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Franz Schubert's *Alfonso and Estrella*: Concerning the Origins of the Plotline*

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Abstract. *Alfonso und Estrella*, the only opera composed by Franz Schubert without spoken dialogue, was created in collaboration with one of the composer's closest friends, Franz von Schober. Despite the fact that a significant amount is known about the circumstances of the libretto's origin, we can only surmise regarding the sources on which its creator relied. In the literature about Schubert, a number of assumptions are made about these sources — two books on the history of Spain published in Germany in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as well as a number of works by German romantic writers. This article discusses other books which in all possibility served as source materials: *History of Spain* by Alexander Adam (*Adams Geschichte von Spanien seit der Entdeckung bis zur Thron-Entsagung Karls IV*), published in Vienna in 1809, as well as a number of librettos that may have been known to Schober — first of all, *Der Taucher* by Samuel Bürde, written for Johann Friedrich Reichardt and published in 1811 in Berlin. Based on the analysis of the plot and the poetic text of *Alfonso und Estrella*, it is shown that Schober was most likely familiar with these sources and actively used them when creating his own libretto.

Keywords: Franz Schubert, Franz von Schober, *Alfonso und Estrella*, libretto

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Музыкальный театр

Научная статья

Опера Франца Шуберта «Альфонсо и Эстрелла»: об истоках сюжета

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Аннотация. «Альфонсо и Эстрелла», единственная опера Франца Шуберта, не имеющая разговорных диалогов, была создана в сотрудничестве с одним из ближайших друзей композитора, Францем фон Шобером. Несмотря на то, что об обстоятельствах возникновения либретто известно довольно много, об источниках, на которые опирался его автор, можно только догадываться. В литературе о Шуберте высказан ряд предположений, касающихся этих источников, — двух книг по истории Испании, изданных в Германии в конце XVIII — начале XIX века, а также некоторых сочинений немецких писателей-романтиков. В настоящей статье рассмотрены другие возможные варианты: «История Испании» А. Адама (*Adams Geschichte von Spanien seit der Entdeckung bis zur Thron-Entsagung Karls IV*), увидевшая свет в Вене в 1809 году, а также ряд либретто, которые могли быть известны Шоберу, — прежде всего «Пловец» Самуэля Бюрде, написанный для Иоганна Фридриха Рейхардта и изданный в 1811 году в Берлине. На основе анализа сюжета и поэтического текста «Альфонсо и Эстреллы» показано, что Шобер скорее всего был знаком с названными источниками и активно пользовался ими при создании собственного либретто.

Ключевые слова: Франц Шуберт, Франц фон Шобер, «Альфонсо и Эстрелла», либретто

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In the reception of Schubert's compositions for the theater, *Alfonso und Estrella* (D. 732) holds one of the most venerable positions, which is hardly surprising: this was the first of two large (and, moreover, unfinished) romantic operas¹ created by the

composer during the period of his artistic maturity, and the only one without any spoken dialogues. The earliest article about it was written as far back as the middle of the 19th century by none other than Franz Liszt,² who organized a production of this opera in

¹ Among the full-scale romantic operas sometimes the youthful work *Des Teufels Lustschloss*, composed “under the supervision of Salieri,” is also included (McKay E. N. *Schubert and Classical Opera: The promise of Adrast. Der vergessene Schubert. Franz Schubert auf der Bühne: Katalog zur Ausstellung, Österreichisches Theater Museum*. Wien: Böhlau, 1997, S. 62).

² Liszt F. Schuberts *Alfonso und Estrella*. *NZfM*. 1854. Bd. 41. Nr. 10. S. 101–105.

1854 in Weimar. Subsequently, *Alfonso und Estrella* frequently became the option of focused attention on the part of researchers — not only in works especially devoted to it,³ but also in connection with various issues related to Schubert's operatic output, beginning with the manifestation of the ideas of his elder contemporary and benefactor Ignaz von Mosel⁴ [1, pp. 35–36] and ending with the analysis of various separate topoi in the composer's musical works. [2, p. 154] It seems that the opera has been researched thoroughly and it has become impossible to add anything to the available information and interpretations. However, in recent years there has been an increase in the corpus of digitized books published in the 18th and 19th centuries, including the diverse types of libretti, whereas the function of automatic identification of texts has made them available for full-text search. [3, p. 166] As Peter Rastl fairly observes, this circumstance has disclosed broad possibilities for the search and research of literary sources, [Ibid.] including those having to do with *Alfonso und Estrella*.

As it is well known, Schubert created this work in the very early 1820s in collaboration with his close friend Franz von Schober (1796–1882), (Il. 1) an amateur poet, who decided to try out his talents in the field of libretto writing.



Il. 1. Franz von Schober (1796–1882).
Drawing in Pencil by Leopold Kuperwieser (July 12, 1821)⁵

In all possibility, it was particularly this collaboration which formed the main reason for the sad stage destiny of the opera during the composer's lifetime. Schubert made several attempts to arrange for his work to be performed on stage, but all his endeavors turned out to be futile, not least of all, for the reason of the weak quality of the libretto.

