beginning there are normally very few performers on stage, gradually more and more singers enter, and at the close the entire cast is on stage along with the full choir. In Goethe's revision of *Claudine* the finale is completely new and, characteristically, all three acts culminate in a musical finale. In order to conclude Act One with a finale that is rich in dramatic action, Goethe introduces a new motif of strife between Rugantino and Basco. Although Goethe follows the inviolate rule that an act must end with a musical number, his finale to Act One is not entirely in the style of opera buffa because we rarely find the juxtaposition of two soloists with a choir. Yet through the skilled division of the bandits' chorus the poet creates a suitable conclusion where all the conventions of the Italian finale are fulfilled: lively, eventful action, division of the text between individual parts and the increasing number of voices used. At the same time, his finale to Act One is a canonic interweaving of four disparate views of a dramatic situation, and is very different from the *Rundgesang*, which was common to Italian opera at this time.

The most progressive finale in relation to the history of opera buffa literature is found in Goethe's first edition of *Claudine* and it is commonly proclaimed as the first North German operatic finale.<sup>66</sup> Only from Italian practice could Goethe have gleaned the brilliant inspiration of setting the first notes of this finale at the moment Rugantino recognizes Claudine beneath her male clothing. In the finale itself the dramatic tension mounting through the four sections duplicates in this deadly serious context the acceleration to *imbroglio* of an opera buffa finale. With its 204 verses it takes up a third of Act Two and closes, as da Ponte specified, with a complete row of individual scenes

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<sup>66</sup> Bauman, p.171.



with overt dramatic action. Although Goethe indicated no act divisions in the first version of *Claudine*, the scene ‘Gegen Morgen vor der Herberge zu Sarossa’ strongly resembles an act-two finale in Italian practice, where confusion and dramatic tension soar to their highest pitch, and, on this assumption, the *Schauspiel* is an implicit three-act drama. Musically, the second version is incredibly rich in comparison with the first working, which closes with two ballads where the entire action is played in spoken prose dialogue. Undoubtedly, the purely dramatic handling of the first working is uncomparably more effective and more deeply developed. The concluding monologue is extremely powerful in its deep insight into Claudine, who experiences for the first time the power of newly discovered love and is torn between delight and the most intense suffering, which arouses fantasies that her loved one at that moment lies dying and calls for her. The psychological depth and power of this scene had to fall away if the poet was to follow the conventions of opera buffa, which demanded musical interest. In Goethe’s revision the scene became something else and lost much of its dramatic power and beauty. What stands in its place is a finale that is richer, livelier and more effective than most found in the entire opera buffa literature. In the finale to Act Two, Goethe fills his libretto with short contrasting sections. This contributes greatly to the finale’s compact energy. It is full of changing action, full of tension, and in his revision Goethe has created a wonderfully rich ensemble for the composer. Dramatically, it may be weaker but as a libretto it offers the composer more possibilities.

Goethe held the Italian librettists in higher regard than the German librettist, because he believed they offered a text that laid the foundations for a good musical setting. On 14 August 1787 he remarks to Kayser:

Sie sollen am Mechanischen sehen dass ich in Italien etwas gelernt habe und dass ich nun besser verstehe, die Poesie der Musik zu subordiniren.<sup>67</sup>

When Seidl objected to the mutilation of *Claudine*, Goethe maintained that what was written was the writer’s contribution to a theatrical production in which others were to be involved. In conversation with Eckermann he admits that he can only enjoy an opera ‘wenn das Subject ebenso vollkommen ist wie die Musik, so daß beide miteinander gleichen Schritt gehen’.<sup>68</sup> In a letter to Herder on 6 February 1788, Goethe’s image of weaving suggests how music both shapes and completes the drama,<sup>69</sup> and his belief that

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<sup>67</sup> *WA* IV, 8, Letter no.2601, To Kayser, 14 August 1787, p.245.

<sup>68</sup> Eckermann, 9 October 1828, p.220, ‘when the subject is as perfect as the music, so that both go hand in hand.’

<sup>69</sup> Goethe to Herder, 6 February 1788. The letter is included in the *IR*, 6 February 1788, *HA* 11, pp.516-17. See also *IR*, 10 January 1788, *HA* 11, pp.476-77.

