

## IV. Fonds de décors historiques dans les théâtres mineurs



# Legacy of a Glorious Era of Theatre. Eighteenth-Century Stage Decorations in the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg

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Fig. 1. Stage with scenery *The Elysian Fields*. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater (Landesmedienzentrum Baden-Württemberg/Sven Grenzemann)

Established in 1758/59, the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg (Figs. 1, 2) numbers among the few historical performance venues that still possess original Baroque-era stage machinery.<sup>1</sup> Redesigned in 1812 in neoclassicist style, the auditorium today imparts the atmosphere of the theatre of Goethe's time in a unique way.

<sup>1</sup> Comparable facilities can still be found in the palace theatres of Gotha, Drottningholm, Český Krumlov, Gripsholm and Litomyšl as well as in the théâtre de la Reine in Versailles. Cf. Judith Breuer/Saskia Esser/Hans-Joachim Scholderer, Das Schloßtheater in Ludwigsburg ist restauriert. Zu Baugeschichte, Denkmalwert und denkmalpflegerischem Konzept, in *Denkmalpflege in Baden-Württemberg* 27, 1998, pp. 167–176, here, p. 176; Jean-Paul Gousset/Damien Rich-

Moreover, the monument houses another significant rarity: an extensive collection of historical stage scenery. A portion of these sets can be attributed to the advanced eighteenth century and the final phase of the late Baroque period;<sup>2</sup> the other portion was likely produced in the early nineteenth century and bears neoclassicist features. That this valuable inventory has been preserved can be attributed to the idle period of the Schlosstheater between 1853 and 1954, as a result of which the stage furnishings were not worn out in ongoing performance operations or discarded due to changes in the decorative style, as mainly happened elsewhere.

This contribution is dedicated to the eighteenth-century portion of the collection, which comprises both high-quality and extraordinary objects and is of considerable interest with respect to both art and theatre history. An examination of this inventory takes one back to the flourishing of the Württemberg court theatre, which – thanks to a significant commitment of labour and financial resources – under Duke Carl Eugen (1728–1793, Fig. 3) received recognition throughout Europe for nearly two decades.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, these pieces are part of a phase of fundamental developments in set design at the threshold between the late Baroque and neoclassicism. There are but a few places where comparable objects can be found: the Schlosstheater Český Krumlov (Czech Republic; formerly Böhmisches Krumau) has sets that date to 1766/67; the castle theatre in Drottningholm (Sweden) has kept holdings originating from several royal court theatres that can be dated between the 1760s and 1790s; and the Schlosstheater Litomyšl (Czech Republic; formerly Leitomischl) possesses scenery that was commissioned

ter, Les décors de scène conservés au théâtre de la Reine et à l'Opéra Royal de Versailles, in *Versalia* 6, 2003, pp. 18–34, here p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> The term “late Baroque” is used here in a broad sense, referring to a period up to around 1780 and including the Rococo as well as early neoclassicist tendencies (late-baroque classicism) which occurred at the same time. The pieces in question belong to a transitional phase and exhibit heterogeneous stylistic features. On the style categories and lines of development in eighteenth-century European stage design, see Hans Tintelnot, *Barocktheater und barocke Kunst. Die Entwicklungsgeschichte der Fest- und Theater-Dekoration in ihrem Verhältnis zur barocken Kunst*, Berlin 1939, pp. 74–110; Holger Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes. Bühnendekorationen aus der Zeit Herzog Carl Eugens von Württemberg im Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg*, Baden-Baden 2024, ch. II.2.1.

<sup>3</sup> The still-seminal account of theatrical events under Duke Carl Eugen can be found in Rudolf Krauß, *Das Theater*, in *Herzog Karl Eugen von Württemberg und seine Zeit*, ed. by Württembergischer Geschichts- und Altertumsverein, Vol. 1, Esslingen a. N. 1907, pp. 485–554; and id., *Das Stuttgarter Hoftheater von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart 1908. Later contributions on this topic either draw considerably on Krauß's conclusions or dispute them, see for example Heinz Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte Europas*, Vol. 4: *Von der Aufklärung zur Romantik. Teil 1*, Salzburg 1972; Hans-Joachim Scholderer, *Das Schloßtheater Ludwigsburg. Geschichte, Architektur, Bühnentechnik, mit einer Rekonstruktion der historischen Bühnenmaschinerie*, Berlin 1994 (Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, Vol. 71); Ute Christine Berger, *Die Feste des Herzogs Carl Eugen von Württemberg*, Tübingen 1997; *Musik und Musiker am Stuttgarter Hoftheater (1750–1918). Quellen und Studien*, ed. by Reiner Nägele, Stuttgart 2000.





Fig. 2. Auditorium with royal box. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater (Landesmedienzentrum Baden-Württemberg/Dieter Jaeger)





Fig. 3. Nicolas Guibal workshop, *Duke Carl Eugen von Württemberg*, oil on canvas, ca. 1760, whereabouts unknown (Landesmedienzentrum Baden-Württemberg/Dieter Jaeger)

in 1797.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the Ludwigsburg eighteenth-century inventory assumes a position of importance; however, until now, it has received little consideration in the research literature, and a number of fundamental questions about the classification of its components from an art-history perspective remained unanswered.<sup>5</sup> Only recently has a detailed investigation been carried out that took into account sources on Württemberg theatre history and documentation of the restoration.<sup>6</sup> The results will be summarised here. First, the history of the Schloss-theater's construction and use as well as the origins of the present stage inventory will be addressed. Furthermore, an overview of the eighteenth-century scenery will be presented, new findings about provenance, dating and attribution will be brought forth, and an international contextualisation will be proposed.