Indeed, Schober was not a professional librettist. His broad education and vast knowledge of literature could in no way

³ Waidelich T. G. *Franz Schubert: Alfonso und Estrella: eine frühe durchkomponierte Deutsche Oper: Geschichte und Analyse*. Tutzing: Schneider, 1991; Denny Th. A. *Archaic and Contemporary Aspects of Schubert's Alfonso und Estrella. Issues of Influence, Originality, and Maturation. Eighteenth-century Music in Theory and Practice: Essays in Honor of Alfred Mann*. Pendragon Press, 1994, pp. 241–262, etc.

⁴ See: Cunningham G. R. *Franz Schubert als Theaterkomponist: Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der Philosophischen Fakultäten der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität zu Freiburg im Breisgau*. Freiburg i. Br., 1974. Ignaz von Mosel (1772–1844) — the vice-director of the Court Theater, the author of the book *The Experience of an Aesthetics of Dramatic Musical Composition* (Mosel I. F. v. *Versuch einer Aesthetik des dramatischen Tonsatzes*. Wien: Anton Strauss, 1813).

⁵ *Franz Schubert. Die Dokumente seines Lebens und Schaffens*, hg. v. O. E. Deutsch. München; Leipzig: G. Müller, 1913. Bd. 3: Franz Schubert. Sein Leben in Bildern. S. 267.

replace his lack of theatrical experience. Moreover, when in the autumn of 1821 the two young people started working on creating the opera, it was an act of pure enthusiasm — most likely, they did not have any preliminary commission for the work. At the same time, the very appearance of *Alfonso und Estrella* could hardly be deemed to be accidental. This was one of the first German operas without any spoken dialogues, which was composed one year before Carl Maria von Weber's *Euryanthe* and Ludwig Spohr's *Jessonda*.⁶ The creation of all three of these compositions was stipulated by the processes that were taking place in the overall cultural milieu of Austria and Germany at that time. The awakening of national self-consciousness and the popularity of Italian opera became a stimulus towards the search for new forms of the genre in the German language, which even in the early 1820s could not finally separate itself from spoken dialogues. In this sense, Schubert's opera found itself at the cutting edge of the national art of that time period. Nonetheless, researchers frequently come up with the question: can *Alfonso und Estrella* be classified as romantic musical theater? The search for the answer to it is what induces us to turn to the plotline and its sources. Incidentally, the responsibility for their choice, apparently, lies virtually entirely on Schober, who although was only a year

older than Schubert, exerted an immense amount of influence on the composer.

Overall, the storyline groundwork of this opera is quite simple (although researchers utter different opinions relating to this)⁷:

The action takes place in the kingdom of Leon⁸ and its vicinities around the year 790 AD (i.e., in medieval Spain, at the very beginning of the Reconquista). King Froila has been deposed many years ago by the usurper Mauregato. Together with his son Alfonso, who does not suspect who his father really is, he conceals himself in a peaceful valley neighboring the Kingdom of Leon. The dwellers of the valley revere him as a wise preceptor and friend. Mauregato's daughter Estrella, having lost herself in the forest, meets Alfonso, and the two young people fall in love with each other. The military commander Adolfo, having been rejected by Estrella, starts a rebellion against her father, in order to gain the throne and the princess' hand, but Alfonso comes to the aid of his beloved. Having overcome Adolfo in battle, he returns power to Mauregato, and the latter, having repented, once again acknowledges Froila as the king. In his turn, Froila passes on the crown to his son, who is happily united with Estrella.

There are three historical personalities among the protagonists — they are: Kings Fruela (in Schober's transcription — Froila⁹), Mauregato, and Alfonso II.

⁶ Both operas were composed in 1823.

⁷ See: Dürr W. Schuberts romantisch-heroische Oper *Alfonso und Estrella* im Kontext französischer und italienischer Tradition. *Der vergessene Schubert. Franz Schubert auf der Bühne: Katalog zur Ausstellung, Österreichisches Theater Museum*. Wien: Böhlau, 1997. S. 85; Denny Th. A. Archaic and Contemporary Aspects of Schubert's *Alfonso und Estrella*... P. 233.

⁸ One of the small kingdoms in the north of the Pyrenean peninsula in the Middle Ages.

⁹ In Kreißle's monograph (Kreißle von Hellborn H. *Franz Schubert*. Wien: Carl Gerolds Sohn, 1865. S. 232) and the first edition of Schubert's complete works the character's name was spelled as *Troila*. This spelling appeared erroneously as the result of the ambiguity in the contour of the initial letter of the title in Schubert's score. See: Waidelich T. G. *Franz Schubert: Alfonso und Estrella*... S. 124.