‘der Operntext soll ein Karton sein, kein fertiges Bild’<sup>70</sup> does not suggest subservience,<sup>71</sup> but acceptance of the power of the musician to bring this work to its final form.<sup>72</sup> That Goethe’s libretto was published in its own right, without connection to a specific production and with no mention of the composers who had set it, shows the loose partnership in German opera at that time. In contrast to this, Goethe sought a collaborator who could challenge and help to develop his ideas. The tailoring of a text to a composer’s needs was rare in those days, and, in this respect, Goethe was well ahead of his time.

We judge *Claudine* as trivial because we do not place either Goethe’s – or Schubert’s – achievement in context. It is more productive to provide a context than to cry injustice to this Singspiel. In Goethe’s time the alternatives to Weisse’s models of German operas were limited and one recognizes Goethe’s achievement by placing it in its historical context. Goethe had first-hand knowledge of the foreign achievements from which German opera had so much to learn. More deeply and accurately than other German texts of that time, his revision of *Claudine von Villa Bella* rendered practical testimony to the exemplary ‘stageworthiness’ of opera buffa in German. In considering *Claudine von Villa Bella* we also need to place Goethe’s libretto in context. If we expect a play of ideas like Goethe’s *Iphigenie*, then, like the first critic in the *Berlinisches Literarisches Wochenblatt*, we are likely to be disappointed and come to the conclusion that it is not the best of Goethe on stage. Goethe’s revision of *Claudine* reveals his endeavour to elevate the German Singspiel to an artistic level commensurate with Italian opera buffa. In pursuing this aim, Goethe saw himself as a librettist – as part of a team who would elevate German opera. Whereas Goethe’s desire to work with an artist of the same calibre suggests equality of music and drama, his aim was to write a libretto, not a dramatic work that could exist in its own right. If Mozart had set *Faust*, as Goethe once hoped,<sup>73</sup> an equality of music and drama would have been attained. Goethe sacrificed a great deal in his first version of *Claudine* in order to create a stronger libretto. Psychological and theatrical complexities are written out of the second edition and the characters of Crugantino and Claudine are less fully realized. Goethe’s recitative version of *Claudine* had a much more inviting musical structure. The song texts are very skilfully woven in; in them the action continues, which is undoubtedly more advantageous for the composer. Goethe’s revision of *Claudine* deepened the musical structure of his libretto and the emphasis on composability that the poet achieved is evident in Schubert’s setting of *Claudine*.

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<sup>70</sup> HA 3, Letter no.961, To Zelter, 19 May 1812, p.192. ‘The libretto should be a sketch, not a complete picture.’

<sup>71</sup> HA 1, Letter no.402, To Kayser, 5 May 1786, p.509.

<sup>72</sup> HA 3, Letter no.961, To Zelter, 19 May 1812, p.192.

<sup>73</sup> Eckermann, 12 February 1829, p.240.

**Table 12.1. Schubert's Compositional Output in July 1815**

As Schubert usually dated his compositions conscientiously, it is possible to trace his compositional output around the time he wrote *Claudine*. July 1815, the most prolific month in Schubert's life, would appear as below:

2 July	'Lieb Minna' (D 222)
5 July	'Salve Regina' (D 223)
	'Wandrer's Nachtlid I' (D 224)
	'Der Fischer' (D 225)
	'Erster Verlust' (D 226)
7 July	'Idens Nachtgesang' (D 227)
	'Von Ida' (D 228)
	'Die Erscheinung' (D 229)
	'Die Täuschung' (D 230)
8 July	'Das Sehnen' (D 231)
9 July	'Completion of Singspiel, <i>Fernando</i> (D 220) (Beginning on 22 June)
11 July	'Hymne an den Unendlichen' (D 232)
12 July	Symphony No.3 (First movement) (Beginning on 24 May)
15 July	'Geist der Liebe' (D 233)
	'Der Abend' (D 221)
	'Tischlied' (D 234)
	Symphony No.3 (Second Movement)
19 July	Completion of Symphony No.3 (D 200)
22 July	'Sehnsucht der Liebe' (D 180) (new version)
24 July	'Abends unter der Linde' (D 235)
	'Das Abendrot' (D 236)
	'Abends unter der Linde II' (D 237)
	'Die Mondnacht' (D 238)
26 July	Singspiel, <i>Claudine von Villa Bella</i> (D 239) beginning
27 July	'Huldigung' (D 240)
	'Alles um Liebe' (D 241)