### *A look into Württemberg theatre history*

Under the founder of the Ludwigsburg residence, Duke Eberhard Ludwig III von Württemberg (1676–1733), the Schlosstheater was already planned as a performance space for French comedy; construction work began on the exterior in 1728, yet at the time of the regent's death, the interior remained in a raw state. Completion of the theatre only took place under Duke Carl Eugen, whose pas-

<sup>4</sup> See Pavel Slavko, *Das Schlosstheater in Český Krumlov. Eine einzigartige, vollständig erhaltene barocke Theaterbühne*, Český Krumlov 2001; Jiří Bláha, *Castle Theater in Český Krumlov. Restoration and Presentation*, Praha 2015; Barbro Stribolt, *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres. Drottningholm – Gripsholm*, Stockholm 2002; Jiří Bláha, *The Chateau Theatre, Theatre Interior* by Joseph Platzer, in *Litomyšl. The Chateau Mount*, ed. by Jiří Kroupa, Praha 2017, pp. 88–94.

<sup>5</sup> On the preserved Ludwigsburg stage inventory as a whole, the following contributions have been written: Harald Zielske, *Some Original Early 19th Century Stage Decorations in the Ludwigsburg Court Theatre. Problems of Conservation and Presentation*, in *Stage Design. Problems of Collecting, Cataloging and Conserving Documents. Papers from the 15th International SIBMAS Congress*, ed. by Ginnine Cocuzza/Barbara Cohen-Stratynier, Evanston 1983 (Performing Arts Resources, Vol. 8), pp. 90–94; Saskia Esser, *Wohin mit großformatigen Bühnenbildern? Konservierung, Deponierung und künftige Präsentation der historischen Bühnenbilder aus dem Ludwigsburger Schloßtheater*, in *Das Schloß und seine Ausstattung als denkmalpflegerische Aufgabe*, München 1995 (IKOMOS – Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees, Vol. 16), pp. 76–81; Breuer/Esser/Scholderer, *Das Schloßtheater in Ludwigsburg ist restauriert*, pp. 169–171; Saskia Esser, *Bühnenschätze vom Dachboden. Die historischen Theaterdekorationen*, in *Das Ludwigsburger Schloßtheater. Kultur und Geschichte eines Hoftheaters*, ed. by Ludwigsburger Schloßfestspiele, Leinfelden-Echterdingen 1998, pp. 43–58; ead., *Die Bühnenbilder des Ludwigsburger Schloßtheaters*, in *Schloßtheater Ludwigsburg. Zum Abschluß der Restaurierungen 1998*, ed. by Finanzministerium Baden-Württemberg, Ostfildern–Ruit 1998, pp. 81–85; ead., *Auf dem Dachboden überdauert. Der Kulissenschatz des Ludwigsburger Schlosstheaters*, in *Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg. 250 Jahre – Von der Hofoper zum lebendigen Theaterdenkmal*, ed. by Frank Thomas Lang, Stuttgart 2008, pp. 30–37. While Zielske assigns the stock to the nineteenth century (with the exception of one backdrop), Esser – without mentioning any other datings – describes a portion of the scenery as work from the eighteenth century.

<sup>6</sup> Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*.

sion for the theatrical arts even exceeded that of his predecessors.<sup>7</sup> The ambitious monarch first resided in Stuttgart, where, with the installation of an opera venue in the Lusthaus in 1750, he created conditions ripe for the development of fruitful activity in the field of opera seria. Performances were regularly given in the carnival season, which centred around the duke's birthday on 11 February, as well as – until the couple separated – on the birthday of Duchess Elisabeth Friederike Sophie on 30 August. During the year, festive opera evenings were held in connection with state visits and other court events. High standards were guaranteed by the engagement of competent artists, which the duke selected with expertise and knew how to also retain at court, in most cases with the offer of handsome salaries. From the autumn of 1750, Innocente Colomba (1717–1801, Fig. 4) was responsible for the decorative settings for performance and celebratory events. Born in Arogno in the Ticino canton, the artist enjoyed early successes in fresco-painting before making his name as a set decorator for the theatre group of Filippo Nicolini, which toured throughout Germany.<sup>8</sup> Colomba worked for sixteen years at the Württemberg court and enjoyed high renown, which led to him being offered, among other things, the directorship of the art academy for a time. In 1753, the post of court kapellmeister and composer was filled with first-class capability through the engagement of Niccolò Jommelli (1714–1774). He had already earned a reputation in Naples, Venice, Vienna and Rome and reached the peak of his creative work during his sixteen-year-long tenure in service to Duke Carl Eugen.<sup>9</sup> In the fall of 1757, a standing ballet ensemble was engaged, which was later to include forces that had succeeded as soloists in the top venues in Europe – among others, the art of the 'dance god' Gaetano Vestris was regularly admired in Stuttgart. Finally, in 1758, a French comedy troupe was brought in,<sup>10</sup> which provided an occasion for short-term plans to be made for the completion of the semi-finished performance venue at Schloss Ludwigsburg, which at that time was used as a summer residence.