It is true, nonetheless, that the kingdom they ruled was not Leon, but Asturia (Leon appeared only a century later as an independent state — in the early 10th century AD). As for the main collision in the plotline, the usurpation of power, it really took place, but Fruela (757–768) was not overthrown by Mauregato (who in reality was his stepbrother, related to his father), but was killed as the result of a rebellion in his surroundings. Incidentally, his character, according to medieval sources, was hardly anything as salutary as was depicted by Schober. Fruela achieved notoriety for his cruelty — not only for his mass executions of adherents to alternate religions, but also for having killed his own brother with his own hand, for which reason in one such source, *The Chronicles of Alfonso III*, his death was labeled as a just form of retribution.¹⁰ The deposed king was succeeded by Aurelio (his cousin), while Fruela's juvenile son Alfonso was barred from inheriting the throne. The successor to Aurelio on Asturia's throne became Silo, the husband to Fruela's sister, who after the death of her husband attempted to bring her young nephew to the throne. And it was here already that Mauregato (783–788) interfered: he started yet another rebellion and captured the crown of Asturia. Alfonso fled and was called back only Mauregato's

successor, King Bermudo I, who abdicated from the throne in his favor. The rule of Alfonso II was lengthy in years (791–842), and he himself received the appellation “the Chaste” (*Spanish*: el Casto), since he never entered into marriage and completely renounced all relationships with women.¹¹

It is interesting to note that Alfonso was a younger contemporary of Charlemagne, one of the protagonists of Schubert's other opera *Fierabras*. It is known that they maintained diplomatic relations — Alfonso turned to Charlemagne for help during his war with the Arabs. Researchers have also highlighted the cultural exchange between the two domains and the similar aspirations of their rulers to revive the “political and territorial unity of the Roman Empire and the Visigothic Kingdom respectively.” [4, p. 329]

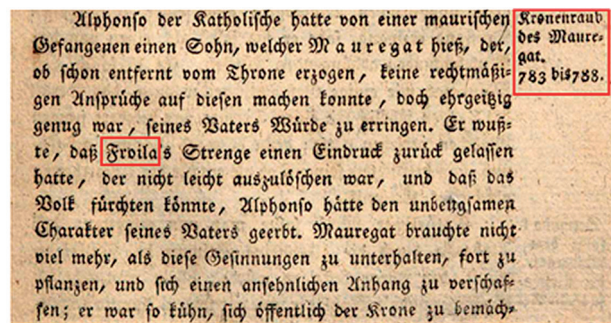
It remains unclear, which sources were used by Schober, when he was creating his libretto. Till Gerrit Waidelich expresses the supposition that the librettist may have been familiar with the works on Spanish history published in German at that time — first of all, the anonymous *History of Spain from the Foundation of the Phoenician Colony Cadix to the Death of Ferdinand the Wise*,¹² as well as Ignaz Aurelius Feßler's *Versuch einer Geschichte der Spanische Nation: einer*

¹⁰ Khronika Al'fonso III (iz tsikla asturiiskikh khronik kontsa IX v.) [The Chronicles of Alfonso III (From the Asturian Chronicles Cycle of the Late 9th Century)]. *Pamyatniki srednevekovoi latinskoi literatury. / X–XI vek [Monuments of Medieval Latin Literature. 10th and 11th Centuries]*. Ed. by M. S. Kasyan. Moscow: Nauka, 2011. P. 259.

¹¹ Waidelich T. G. Franz Schubert: *Alfonso und Estrella*... S. 96–97. See also: The Chronicles of Alfonso III..., pp. 258–262.

¹² Waidelich T. G. Franz Schubert: *Alfonso und Estrella*... S. 97. The authorship of the three sources named by Weidel has been established at the present time. See: Gifford J., Pöschmann G. F. v. [Übers.] *Geschichte von Spanien: von der Niederlassung der Phönizischen Pflanzstadt zu Kadix bis auf den Tod Ferdinand des Weisen*. Leipzig: im Schwickertschen Verlag, 1794–1796. Bd. 1. 1794. S. 130–140 (Dürr W. Vorwort. NSA. Bd. II/6a–c: „Alfonso und Estrella“, S. XVI).

Völkerspiegel, published in 1810.¹³ Both works make use of the same spelling of the Gothic name Fruela — Froila — which has also found its reflection in the libretto.¹⁴ In our opinion, both German works may very well be supplemented by Alexander Adam's *History of Spain*, which saw the light of day in Vienna in 1809. (Il. 2) The name of Froila in it has the same spelling,¹⁵ and if viewed as source material available to Schober, it seems to be preferable because of the place and time of its publication. Moreover, this is the only one among the three named works in which Mauregato's rule is directly labeled as usurpation (*Kronenraub*), moreover, the