### Schubert's Setting of *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239)

Schubert commenced work on *Claudine von Villa Bella* on 26 July 1815.<sup>74</sup> Like his contemporaries, the composer worked on the second edition of the text and finished Act One on 5 August 1815. Although Schubert completed the Singspiel, the music for Acts Two and Three was burnt as fuel by Josef Hüttenbrenner's servants during the revolution in Vienna in 1848. All that remains of both acts are fair copies of the vocal part for Rugantino's tenor *arietta*, 'Liebliches Kind', in Act Two:

#### Example 12.1 Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Arietta, 'Liebliches Kind'

**Andante con moto**

Lieb - li - ches Kind,      kannst du mir sa - gen,

and for Claudine's part for her duet with Pedro, 'Mich umfängt ein banger Schauer', in Act Three:

#### Example 12.2 Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Duet, 'Mich umfängt ein banger Schauer'

**Andante**

Mich um - fangt ein ban - ger\_ Schau - er

The manuscript is entitled: 'Claudine von Villa Bella, Singspiel in 3 Akten von Goethe. Die Musik ist von Franz Schubert m.p Schüler des Hr. von Salieri, 1815'. It is in two volumes, both of which are held by the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna.

As Schubert's setting is incomplete, performances of *Claudine von Villa Bella* are uncommon. The first recorded performance of the overture was planned in Baden in 1818, followed by a rendition in a concert in Vienna during October 1818, yet neither

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<sup>74</sup> *Dok.*, p.35.

presentation took place.<sup>75</sup> The reasons for these cancellations are given in a letter to Schubert during October 1818, where his brother Ferdinand refers to the difficulties the Baden orchestra had with the score:

Deine Ouvertüre aus *Claudine*, welche schon früher bei einem Jaëll'schen Konzert in Baden aufgeführt werden sollte, unterliegt, wie mir Doppler sagt, vieler Kritik. Sie soll für die Harmonie so schwer gesetzt sein, daß sie besonders für Oboen u. Fagott unausführbar wäre. Andere sagen (so auch Radecki), sie sei nur für das Badner Orchester zu schwer. Nun sollte sie am 11. Okt. d. J. im landständischen Saal in Wien aufgeführt werden, denn die öffentlichen Anschlagzettel sagten es, u. doch wurde nichts daraus. Dies ist nach meiner Ansicht für Dich gewiß unangenehm; Du könntest Dich deshalb beim Doppler bedanken. Man sagte nun auch hier das nämliche von derselben.<sup>76</sup>

Later, a rendition planned by the Kärntner-Theater orchestra was also postponed, yet reasons for its adjournment are unknown. According to Otto Biba, Schubert's *Claudine* was originally intended for performance in a *Haustheater* in Vienna<sup>77</sup> and the first staging of Act One, organized by the Schubertbund of Vienna in the Gemeindehaus Wieden on 26 April 1913, shared something of this nature. As a private production with piano reduction arranged by Adolph Kirchl, it was neither publicized nor reviewed in the Viennese press. A second performance with orchestral accompaniment was organized by the Schubert society in Vienna and broadcast by Radio Beromünster in 1949. The first public performance of Act One was given at the 'Europa-Concert' in the Vienna Musikverein-Saal on 11 March 1974,<sup>78</sup> while staged performances were given at the Kammeroper at the Fleischmarkt in Vienna on 7 June 1978<sup>79</sup> and by the BBC

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<sup>75</sup> The *Wiener Allgemeinen Theaterzeitung* on 17 October 1818 records the change of programme where Schubert's Overture was replaced by the overture to Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (*Dok.*, p.70).

<sup>76</sup> Ferdinand Schubert to his brother Franz, mid-October 1818, *Dok.*, pp.72-73. 'Your overture from *Claudine*, which should have been performed in a Jaell concert in Baden, is, as Doppler tells me, coming in for criticism. It is harmonically so difficult that it would be impossible for the oboes and bassoons [to play it]. Others say (as does Radecki) that it is only too difficult for the Baden orchestra. Here too they said the same about it.' The suggested difficulty of the oboe and bassoon parts does not hold up when one examines the score – nor would it have been difficult to render on the oboe of Schubert's day even before the Böhme system was employed.

<sup>77</sup> O.Biba, 'Schubert's Position in Viennese Life', *NCM*, 3/2 (1979), 106-13.