<sup>7</sup> On the construction and furnishing of the Schlosstheater under the dukes Eberhard Ludwig III and Carl Eugen see Scholderer, *Das Schloßtheater Ludwigsburg*, pp. 11–30.

<sup>8</sup> On the life and work of Innocente Colomba see Lucia Pedrini Stanga, *I Colomba di Arogno*, Lugano <sup>2</sup>1998 (Artisti dei laghi. Itinerari europei, Vol. 1), pp. 189–223; Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.4.1.

<sup>9</sup> On the work of Niccolò Jommelli at the Württemberg court see Krauß, *Das Theater*, pp. 494–505; Hermann Abert, *Die dramatische Musik*, in *Herzog Karl Eugen von Württemberg und seine Zeit*, ed. by Württembergischer Geschichts- und Altertumsverein, Vol. 1, Esslingen a. N. 1907, pp. 557–611, here pp. 558–575; Audrey Lyn Tolkoff, *The Stuttgart Operas of Niccolò Jommelli*, Ann Arbor 1978; Joachim Kremer, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Niccolò Jommelli und die Schüler der Carlsschule. Zum Profil der höfischen Musikpflege in Stuttgart unter Herzog Carl Eugen, in *Aufgeklärte Herrschaft im Konflikt. Herzog Carl Eugen von Württemberg 1728–1793*, ed. by Wolfgang Mährle, Stuttgart 2017, pp. 122–134.

<sup>10</sup> On the cultivation of French drama under Duke Carl Eugen, see Krauß, *Das Theater*, pp. 519–521; Michael Steltz, *Geschichte und Spielplan der französischen Theater an deutschen Fürstenhöfen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Diss. München 1965, pp. 100–108.



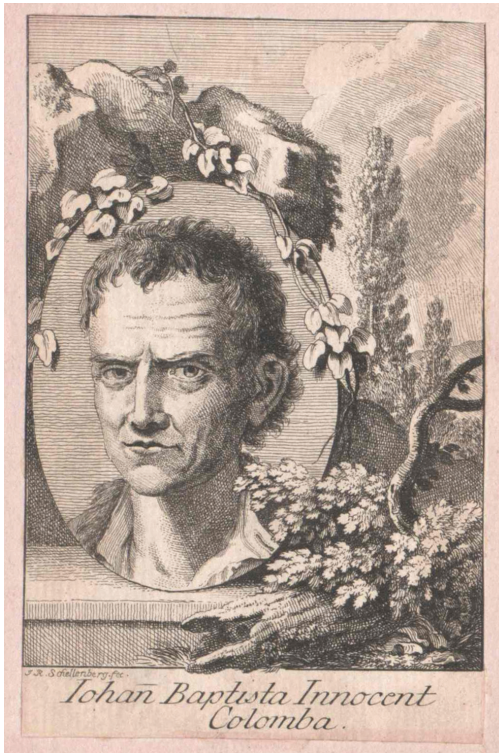


Fig. 4. Johann Rudolf Schellenberg: Innocente Colomba, etching, in Johann Caspar Fueßli, *Geschichte der besten Künstler in der Schweiz. Nebst ihren Bildnissen*, Vol. 4, Zürich 1774, p. 62a. Copy: Vienna, ÖNB, 384138-B.4 (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Mediennummer 00435988)

The new stage was still intended as a comedy theatre, but it should now also be able to accommodate small music-theatre performances and was thus equipped not only with scene-changing machinery but also with fly systems and trap doors.<sup>11</sup> Chief building director Philippe de La Guêpière (1715–1773) was responsible for structural considerations. The Paris-educated exponent of the early neo-classicist *goût grec* exerted significant influence over the development of style across the country, particularly through his work on the Neues Schloss Stuttgart, Schloss Monrepos and Schloss Solitude.<sup>12</sup> The technical installation was entrusted to court machinist Christian Keim (ca. 1721–1787), who was extremely knowledgeable in both technical and organisational matters. The design of the interior and the stage scenery was the bailiwick of theatre architect Colomba. On 12 April 1758, the work at the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg began, and already by May/June, comedies and ballets were being performed in the still-unfinished building.<sup>13</sup> As there was no stage inventory available yet, a set from Stuttgart first had to be brought in; in the following time production of the necessary furnishings was

<sup>11</sup> See Scholderer, *Das Schloßtheater Ludwigsburg*, pp. 27 and 116–177.

<sup>12</sup> On the work of Philippe de La Guêpière at the Württemberg court see Hans Andreas Klaiber, *Der württembergische Oberbaudirektor Philippe de La Guêpière. Ein Beitrag zur Kunstgeschichte der Architektur am Ende des Spätbarock*, Stuttgart 1959.