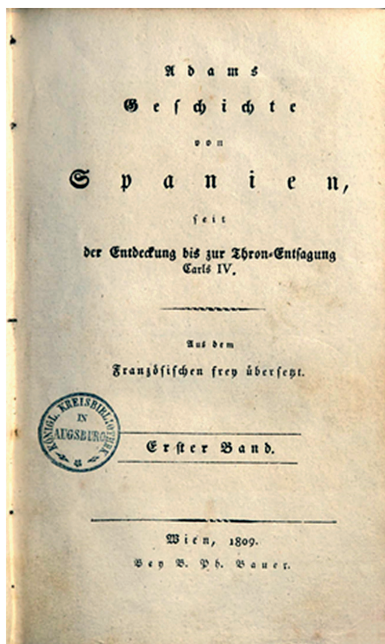


Il. 3. *Adams Geschichte von Spanien*. Subtitle on the Margins: *Kronenraub des Mauregat. 783 bis 788 (Mauregato's Usurpation. 783–788)*¹⁷

word itself is brought out into the margin as a subtitle. (Il. 3)¹⁸

It must be said that Schober, for obvious reasons, was interested not in the least in the real events, but only in the collisions connected with illegal seizure of power. The complex succession of four usurper kings was simplified by him solely to the story of Mauregato, to which he added a love intrigue and brought in two more characters, Estrella and Adolfo, which, according to the researchers' opinion, did not have any prototypes in Spanish history.

However, in the case of *Alfonso und Estrella*, also important are the understanding itself and the particularities of the development of the historical subject matter. The Romantic conception of history, which developed vehemently particularly in the time period between the 1810s and the 1830s, presumed, first of all, the “artistic



Il. 2. The Title Page to Adams' *History of Spain*¹⁶

¹³ Feßler I. A. *Versuch einer Geschichte von Spanien*. Berlin: Maurer, 1810. See also: Feßler I. A. *Versuch einer Geschichte von Spanien*. Karlsruhe, 1814. Bd. 2. S. 8–17.

¹⁴ Waidelich T. G. Franz Schubert: *Alfonso und Estrella*... S. 96.

¹⁵ [Adam A.] *Adams Geschichte von Spanien, seit der Entdeckung bis zur Thron-Entsagung Carls IV. Aus dem Französischen frey übersetzt*. Wien: Bauer, 1809. Bd. 1. S. 142.

¹⁶ Op. cit.

¹⁷ Ibid. S. 145.

¹⁸ Ibid.

recreation of “the image of the epoch”” and the “inimitably colorful historical milieu,”¹⁹ which are completely lacking in Schober’s libretto. The historical décor remains here purely conditional: the action here may be transferred to another epoch without much detriment. In this sense, the perspective of the historical element demonstrated in *Alfonso und Estrella* clearly still belongs to the 18th century, when in the storylines derived from various annals only political events and love stories (whether real or fictional) were taken into consideration.

Particularly these two components of the libretto — the motive of usurpation, tracing back to a real historical situation, together with the fictional love collision — make it possible for us to speak about its resemblance, at least, outwardly, with Metastasio’s matrimonial-dynastic drama.²⁰ If we are to turn to concrete operatic storylines from the 17th and the 18th centuries, it is possible to find at least several libretti where these motives are connected almost the same way they are in *Alfonso und Estrella*, or in a comparable way. In *Il trionfo di Camilla, regina de’ Volsci* by Silvio Stampiglio,²¹ as well as *Demetrio* and *La clemenza di Tito* by Pietro Metastasio²² the motive of usurpation of power appears in unity with love intrigue based on the mutual feelings experienced

by representatives of the conflicting sides, moreover, the adversarial position and enmity are resolved by their marriage.

The most apparent associations with the storyline of *Alfonso und Estrella* appear in the librettos of *Il trionfo di Camilla* and *Demetrio* — up to the coincidence of separate details. Thus, the first of these operas contains a scene in which Camilla, the lawful heiress of the throne, saves Prenesto, the offspring of Latinus, who usurped the throne — similarly to the way Alfonso saves the lost Estrella. At the same time, in *Demetrio*, just as in Schubert’s opera, the main protagonist is the heir of the deposed ruler, whereas the heroine is the daughter of the usurper. Moreover, similar to Alfonso, Demetrio is not aware until the very last moment of his high descent.

It must be said that both plot devices in question have been popular at all times and may be found in the most diverse libretti.²³ However, in operas of the Romantic era the theme of love between the representatives of warring sides was especially popular, albeit, the subject of enmity, as a rule, was transferred into a more global platitude of the clash between peoples or religious faiths.

This fact causes many Schubert scholars to seek with special assiduity the preimages of the main protagonists of *Alfonso und*

¹⁹ Cherkashina M. R. *Istoricheskaya opera epokhi romantizma: (Opyt issledovaniya)* [Historical Opera of the Romantic Period: (The Experience of Research)]. Kiev: Muzichna Ukraïna, 1986, pp. 39–40; Waidelich T. G. Franz Schubert: *Alfonso und Estrella*... S. 96.