<sup>78</sup> The work was performed by the ORF Chorus and Orchestra, directed by Hans Swarowsky, and the soloists were Edith Mathis, Annelies Hückl, Horst Laubenthal, Werner Krenn, Ernst Gutstein and Helmut Berger-Tuna. (McKay, *Schubert's Music for the Theatre* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1991), p.330.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.* This performance was also given by members of the ORF Chorus and Orchestra, and directed by Christo Stanischeff. The soloists were Raymond Anderhuber, Amanda Benda,

Symphony Orchestra under David Atherton at the Festival Hall on 3 December 1978.<sup>80</sup> A concert performance took place at the Hohenems Schubertiade in the Bregenzer Festspielhaus on 20 June 1982 with the ORF Choir and Orchestra directed by Lothar Zagrosek.<sup>81</sup> In recent years a performance was staged in the Università Degli Studi di Roma on 9 December 2000 in the Villa Mondragone: Salone degli Svizzeri. The performance was accompanied by the Orchestra Sinfonica Dell'associazione musicale dei Castelli Romani conducted by Carlo Stoppoloni. Schubert's Music was used for Act One with Reichardt's Music for the remaining two acts.<sup>82</sup> The most recent staged performance was presented in the Royal Irish Academy of Music on Westland Row as part of this conference. The performance was conducted by Colman Pearce and produced by the Irish playwright and director, Andrew Hinds.<sup>83</sup>

The lack of performances of Schubert's incomplete setting of *Claudine von Villa Bella* has clearly contributed to misunderstandings of Schubert's and Goethe's achievements in this field. To listen to an opera for the music alone is like listening to a Lied without any understanding of what is being said. In both cases, music is only part of the communication. There have been a number of broadcasts of the work such as the series broadcast of Schubert's operas on Swiss radio in Studio Bern in 1946 with the Berner Studiooper under the direction of Christoph Lertz, the BBC recording of *Claudine von Villa Bella* in 1978<sup>84</sup> and the transmissions of the Orfeo recording on Dutch National Radio for the Goethe year in 1999. While such broadcasts are extremely valuable in raising public awareness of the work, it is impossible to get a full picture of the work because half of the communication is lost. With radio broadcasts or concert performances of *Claudine*, the audience have had to project themselves into an imagined

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Elizabeth Halton, Hans Günther Müller, Josef Oberauer, Karl Dumphart, Anni Hamberger and Hans Huber. For both performances, private recordings were made. *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Forbes, 'Schubert's *Claudine*', *Opera* 29 (1978), pp.1168-71.

<sup>81</sup> The soloists were Robert Holl (Alonzo), Edith Mathis (Claudine) Gabriele Sima (Lucinde and Kind), Heiner Hopfner (Pedro and Rugantino), Robert Holl (Basco). The recording is available on Orfeo International Music GmbH (Munich, 1984).

<sup>82</sup> See Lia Secci, 'Una Traduzione Ottocentesca del Teatro di Goethe', in *Metamorfosi della Parola tra Letteratura e Filosofia* ed. Lia Secci (Roma: Artemide, 2001), pp.249-54. Italian/German translation reprinted from Giuseppe Rota, *Teatro Scelto di Volfrango Goethe*, Milano, Gnocchi, 1860, pp.255-68.

<sup>83</sup> '*Claudine von Villa Bella*': *Goethe's Singspiel set by Franz Schubert*, German with English trans. by Dan Farrelly and piano reduction by Lorraine Byrne (Dublin: ICTP, 2002).

<sup>84</sup> The studio recording was made by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Singers, conducted by David Avington and sung in English translation by Elizabeth Forbes. Soloists were: Margaret Marschall (Claudine), Felicity Lott (Lucinde), Malcolm King (Alonzo), Robert Tier (Pedro), John Tomlinson (Rugantino); Brian Burrows (Basco). The historical context and narration linking the songs was jointly shared by Elizabeth McKay and David Owen Norris.

performance, for the expressiveness of the *Singspiel* partly results from the theatre context. It is a mistake to think of Schubert's opera like *Lieder*, as a marriage between words and music. It is the marriage of music with drama and, as with Goethe's works for music theatre, Schubert's setting was written to be performed.