<sup>13</sup> The account book of the building administration of the ducal treasury, Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HStAS) A 19a Bd 981, provides information about the progress of the interior construc-

completed in the scenery workshop. In July 1758, work in Ludwigsburg had to be suspended due to the extension of the Stuttgart opera house, which was scheduled at short notice; work resumed in November. From June 1759 on, comedies were once again performed even though the installation work was still in progress, and on 4 October, the accounts for the entire construction project were at last closed. In June 1760, Colomba was once again busy with changes in the Ludwigsburg theatre. These alterations were likely connected with a ballet performance arranged for the Schlosstheater by Jean Georges Noverre (1727–1810), the leading choreographer at the time and promoter of the publicly acclaimed Ballet d'action who had recently been engaged at the court.<sup>14</sup>

Due to growing resistance to the immense expenditures in the area of courtly representation, Duke Carl Eugen relocated his residence from Stuttgart to Ludwigsburg in autumn 1764, and in the time that followed the Schlosstheater was also used for small opera performances.<sup>15</sup> As the main stage of the court, however, it was inadequate; thus, by November, the duke had already ordered the construction of an opera house in the palace gardens, which was immediately undertaken. The enormous venue, one of the largest in Europe at that time, was inaugurated in scintillating style on 11 February 1765, and, during the next ten years, it offered a prestigious setting for the staging of grand festive operas. The Schlosstheater, however, continued to be used for events on a more modest scale. An inventory prepared likely at the end of 1766 by theatre architect Colomba describes the heterogeneous stock of scenery that had accumulated in the small house as a result of its varied stagings.<sup>16</sup> In addition to typical comedy sets, there are objects listed that were made for ballet performances as well as ones originating from opera seria productions at the Opernhaus Stuttgart.

From 1766, performance activities in the ducal summer residences increased. Already in 1763, Carl Eugen had had a small opera house built at Schloss Grafeneck auf der Rauhen Alb, and additional stages were created in 1766 at Schloss Solitude, in 1767 at Kirchheim and Tübingen and finally in 1770 at Bad Teinach.<sup>17</sup> With the exception of the Teinach theatre, which was used only for one season, these houses maintained their own stage furnishings, which were supplemented by loans from other venues as needed. The repertoire cultivated here centred around opera buffa, which in 1766 was the last category to be added to the programming; Carl Eugen now favoured this genre and happily enjoyed it in the

tion, the production of the scenery and early performance activity. See also Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.4.2.2.

<sup>14</sup> On the life and work of Jean Georges Noverre see Sibylle Dahms, *Der konservative Revolutionär. Jean Georges Noverre und die Ballettreform des 18. Jahrhunderts*, München 2010.

<sup>15</sup> On the performance activity in the Schlosstheater in the years 1764–1771 see Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.4.2.1.

<sup>16</sup> HStAS A 21 Bü 849, pp. 8f.

<sup>17</sup> See Krauß, *Das Theater*, pp. 499f.; Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.4.3–II.4.8.

relaxed atmosphere of his country stays.<sup>18</sup> At this time, evidence suggests that only a few performances were arranged in the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg.

Carl Eugen could not sustain his unbridled spending policies in perpetuity.<sup>19</sup> In January 1767, there came a considerable cost reduction in the theatre area, and numerous artists were let go. Although the savings were initially accompanied by greater expenditures elsewhere, there was nevertheless a noticeable transformation. Some of the leading figures, including theatre architect Colomba, left the court of their own free will, aware that their artistic development was being increasingly limited. Leadership in the field of courtly decoration was taken over by Colomba's close colleague, Giosué Scotti (1729–1785), who, until his departure in 1777, faced the difficult task of both managing and, to a modest extent, adding to what was on hand with reduced means. The same was also true for his successor, court painter Nicolas Guibal (1725–1784).<sup>20</sup>

With the awakening of his pedagogical interest, in 1769 Duke Carl Eugen created, among others, a training facility for stage personnel who could in the future replace the costly foreign staff at the large opera house.<sup>21</sup> This institution was housed first in Ludwigsburg and subsequently in the military academy at Schloss Solitude. From 1772 the students tested their skills in performances in the theatre there, which led to renovations and expansions in this small venue during the following two years.<sup>22</sup> In 1775, Carl Eugen relocated the residence back to Stuttgart, where the opera in the Lusthaus once again became the main venue, and the trainees were engaged there in all branches of the theatre. In 1777 came a radical innovation: tickets could be sold, a step that transformed the court theatre into a commercial one. In the ensuing period, however, Carl Eugen's interest in theatrical entertainments declined. A not insignificant reason for this could be ascribed to his mistress at the time and later second wife, Franziska von Hohenheim, who did not take much pleasure in the courtly divertissements.<sup>23</sup> The German singspiel that was then primarily cultivated at the opera house also did not suit the taste of the duke, and he attended the performances ever more seldomly. However,

<sup>18</sup> Information about the theatre happenings in the ducal summer residences from September 1767 to May 1773 can be found in the travel diary of Freiherr von Buwinghamen-Wallmerode, an officer from Duke Carl Eugen's close social circle, see *Tagebuch des Herzoglich Württembergischen Generaladjutanten Freiherrn von Buwinghamen-Wallmerode über die "Land-Reisen" des Herzogs Karl Eugen von Württemberg in der Zeit von 1767 bis 1773*, ed. by Ernst von Ziegesar, Stuttgart 1911.

<sup>19</sup> The influential estates had raised complaints against Carl Eugen to the Imperial Court, as a result of which a years-long legal battle ensued, in which the duke eventually – albeit speciously at first – had to relent, see Gerhard Storz, *Karl Eugen. Der Fürst und das "alte gute Recht"*, Stuttgart 1981, pp. 126–128.