²⁰ About the main features of this kind of drama see: Lutsker P. V., Susidko I. P. *Ital'yanskaya opera XVIII veka. Ch. II* [Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera. Part 2]. Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2004. P. 248.

²¹ Lutsker P. V., Susidko I. P. *Ital'yanskaya opera XVIII veka. Ch. I* [Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera. Part 1]. Moscow: State Institute of Art Studies, 1998, pp. 417–419.

²² Ibid. Part 2, pp. 716–717, 731–732.

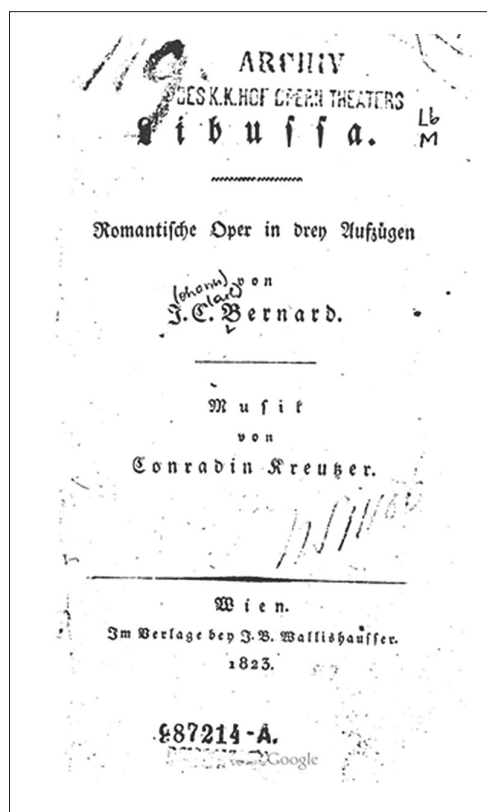
²³ Sometimes, even in a sort of “debased” version — just as in Boieldieu’s *La dame blanche*, wherein the heir to the castle, having been lost in his childhood, not suspecting of his parentage, confronts with the commander who seized him, while the female ward of this commander helps him in secret to return his father’s heritage.

Estrella, or at least parallels with this type of love collision in romantic literature. Some indicate at *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* by Novalis as a possible literary source, — to be precise, the third chapter of the novel, which narrates about a princess who, similar to Estrella, was the daughter and sole heiress of the king, who met her beloved in a forest.²⁴ Others compare the opera's libretto to Heinrich von Kleist's tragedy *Die Familie Schroffenstein*, indicating to the fact that the dramatist's works were studied in Schubert's circle in 1825–1828 upon the initiative of Schober, who may have familiarized with them earlier.²⁵

Be that as it may, the incorporation of such a collision in *Alfonso und Estrella*, despite all the allusions with the 18th century librettos, speaks in favor of its affinity particularly with the romantic musical theater. Moreover, this similarity is confirmed by numerous parallels with the libretti of two operas which, like *Alfonso und Estrella*, appeared during the first decades of the 19th century.

It is referred to the compositions of Conradin Kreutzer, one of which was written practically at the same time as Schubert's opera (namely, *Libussa*, composed in 1822), while the second, created initially for Stuttgart (1813), was subsequently revised

for the Vienna stage (*Der Taucher*, composed in 1824). Both operas were staged at the Kärntnerthortheater with varying degrees of success²⁶ and both bear the designation of *romantic opera* [*romantische Oper*]. (II. 4, 5)



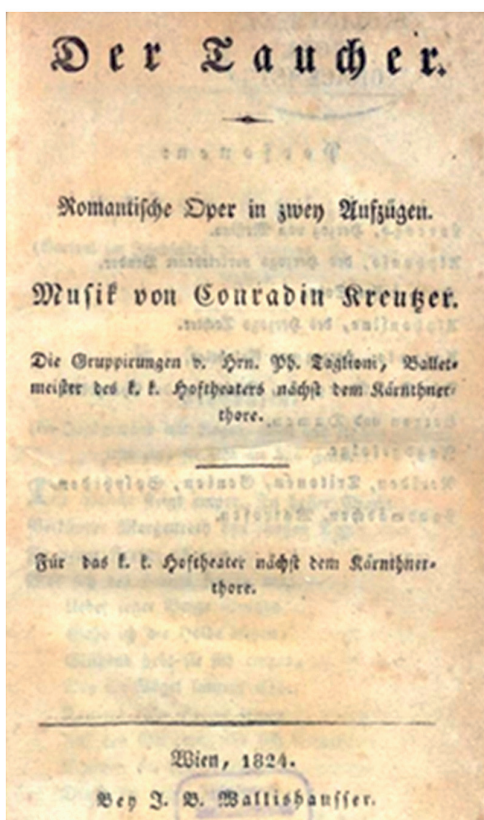
Il. 4. Title Page of Libretto of Conradin Kreutzer's Opera *Libussa*²⁷

²⁴ McKay E. N. *Franz Schubert's Music for the Theatre*. Tutzing: Schneider, 1991. P. 215. In a later research work Elizabeth Norman McKay indicates at another possible source — William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (McKay E. N. *Franz Schubert: A Biography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. P. 119). However, this parallel does not appear to be very convincing.