The fact that the acts of Schubert's setting of *Claudine von Villa Bella* are missing is clearly responsible for the lack of ambition to see the work staged. One further difficulty is discovered in Johann Nepomuk Fuchs's edition of the operatic volumes of the *Gesamtausgabe*, for he preserved Schubert's original c-clefs in the soprano, alto and tenor vocal parts of the opera scores. Those clefs are, as they were at the time of Fuchs's edition, obsolete in vocal notation. Thus, for a long time the opera scores were absurdly difficult to read, even for those experienced in such matters.<sup>85</sup>

While these arguments explain the reception of the work since 1848, it is still necessary to explain the lack of performances in Schubert's day. Although North German libretti enjoyed favour in Vienna in the 1780s, by 1815 the city of Vienna was an unappreciative place to perform German opera,<sup>86</sup> and apart from occasional performances, such as Josef Weigl's *Die Schweizerfamilie* which Schubert reputedly heard on 8 July 1811,<sup>87</sup> Italians were in control of operatic taste. Unlike the other composers who set Goethe's *Singspiel*, Schubert did not have a connection with any particular stage – which often shaped a writer's work<sup>88</sup> – and Vienna offered little opportunity for composers to serve any kind of theatrical apprenticeship. So why did Schubert set Goethe's *Singspiel* against this background? The question is more poignant when one realizes that Schubert was the composer who came closest to realizing Goethe's ambitions as a librettist of German national opera. With this one obvious difference between both artists emerges. For Goethe, national musical theatre placed a public stage in the service of elevating operatic standards and tastes without regard to profit. Schubert did not have this luxury. As a freelance composer, he wished to earn money through this venture. While Schubert's choice of Goethe's libretto reveals his obvious enthusiasm for the poet in 1815, it may also indicate his ambitions in this form. Undoubtedly, Schubert was attracted by the literary libretto Goethe wrote for *Claudine* – a characteristic that once inspired Viennese devotion to North German librettists. Yet

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<sup>85</sup> Maurice Brown discusses this issue in relation to *Fierabras* and *Alfonso und Estrella* in 'Schubert's two main operas: a consideration of the possibility of actual stage production, *MR* (1969), p.105.

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed study of the historical background, see Elizabeth McKay, *Schubert's Music for the Theatre* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1991).

<sup>87</sup> Otto Erich Deutsch, *The Schubert Reader, A Life of Franz Schubert in Letters and Documents*, trans. by Erich Bloom (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1947), p.81.

<sup>88</sup> Schubert's association with the Kärntnerthor-Theater began in 1818 through his friendship with Michael Vogl, see 'Schubert's Early Association with the Kärntnerthor-Theater', *MT*, (1959), pp.261-62.

Schubert was also aware of the esteem in which Goethe was held by the Viennese public, and he may have hoped to win favour with contemporary audiences through his setting of *Claudine*. August Wilhelm Schlegel's Viennese lectures, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1809-11), his journal, the *Österreichischer Beobachter*, and the timely flood of publications of Goethe's works in Vienna after Metternich's censorship laws contributed enormously to the favourable reception of the poet. Considering the favourable reception of Goethe in Vienna, Schubert's choice of libretto was very apt. Italian opera was in vogue in Schubert's Vienna, and Goethe's direct knowledge of opera buffa left its stamp on *Claudine*. That it was not well-received was no fault of Schubert's – or Goethe's – but of larger, seemingly inevitable trends. Like Goethe, Schubert had artistic ambitions in this realm: both experienced the conflict between the desirable and the attainable, between imagination and reality.

Schubert's setting of *Claudine von Villa Bella* shows him capable of unleashing considerable dramatic power in his handling of Goethe's text. While Schubert's setting is clearly not one of Schubert's masterworks, in performance the composer's voice comes through with great clarity. It is an attractive setting for the amateur stage, though with Acts Two and Three missing the main attraction of the work is confined to scholarly interest. Schubert's orchestration of *Claudine* has been frequently criticized,<sup>89</sup> yet within the confines of theatrical music it is really well orchestrated. In the Adagio introduction, for example, the lyrical phrase, played first by unison cellos and violas, is developed with some fine contrapuntal and imitative invention and masterly orchestration:

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<sup>89</sup> Einstein was one of the first to criticize this, *Schubert. A Musical Portrait*, p.90.





In performance, the Allegro vivace creates a real feeling of theatre and forms a very apt introduction to the piece:

**Example 12.4 Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Overture, Allegro vivace, bars 20-28**

The musical score is for Franz Schubert's Overture to *Claudine von Villa Bella*, bars 20-28. The tempo is *Allegro vivace*. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score is arranged for a full orchestra and includes parts for Flutes I and II, Oboe, Clarinet in A, Bassoon, Horn in F, Trombone in E, Timpani, Violins I and II, Viola, and Violoncello/Double Bass. The score shows a dynamic progression from piano (*p*) to fortissimo (*sfz*) and then to mezzo-forte (*mf*). The woodwinds and strings all feature a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the woodwinds play a melodic line with accents. The brass instruments play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The timpani part is mostly rests.