<sup>20</sup> On the activity of Giosué Scotti and Nicolas Guibal at the Württemberg court see Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.2.6, II.3.3 and II.3.4.

<sup>21</sup> See Krauß, *Das Theater*, pp. 533–538.

<sup>22</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 499; Klaiber, *Schloss Solitude*, p. 24; Michael Wenger, *Ludwigsburg. Die Gesamtanlage*, Berlin/München 2014, p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> See Krauß, *Das Theater*, pp. 540f.

on major festive days the old brilliance sometimes flared up again, and the regent still kept the supervision of finances and the repertoire firmly in his own hands.

In 1779, Carl Eugen had the Kleines Theater on the Stuttgart Planie built as an inexpensive, accessible, everyday stage. To furnish this new venue, sets were brought in from the seldom-used secondary court theatres, including a room scene from the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg.<sup>24</sup> Several times per week in the Kleines Theater, for the price of a ticket, singspiels, bourgeois plays and popular ballets – doubtless of a lower level than before – were enjoyed.<sup>25</sup> It can be assumed that over time, the vast majority of the sets suitable for lighter spectacles were taken from other theatres and brought together here. In contrast, already in 1781, the inventory of the large Opernhaus Stuttgart contained only sets that could be used for opera seria.<sup>26</sup> At the time of his death, Carl Eugen left behind eight court theatres in more or less usable condition. Under his successors, his brothers Ludwig Eugen (1731–1795) and Friedrich Eugen (1732–1797), only the two Stuttgart stages were further used, and then with middling artistic results.

Only under the theatre-loving duke Friedrich II (1754–1816, Fig. 5), whose rule began in 1797, did the Württemberg theatre scene blossom once again.<sup>27</sup> From 1802, the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg was revived and the scenery collection subsequently reorganised.<sup>28</sup> Only a few sets were in this moment still available on site, and these were suitable only for the performance of plays. In the name of economy, the collection was expanded by bringing in objects that were no longer needed elsewhere in order to furnish the upcoming performances. For this, elements were on offer from the ever-rich inventories of the Opernhaus Stuttgart as well as the few remaining pieces from Carl Eugen's summer theatres and the relics from the Kleines Theater Stuttgart that survived the September 1802 fire there.<sup>29</sup> Friedrich, however, who was elevated to king in 1806 and was concerned with displays of courtly splendour, was not just engaged in the theatre scene in Ludwigsburg: as a replacement for the Kleines Theater Stuttgart, an everyday stage was built in the local riding school, the Opernhaus Stuttgart was lavishly modernised, and in the secondary residences of Monrepos, Freudental and Schorndorf,

<sup>24</sup> See Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.4.2.2.

<sup>25</sup> See Krauß, *Das Theater*, pp. 539f.

<sup>26</sup> This is taken from an inventory of set decorations from 1781, HStAS A 21 Bü 959, fol. 43–46. See Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.4.9.2.

<sup>27</sup> See Krauß *Das Stuttgarter Hoftheater*, pp. 110–149; Norbert Stein, *Musik und Theater im Ludwigsburg des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, in *Ludwigsburger Geschichtsblätter* 38, 1985, pp. 61–87, here pp. 71–75.

<sup>28</sup> See Scholderer, *Das Schloßtheater Ludwigsburg*, pp. 34–38; Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.4.2.2.

<sup>29</sup> Krauß reports that, in the fire in the Kleines Theater, the registration, the cloakroom, scenery, prop store, music supplies and the orchestral instruments “were for the most part completely destroyed” (“gingen zum größten Teil ganz verloren”), leaving open the question of to what extent scenery elements have been preserved, if at all (Krauß, *Das Stuttgarter Hoftheater*, p. 119). At least some of the pieces must have survived, however, as it is proved by, among other things, the still-extant set piece *Ship* (*Schiff*), see p. 291 of this article.





Fig. 5. Johann Baptist Seele, *King Friedrich von Württemberg*, oil on canvas, 1816. Stuttgart, Landesmuseum Württemberg, NN 74 (Wikimedia Commons, public domain)

new venues were built, which also required investments in the stage-design sector. Because the new venues already closed after a few years and their stage furnishings were made available, there were several opportunities to add to and expand the collection of the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg. This made it possible to replace the eighteenth-century interior sets, which in the meantime may have been perceived as old-fashioned in terms of the room furnishings depicted, with variants from the early nineteenth century. The exterior sets from the days of Carl Eugen, however, which were rather timeless in their appearance, remained in use. This cobbled-together, heterogenous collection was documented for the first time as part of an inventory taken in 1818. Here, the vast majority of all the objects contained in the present stock are already listed. Inventories from the later nineteenth century indicate that the collection, due to the suspension of theatre activity after 1853, had not fundamentally changed in that time.<sup>30</sup>

The Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg survived into the twentieth century largely unscathed, but in 1911, the construction of a finance archive in the backstage area led to the loss of the original upper machinery.<sup>31</sup> In 1922, the scenery collection was examined and photographed, through which it became apparent that only a few of the objects listed in the nineteenth century were missing and several had even been added.<sup>32</sup> During an inventory in 1931, however, it was discovered that only sixteen of the formerly counted eighteen sets remained, and two photo sessions in 1965 further indicated that, in the meantime, more pieces had been lost, including all borders.<sup>33</sup> The theatre building itself was at risk. For quite some time, the local building authority had been able to oppose the growing interest in once again using the venue, which had been registered as a cultural monument since 1928. In 1954, however, the Schlosstheater was opened and appropriately furnished for the Mozartfest, later known as the Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele. After sparing use at first, in the 1970s, the demands of a modern stage operation were increasingly placed upon the theatre, which led to unauthorised interventions and the destruction of essential elements of historical import. In 1989, the Landesdenkmalamt Baden-Württemberg determined that the building and its valuable interior furnishings should be classified as especially worthy of preservation, and extensive refurbishment measures were planned. By 1987, the restoration of the stage decorations had already begun; it was completed in 1995.<sup>34</sup> The scope of the collection documented in the course of this work corresponds

<sup>30</sup> Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg stage decoration inventories, Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg (StAL), 1818: E 20 Bü 606; 1823: E 20 Bü 666; 1866: E 17 Bü 261; 1893: E 17 Bü 311.

<sup>31</sup> See Scholderer, *Das Schloßtheater Ludwigsburg*, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> The photo series is located in the Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 228 a III, and is accessible in digital form. See also Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.4.2.2.

<sup>33</sup> See Complete inventory Schloss Ludwigsburg, 1931, pp. 880–885, Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg (SSG); photo series of the research project Prof. Dr. Harald Zielske, Freie Universität Berlin, 1965, SSG; photo series of the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, Universität Köln, 1965, private collection.

<sup>34</sup> See Esser, *Wohin mit großformatigen Bühnenbildern?*, p. 79.

to the present. Restoration of the venue took place between 1994 and 1998.<sup>35</sup> At last, the Schlosstheater could once again open its doors and was integrated into guided tours for visitors.

For some time, original decorations were displayed on stage in the winter season.<sup>36</sup> Eventually, out of consideration for the valuable pieces, copies were made of two sets, the *Elysian Fields* (*Die Elysischen Gefilde*) and the *Red Garden Hall* (*Roter Gartensaal*). In addition, a cloud scenery was made that was modelled on an extant example held in Drottningholm. A copy of the main curtain was also produced that was fastened in front of the original at the proscenium and which could be lowered in its place.<sup>37</sup> These newly made elements were used initially for scenic performances and later for public stage transformations with an explanation of the mechanism. For the last several years, practical stage use has been suspended; it is planned to resume in due course.

### *New findings about the Ludwigsburg eighteenth-century inventory*

The Ludwigsburg decoration collection consists of more than 150 individual objects, which can be arranged to create sixteen stage scenes.<sup>38</sup> The eighteenth-century part includes six exterior sets, some of whose elements can be combined with one another, as well as three variable set pieces and two stage curtains. On the other hand, there are nine sets depicting interior sceneries of various orientations and twenty-four set pieces that can be assigned to the nineteenth century. The vast majority of the elements show signs of having been altered in size – partly several times –, which indicates that these pieces of scenery were brought in from other venues of the Württemberg court.

Until now, the predominant area of inquiry surrounding the eighteenth-century sets was their date of origin and provenance as well as clarification of who was responsible for their creation. Upon closer examination, the collection proves to be in fact heterogenous in that not only do the sets differ from each other, but also their individual components partly differ in style and make, from which it becomes evident that elements originating from several previous versions were put together here. In the course of research into an art-history-based classification of the eighteenth-century inventory, each object belonging to this part of the collection had to be individually examined. The essential criterion proved to be each item's provenance. As was mentioned, there were nine court theatres

<sup>35</sup> On the measures carried out see *Schloßtheater Ludwigsburg. Zum Abschluß der Restaurierungen 1998*, ed. by Finanzministerium Baden-Württemberg, Ostfildern-Ruit 1998, pp. 38–79.

<sup>36</sup> See Esser, *Bühnenschätze vom Dachboden*, p. 58; ead., *Die Bühnenbilder des Ludwigsburger Schloßtheaters*, p. 83.

<sup>37</sup> Information kindly shared by Dr. Felix Muhle, restorer of the Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg.

<sup>38</sup> On the extent and composition of the preserved collection see Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. I.2; cf. Esser, *Wohin mit großformatigen Bühnenbildern?*, p. 77.

in total across the principal and secondary residences of Duke Carl Eugen, all of which could be considered as possible sources for the sets.<sup>39</sup> Clues were given in the dimensional changes that were carried out on the objects, evidence of which is partially still recognisable or can be deduced with the help of photographs included in the restoration documentation. If provenance could be determined, the next step was to search the archives of the Württemberg court theatre for information about performance activities as well as furnishing campaigns with which the object in question could be linked. In this manner, it was possible to arrive at datings and attributions to the respective heads of set design. In a further step, the Ludwigsburg inventory could be situated in the context of other surviving examples of eighteenth-century set design elsewhere.