²⁵ Waidelich T. G. *Franz Schubert: Alfonso und Estrella...* S. 99, 240.

²⁶ *Libussa* had over twenty productions during the years 1822–1823, and then was briefly reintroduced in 1829 (Jahn M. *Die Wiener Hofoper von 1810 bis 1836: das Kärnthnerthortheater als Hofoper*. Wien: Der Apfel, 2007. S. 299), *Der Taucher* remained on stage after the premiere for a period of less than two months with a result of 13 performances (Ibid. S. 334), but this took place during the 1823–1824 season, and created a brilliant result, since it was particularly during this season that the peak of fascination towards Rossini's operas on the part of the Viennese. The success of *Libussa* resulted in Kreutzer being appointed as Kapellmeister at the Kärnthnerthortheater.

²⁷ Bernard J. C., Kreutzer C. *Libussa: Romantische Oper in drey Aufzügen*. Wien: Wallishauser, 1823.



Il. 5. Title Page of Libretto of Conradin Kreutzer's Opera *Der Taucher*²⁸

The plotline of the first of these operas, derived from medieval chronicles and based on the legend of the Czech duchess Libussa, was very popular during the early 19th century.²⁹ Despite the fact that the legend itself has direct connotation with the advent of the Czech national self-consciousness, the action of the opera is concentrated entirely

on the amorous intrigue, since the Viennese censors would not tolerate any political insinuations.

The libretto of *Der Taucher* was initially written for Johann Friedrich Reichardt. His opera appeared on the stage of the Berlin Royal Opera Theater in 1811. (Il. 6)³⁰ Created on the basis of Schiller's ballad with the same



Il. 6. Title Page of Libretto of Johann Friedrich Reichardt's Opera *Der Taucher*

²⁸ Kreutzer C., [Bürde S. G.] *Der Taucher: Romantische Oper in zwey Aufzügen: für das k. k. Hoftheater nächst dem Kärnthnerthor.* Wien: Wallishauser, 1824.

²⁹ Schläder J. *Conradin Kreutzer. Libussa. Piper.* Bd. 3. S. 346. The author of the libretto, Joseph Bernhard, first offered his text to Beethoven (Kirillina L. V. *Beethoven. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo. V 2 t. T. 1 [Beethoven. Life and Work: In 2 Vols. Vol. 1].* Moscow: Moskovskaya konservatoriya, 2009. P. 401).

³⁰ In *The New Grove Dictionary* it is indicated as a Singspiel, however both in the libretto and in the German press it is mentioned as a romantic opera (in *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* it is even referred to as a *romantische große Oper*). See: Reichardt J. F., Bürde S. G. *Der Taucher: eine Romantische Oper in zwey Akten.* Berlin: [s.n.], 1811. S. 1; *AMZ(L)*. 1811. Nr. 16. S. 275; *ZfEW*. 1811. Nr. 66. S. 527.

title,³¹ it bears very little resemblance to the primary source, except for the goblet thrown into the sea, the youth who dives after it, and the hand of the princess promised to him in marriage.³²

It must be said, in all possibility, that the author of the libretto, Samuel Gottlieb Bürde, turned directly to the Sicilian legend about Nicholas Fish (Pesce Cola). It recounts about the swimmer named Cola (Nicholas), who was cursed by his mother because of his love for the sea and became half-man, half-fish. [5, pp. 212–213] Twice he dives into the sea chasm upon the order of the king,³³ returning for the first time with a chalice, and perishing as the result of his second endeavor.³⁴ In the libretto, just as in the legend, the action takes place in Sicily, in Messina, and the main protagonist dives for the chalice into the bottomless chasm. In addition, in Reichardt's opera the main protagonist expresses a special love for the sea: „Das Meer, das unbegrenzte, / lockt mich allein in's Freie. / Geschwimmen, Tauchen, Meerblumen, Muscheln sammeln, / das ist mir Spiel und Wonne“ (“Only the boundless sea / draws me to the vastness. / To swim, to dive, to gather maritime flowers, seashells — / this is my fun and pleasure”).³⁵

The libretto of Kreutzer's opera, even in its revised version, preserves many common features with the primary version, even though the cast of characters changed somewhat and now turns of the plotline appeared, which, incidentally, gives it a common ground with *Alfonso und Estrella*.³⁶

All the aforementioned libretti are notable by their assortment of typical situations and turns of narrative moves, which also may be found in Schubert's opera. In Table 1 three variants of the entanglement of the love collision in these operas can be found, and it can be seen that all of them coincide, with the exception of the name of the main protagonists.