Schubert's contrasting textures are very nicely handled:

**Example 12.5** Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Overture, *Allegro vivace*, bars 50-67

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The woodwind section includes Flute I and II, Oboe, Clarinet in A, and Bassoon. The brass section includes Horn in F, Trombone in E, and Timpani. The string section includes Violin I and II, Viola, and Violoncello/Double Bass. The score is in the key of A major (three sharps) and 2/4 time. The dynamic markings range from piano (*p*) to fortissimo (*fz*). The woodwinds and strings play sustained notes, while the brass and timpani provide rhythmic support. The flute parts feature melodic lines with slurs and accents.

This musical score is for the piece "Across the Divide" by Goethe and Schubert, page 186. It features a full orchestral arrangement with the following parts:

- Fl. I:** Flute I, starting with a forte (*fz*) dynamic and moving to piano (*pp*) later in the piece.
- Fl. II:** Flute II, playing a sustained note.
- Ob.:** Oboe, playing a sustained note.
- Clar. in A:** Clarinet in A, playing a melodic line with piano (*pp*) dynamics.
- Fag.:** Bassoon, playing a sustained note.
- Cor.:** Trumpet, playing a rhythmic pattern with forte (*fz*) dynamics.
- Trom.:** Trombone, playing a rhythmic pattern with forte (*fz*) dynamics.
- Timp.:** Timpani, playing a rhythmic pattern with forte (*fz*) dynamics.
- Vln. I:** Violin I, playing a melodic line with dynamics ranging from forte (*fz*) to piano (*p*) and pianissimo (*pp*), including staccato markings.
- Vln. II:** Violin II, playing a rhythmic pattern with dynamics ranging from forte (*fz*) to piano (*p*) and pianissimo (*pp*), including staccato markings.
- Vla.:** Viola, playing a rhythmic pattern with dynamics ranging from forte (*fz*) to piano (*p*) and pianissimo (*pp*), including staccato markings.
- Vc./B.:** Violoncello/Double Bass, playing a rhythmic pattern with dynamics ranging from forte (*fz*) to piano (*p*) and pianissimo (*pp*), including staccato markings.

There are many examples of effective doubling with the woodwind shadowing the outline of the strings:

**Example 12.6** Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Overture, *Allegro vivace*, bars 107-113

Musical score for Example 12.6, showing woodwind and string parts. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The woodwind parts (Ob. and Fg.) play chords, starting with a *p* dynamic. The string parts (VI. I, VI. II, Vla., and Vc./Cb.) play a rhythmic pattern, starting with a *p* dynamic and including staccato markings. The dynamics range from *p* to *mf*.

And Schubert's use of bass motifs creates a strong sense of drama throughout the score:

**Example 12.7** Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Overture, *Allegro vivace*, bars 42-45

Musical score for Example 12.7, showing Fl. I and Vc./Cb. parts. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The Fl. I part plays a melodic line with dynamics *ff*, *fz*, *fz*, and *fz*. The Vc./Cb. part plays a bass line with dynamics *ff*, *fz*, *fz*, and *fz*.

**Example 12.8** Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Overture, *Allegro vivace*, bars 158-161



While Schubert's orchestration is not novel, *Claudine* is very expertly and professionally scored. On the title page Schubert acknowledges himself as a student of Salieri, who was a pupil of Gluck, and a gifted orchestrator, and his scoring suggests the guidance of the older composer. Schubert's skilful scoring is evident throughout the score. In the opening chorus, the bright mood of the Goethe's terzetto, with its delicate shades of vocal contrast created through the alternating parts of father, cousin and lover, and continuous staccato accompaniment, portray the bustle of preparations for Claudine's arrival. Whereas Schubert's continuous quaver figuration has been criticized as unimaginative orchestration, the running quaver figurations in the opening terzetto:

**Example 12.9** Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Introduction (No.1) *Allegro molto*, bars 3-4



and in the finale:

**Example 12.10** Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), finale (No.8) *Allegro ma non troppo*, bars 1-2



are used as a motor rhythm to give impetus to the piece.