### 1. *The Elysian Fields (Die Elysischen Gefilde)*

Consisting of twelve flats and a backdrop, *The Elysian Fields* (cf. Fig. 1) is considered to be both the most prominent stage set as well as that which likely contains the oldest components in the Ludwigsburg collection.<sup>40</sup> Thickly leaved and mostly lushly flowering trees with rose tendrils winding about their trunks appear on the flats. The depiction on the backdrop (Fig. 6) visualises a borderline situation through an unusual spatial disposition. The lovely landscape spread out before the viewer is crossed by a river running parallel to the picture.<sup>41</sup> A row of rose-entwined trees towering on the bank on this side indicates the boundary of the Elysium; beyond the river rises a hill with a waterfall flanked by further groups of trees – the area behind it, which belongs to the world of the living, is hidden from view. The stage set was very likely once furnished with part of the sky borders that were indicated in the nineteenth-century inventories of the Schlosstheater under the description air friezes (“Luft Frieze”).<sup>42</sup>

The backdrop of *The Elysian Fields* is too large for the stage of the Schlosstheater, and the majority of the flats show signs of having been cropped (Fig. 7), hence why until now it was assumed that the scenery was created by the succes-

<sup>39</sup> As far as can be determined from the sources, the opera house at Bad Teinach did not have its own collection; however, there were decoration objects on loan that may have remained on site for some time and were later transferred to other venues.

<sup>40</sup> In-depth research into the stage scenery with respect to its origin, use, dating and attribution can be found in Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. III.1.

<sup>41</sup> The ancient sources mention six underworld rivers – Acheron, Eridanos, Kokytos, Lethe, Phlegethon and Styx – with contradictory descriptions of the topography. The Acheron and Styx appear as border rivers at the entrance to the underworld for numerous authors. The location and nature of the Elysium in the realms of Hades also remains undetermined; in post-Homeric tales it is mainly surrounded or crossed by the Lethe, whose water, when drunk, causes blissful oblivion of all earthly suffering. The depiction on the backdrop reflects various iconographical traditions, see Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. III.1.6. For the mythological and historical-topographical background, see e.g. Otto Gruppe/Friedrich Pfister, *Unterwelt*, in *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, ed. by Wilhelm Heinrich Roscher, delivery 92/93 [Vol. 6], Leipzig 1924, coll. 35–95.

<sup>42</sup> As note 30; 1818, n. p.; 1823, n. p.; 1866, p. 6; 1893, p. 6.





Fig. 6. *The Elysian Fields*, backdrop, canvas, lean bound colour. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater, Sch.L. 5638 (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/Joachim Feist)



Fig. 7. *The Elysian Fields*, two flats, canvas, lean bound colour, softwood. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater, Sch.L. 5648 and 5654 (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/Joachim Feist)

sors of Innocente Colomba for the Opernhaus Ludwigsburg and later, when it was transferred to the smaller Schosstheater, was fitted to the conditions there.<sup>43</sup> Because the extant ensemble at first glance gives the impression of uniformity in appearance, the cohesiveness of its individual parts was never called into question. Upon closer examination, however, the eye catches a number of aspects that make it clear that *The Elysian Fields* is an assemblage of elements from different previous versions. Based on this, it is possible to separate the scenery into three groups of components that presumably belong together.

Archival study reveals in fact that three versions of *The Elysian Fields* existed under Duke Carl Eugen, which were used for the first time in ballets performed between acts of opera performances for ducal birthday celebrations in 1760, 1763 and 1766 and were subsequently used numerous times in different contexts.<sup>44</sup> All three were realised under the direction of theatre architect Innocente Colomba, who, with short interruptions, was active at the court until the spring of 1767. This leads to the conclusion that, in the course of reviving of the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the currently extant scenery was compiled from pieces remaining from these three previous versions.

The different provenances of the components explain why, although the disposition of the individual depictions and their painterly execution testify to a high level of artistry, the set as a whole does not exhibit the spatial and formal unity in appearance that would have been expected from a work created under the direction of a widely recognised set designer of that period. With respect to the overall effect of the scenery, it is important to note the sometimes quite roughly executed cropping of the flats as well as the fact that the backdrop could not be seen in its full size on the Schlosstheater stage, that the two rows of flats connect to it at previously unintended points and that some parts of the depictions have been painted over. This may also have led to *The Elysian Fields* having been dated to the period after the heyday of the Württemberg court theatre, when funding had dwindled and the performance level had necessarily sunk. However, the new findings suggest a reassessment of both the historical placement and the artistic status of the set. The present overall appearance of *The Elysian Fields* is a significant example of the oft-practiced compilation of scenic elements of varying provenances in the Württemberg court theatres in the early nineteenth century. The individual components of the scenery, on the other hand, all of which were already in existence in the 1760s, represent valuable evidence of the high point of stage decoration practices under Duke Carl Eugen as well as the expertise of theatre architect Innocente Colomba and his team of experienced set painters. Given that until now, Colomba's work was represented only in two series of set designs that were lost in the twentieth century and exist only in photographic reproduc-

<sup>43</sup> See Esser, *Wohin mit großformatigen Bühnenbildern?*, p. 79; ead., *Bühnenschätze vom Dachboden*, p. 50; ead., *Die Bühnenbilder des Ludwigsburger Schloßtheaters*, pp. 84f.

<sup>44</sup> See Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. III.1.5.4.





Fig. 8. Innocente Colomba, *Sacro bosco di quercie*, set design for the opera *Annibale in Torino*, washed drawing, ca. 1770/71. Formerly Varese, Sammlung Pogliaghi (Mercedes Viale Ferrero, *La scenografia del '700 e i fratelli Galliari*, Torino 1963, p. 113, Fig. 19)

tions (Fig. 8),<sup>45</sup> the fact that the Ludwigsburg collection contains a material legacy of this scenic artist, well-known in his time, is of considerable importance. We will address the conclusions that have resulted from the predating of *The Elysian Fields* and – as we shall see – additional elements in the collection with respect to their place in the pan-European context.