The comparison is also manifested in other details. In all three plotlines the main protagonist presents himself as a savior: in *Alfonso und Estrella* and *Der Taucher* he accompanies the lost heroine to her father's court, in *Libussa* he saves her from a bear. In each libretto there is a precious object mentioned which helps the lovers to unite in the final outcome — Eric's chain in *Alfonso und Estrella*, a particular precious gem (Kleinod) in *Libussa*, the chalice in *Der Taucher* — notably, in the first two operas the hero (or heroine) gives this object

³¹ It must be reminded that Schubert set it to music in 1813–1814.

³² Reichardt J. F., Bürde S. G. *Der Taucher: eine Romantische Oper in zwey Akten...* S. 7–8.

³³ In some versions of the legend, this is Friedrich II Stauffen (1194–1250), the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and the King of Sicily.

³⁴ See: Otto B. *Unterwasser-Literatur: von Wasserfrauen und Wassermännern*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001. S. 175–177; Bertino M. *Niklas der Fisch*. Bericht über ein Erzähltheaterprojekt mit italienischen Sekundarschülern [Onlinefassung]. *SCENARIO*. 2008. Vol. 2, Issue 1. S. 104.

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³⁵ Reichardt J. F., Bürde S. G. *Der Taucher: eine Romantische Oper in zwei Akten...* S. 7–8.

³⁶ For example, in the 1824 version of *Der Taucher* the “chivalrous” component is enhanced — in gratitude for his daughter having been saved, the duke anoints the main protagonist as a knight and rewards with armor. It must be said that there is a serious dissimilarity with Schubert's opera: Bürde's libretto contains elements of a magic fairy tale. In the 1811 version the main protagonist is helped by the goddess of the sea Lewkofee, and in the Vienna version — by the fairy Morgana.

Table 1. The Beginning of the Love Collision
in the Libretto of *Der Taucher*, *Alfonso und Estrella*, and *Libussa*

<i>Der Taucher</i>	<i>Alfonso und Estrella</i>	<i>Libussa</i>
<p><i>The duke's daughter, Alfonsine, goes on a hunt with her father and retinue and becomes lost and separated from her companions. Wandering through the forest, she meets Ivo. The young people fall in love with each other at first sight. They do not wish to part, but Alfonsine must return to her father's court.</i></p>	<p><i>The king's daughter, Estrella, goes on a hunt with her retinue and becomes lost and separated from her companions. Wandering through the forest, she meets Alfonso. The young people fall in love with each other at first sight. They do not wish to part, but Estrella must return to her father's court.</i></p>	<p><i>The duchess Libussa goes on a hunt with her retinue and becomes lost and separated from her companions. Wandering through the forest, she meets Vladislav. The young people fall in love with each other at first sight. They do not wish to part, but Libussa must return to court.</i></p>

to his (or her) beloved during the scene in the forest as a pledge of love.

Moreover, the main protagonist has a rival (sometimes several), who lays claim to the hand of the main heroine (in *Alfonso und Estrella* this is commander Adolfo, in *Libussa* — Domoslaw and Tursko, and in Kreutzer's *Der Taucher* — the son of the neighboring duke, Antonio; albeit, the latter character is absent from the 1811 libretto). In two cases these rivals create a conspiracy in order to gain the hands of the main heroines who rejected them (as in *Alfonso und Estrella* and *Libussa*). All three operas have scenes of single combat with the rival. Yet other common figures to be found in the operas are the fathers of the main protagonists (in *Libussa* — the foster father) who raised them in settings far from human society.

Alfonso und Estrella and *Der Taucher* demonstrate additional comparisons with each other. In both operas the fathers of the main heroines are usurpers who deposed the fathers of the main protagonists from their thrones. (Incidentally, in *Der Taucher*

the deposed duke's name is Alfonso.) The latter is considered to have died, but in reality lived in solitude (albeit, not too far from the capital city), where he brought up his son who did not suspect of his royal descent. Matured, the youth attempted to depart from the place where he grew up, but the father forbade him to do so.

The librettos of these two operas also have similarly solved stage situations. One of them is the first meeting of the two main heroes. A whole set of coincidences can be discerned in their utterances. Ivo, having seen Alfonsine for the first time, takes her for an angel; Alfonso, having encountered Estrella, sees in her the embodiment of "the cloud maiden" about which his father sang to him. At the same time, the heroine decides for herself that there is nothing threatening in the unfamiliar youth and that she could ask him for aid, see Table 2.