The charming ensemble, ‘Fröhlicher, seliger herrlicher Tag’, with its graceful solo for the child is a typical Singspiel ensemble setting with alternating choral and solo episodes.<sup>90</sup> Conversely *Claudine*’s aria (no.4), ‘Alle Freuden, alle Gaben, die mir heut’ gehuldigt haben’, is more suggestive of an Italian *da capo* aria with its high coloratura passages. The contrast in musical styles subtly reflects the dual influences on Goethe’s text, and the contrast in orchestration between the solo and choral settings reveals the composer’s theatrical sense. The orchestration in Schubert’s arias and ariettas is much more subtle than in his ensembles. A good example of this is found in the introduction to *Claudine*’s aria ‘Alle Freuden, alle Gaben’, where Schubert carefully balances the orchestral forces: the oboes join the answer in the horns and are balanced with quaver strings:

**Example 12.11 Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Aria (No.4)  
Andantino, bars 1-4**

The musical score for Example 12.11 is in 3/4 time and marked 'Andantino' and 'mf'. It features six staves: Oboe (Ob.), Bassoon (Fg.), Cor (C), Violin I (VI. I), Violin II (VI. II), and Violoncello/Double Bass (Vc./Cb.). The Oboe and Bassoon parts have long notes with slurs. The Cor (C) part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Violin I part has a melodic line with slurs. The Violin II part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Violoncello/Double Bass part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

<sup>90</sup> In her analysis of the work, McKay links the opening phrases of this piece to the chorus in *Fierabras* which opens Act Three, p.122.

In contrast to this, the orchestration accompanying Schubert's ensembles is written with much broader strokes

**Example 12.12 Franz Schubert, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D 239), Ensemble (No.2) Allegretto, bars 13-16**

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The woodwind section includes Flutes I and II, Oboes I and II, Clarinets I and II (C), and Bassoons I and II. The brass section includes Horns (G). The string section includes Violins I and II, Viola, and Violoncello/Double Bass. The vocal section includes Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The score is in 8/8 time and features a dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) throughout. The vocal parts have the lyrics: "Fröhlich-er, seli-ger, herrlich-er Tag!".





Carlos call for volunteers to follow them to their respective tasks. Schubert captures this division by arranging the male chorus in two groups (both TB). The diversity of voices is realized through the contrapuntal writing while their allegiance to each leader is affirmed in the homophonic sections of their song.

While the traditional perception places Goethe and Schubert in opposition to one another, the distance between the librettist and composer was temporal rather than artistic. Like Goethe, Schubert was eclectic in that he absorbed from diverse operatic styles all that was suited to his own. In his dedication of the score, Schubert directly acknowledges himself as a student of Salieri, who reputedly encouraged his early operatic works composed in Italian style. In Schubert's *Claudine von Villa Bella* this Italian influence can be felt in the *Vivace* section of the overture and the influence of Mozart's *Giovanni liete* from *Figaro* on Schubert's ensemble (no.2) has often been recognized. Schubert's setting, a realization of the musical values in the libretto, was exactly what Goethe sought. Goethe did not write arias which demanded Italianate vocal writing; Schubert mirrored this perfectly and he does not try to Italianize *Claudine*. All of Goethe's arias/ariettas are affective rather than virtuosic and Schubert has captured the tone perfectly. In contrast to Italian style, Schubert does not give the soloists in his operas showy theatrical brava material to sing; he demands expressive nuances rather than displays of technical virtuosity. As the portrayal of emotions in a Schubert song mirror the controlled expression of feeling in Goethe's verse, Schubert's setting of Act One exquisitely realizes the character of Goethe's recitative version of *Claudine*. It would be impossible to marry Schubert's music to Goethe's first setting because of the amount of arias and ensembles which were omitted and replaced. Even if it were possible to marry text and music, the two would not relate for it is the spirit of the Singspiel rather than the *Schauspiel* which is realized in Schubert's *Claudine*. It is a love story, a light-hearted piece which a sophisticated audience can enjoy. Would Schubert have set Goethe's *Schauspiel* in a style commensurate with its serious tone? Would he have written a work with more substance? From the scenes Schubert composed from Goethe's *Faust*, and from his setting of 'Erlkönig' it is clear that he was capable of such dramatic depths, yet it is impossible to answer these questions when all that remains is Act One of Schubert's setting. Dramatically not enough has been realized on stage and it is impossible to say how Schubert's setting would have developed in subsequent acts.