Still another stage situation common to both libretti is expressed in the meeting of the deposed ruler and the usurper tormented by his consciousness prior to the final outcome,

Table 2. Scene of the First Meeting of the Main Protagonists in *Der Taucher* and *Alfonso und Estrella*

<i>Der Taucher</i> Trio from Act I	<i>Alfonso und Estrella</i> Duo No. 12, 2nd Act	<i>Der Taucher</i> Terzett, Akt 1	<i>Alfonso und Estrella</i> Nr. 12 Duett, Akt 2
Scene 4. <i>Alphonsine</i> appears between the <u>cliffs</u> across from the cottage [...]	[<i>appearance of Estrella</i>] Estrella. Surrounded by <u>cliffs</u> and the forest, Who will show me the way?	Scene 4. <i>Alphonsine</i> kommt zwischen den <u>Felsen</u> hervor, der <u>Hütte</u> gegenüber [...]	<i>Estrella.</i> Von <u>Fels</u> und Wald umrungen, Wer zeigt die Pfade mir?
Alphonsine. What is it that I see rising from the current? / The head of a <u>youth</u> , the body of a person! Ivo. <u>What do I see there, hovering on the bank?</u> / It is an angel, not an earthly woman. Alphonsine. <u>Nothing wild threatens in his movements,</u> / he can give me advice and protection. Ivo. I came out of the underworld and am entering <u>heaven</u> .	Alfonso. <u>What was bravely sung about in a song,</u> / I see embodied here. Estrella. <u>A youth,</u> must I flee? Alfonso. O, do not flee. Estrella. <u>But he seems to be meek and kind.</u> Alfonso. O, sweet <u>heavenly image,</u> / O, do not run away. Estrella. <u>His movements / revive courage and hope in me.</u>	Alphonsine. Was seh' ich aus der Flut sich heben? <u>Ein Jünglingskopf,</u> ein Mennschenleib. Ivo. Was seh' ich dort am Ufer schweben? — <u>Ein Engel ist's, kein irdisch Weib.</u> Alphonsine. <u>Nicht wildes droht in seinen Zügen;</u> — Er kann mir Rat und Schutz verleihn. Ivo. Der Unterwelt bin ich entstigen, und in den <u>Himmel</u> tret' ich ein.	Alfonso. <u>Was kühn das Lied gesungen,</u> <u>seh ich</u> verwirklicht hier. Estrella. <u>Ein Jüngling,</u> soll ich fliehen? [...] <u>Doch scheint er sanft und mild.</u> Alfonso. Du süßes <u>Himmelsbild,</u> O wolle nicht entfliehen! Estrella. Es flößen <u>seine Züge</u> mir Mut und Hoffnung ein.

Table 3. Scene of the Meeting of the Former Ruler and the Usurper in *Der Taucher* and *Aldonso und Estrella*

<i>Der Taucher,</i> End of Act 2, Scene 8	<i>Alfonso und Estrella,</i> Act 3	<i>Der Taucher,</i> Ende von Akt 2, Szene 8	<i>Alfonso und Estrella,</i> Akt 3
Duke (recitative). Ah, <u>shadow</u> of my brother! Alfonso (Duo). Your brother is <u>alive</u> , and he <u>forgives</u> you. Duke. Are you <u>not a spirit</u> ?	Maugerato (Aria No. 32). Woe unto me! His <u>spirit</u> ! Froila (Duo No. 33). <u>Not a spirit,</u> I am <u>alive</u> [...], I came to <u>forgive</u> you...	Herzog. Ha! meines Bruders <u>Schatten</u> ! Mein Traum erfüllt! was führt dich her zu mir, Du Todter! aus dem Meeresgrunde Streckst du nach mir die Hand. Alphonso. (Duett). <u>Dein Bruder lebt und er verzeihet dir.</u> Herzog. [...] du bist <u>kein Geist</u> ?	Mauregato (Nr. 32 Arie). Weh mir! Sein <u>Geist</u> ! Laß ab! Verschone! Wie foltert mich dein Blick, laß ab! Sieh die geraubte Krone, Hier hast du sie zurück! Froila (Nr. 33 Duett). <u>Kein Geist;</u> <u>ich bin am Leben,</u> [...] Ich komme zu vergeben,

moreover, the latter at first takes the former for an apparition, see Table 3. In both cases this scene is followed by a reconciliatory duo.

A legitimate question arises: could Schober, who created his oeuvre in 1821, have been familiar with a single one of the aforementioned libretti? Of course, neither *Libussa*, nor, even more so, *Der Taucher* in its version from 1824 can in any way be perceived as source material for the plotline of *Alfonso und Estrella*. However, the text of the latter opera in the Berlin edition from 1811 could very likely have come into Schobert's hands, and the numerous coincidences with it, as it

seems to me, confirm this presumption. As for Metastasio's libretto, it must be acknowledged that Schobert's familiarization with it was not such an implausible occurrence. After all, the Italian poet had spent several decades in Vienna, and we can be certain that Schubert had encountered Metastasio's texts during his studies with Salieri.

Whatever the case may be, *Alfonso und Estrella*, notwithstanding the scant amount of staginess and its other imperfections, has been firmly written in the opera tradition of its time and also possesses a number of features which bring it close to the later phenomena of romantic musical theater.

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