## 2. Forest Landscape (Waldlandschaft)

At first glance, it is already evident that the scenery *Forest Landscape* (Fig. 9) is an assemblage of elements that originally did not belong together.<sup>46</sup> The magnificently composed backdrop, which was very likely first used on 11 February 1761 for a festive performance of the opera *L'Olimpiade* (Metastasio/Jommelli) in the

<sup>45</sup> Five set designs from late in Colomba's time at the court of Carl Eugen were located in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek and were lost in World War II; one series from Colomba's work with the Teatro Regio in Turin (1769–1771), including the design shown here for *Sacro bosco di quercie* from the opera *Annibale in Torino*, was previously located in the Pogliaghi collection in Varese and later scattered about. See Tintelnot, *Barocktheater und barocke Kunst*, pp. 106f.; Mercedes Viale Ferrero, *La scenografia dalle origini al 1936*, Torino 1980 (Storia del Teatro Regio di Torino, Vol. 3), pp. 260–267; Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. II.3.1.2. and II.3.1.3.

<sup>46</sup> On the *Forest Landscape* see *ibid.*, ch. III.2.



Fig. 9. *Forest Landscape*, complete picture. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater (© Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/research project Prof. Dr. Harald Zielske, Berlin)

Opernhaus Stuttgart, features a valley bordered by beech trees leaning towards each other to form a hollow path.<sup>47</sup> This is accompanied by a row of flats – likely created in 1766/67 for the Theater Solitude – whose natural, unadorned depiction of an impassable forest thicket is striking (Fig. 10). These elements – at least with respect to design – can be attributed to the work of Innocente Colomba, who was responsible for the set decoration for the 1761 performance as well as furnishing the Theater Solitude. Numerous motives on both the backdrop and flats are echoed in the landscape paintings that the Ticino native left behind, providing artistic evidence that supports the archive-based attributions.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the aforementioned pieces, there are also three smaller, poorly preserved forest flats of indeterminable origin as well as an exemplar that clearly differs from the rest in both motif and painterly style; the latter might have come from the Theater Monrepos and may have been produced around 1810. The various origins of the scenic elements are also recognisable in mismatches in perspective as well as differences in colour composition. Nevertheless, in the compilation of the scenery for the Schlosstheater, an atmospherically convincing appearance was achieved,

<sup>47</sup> The related scene description reads: “Fondo selvoso di cupa ed angusta valle, adombrata dall’alto da grandi alberi, che giungono ad intrecciare i rami dall’uno all’altro colle, fra’ quali è chiusa”, see *L’Olimpiade* [textbook], Stuttgart 1761 (Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, Fr.D.qt.192), Act I Scene 1; Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. III.2.5.2.

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid.*, ch. III.2.5.





Fig. 10. *Forest Landscape*, two flats, canvas, lean bound colour, softwood. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater, Sch.L. 5669 and 5671 (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/ Joachim Feist)

the effect of which was certainly felt in the context of the productions there. In this case, too, the worth lies above all in the quality of the individual pieces, which – despite their partially quite decrepit state of preservation and dimensional alterations – remains recognisable.

### 3. *Rocks Scene (Felsenszene)*

In the inventory, there are seven additional flats featuring rocks that, in connection with the backdrop of the *Forest Landscape*, create a *Rocks Scene*; these specimens could be complemented with the addition of forest flats in various constellations to form a complete tableau (Fig. 11).<sup>49</sup> Here, too, the pieces vary in both provenance and time period; there are three “rock frames” from a mountain scene with characteristic projections on the top, a boulder with a deciduous tree, one with a conifer and one with a waterfall that may have been created in the 1760s–70s as well as one with mossy growth that can be dated to the early nineteenth century. The design of these pieces can be ascribed to Innocente Colomba, his successors Giosué Scotti and Nicolas Guibal as well as a court artist who was active under King Friedrich in the beginning of the nineteenth century; thus,

<sup>49</sup> On the *Rocks Scene* see *ibid.*, ch. III.3.

the *Rocks Scene* provides a clear overview of several decades of set design at the Württemberg court.

To add to both the forest and rock elements, there are set pieces available as needed that could be freely placed on stage:<sup>50</sup> a two-part deciduous tree, an enormous boulder (Fig. 12) as well as two low floor pieces depicting grassy and rocky grounds, respectively (cf. Fig. 11). From the painterly execution, it can be concluded that these objects were made in the early nineteenth century. According to the inventories, at least the tree and the boulder came from the Opernhaus Stuttgart.

#### 4. Vineyard Area (*Weinberggegend*)

To create the so-called *Vineyard Area* (Fig. 13), eight flats and a backdrop that previously belonged to an *Agricultural Landscape* (*Kulturlandschaft*) and six later flats depicting a *Village Street* (*Dorfstraße*) are available for use.<sup>51</sup> The two groups of flats could be brought on stage individually; however, for the most part, the scenery was probably used with a combination of both varieties. The flats of the *Agricultural Landscape* depict fruit trees and grapevines that rise behind a brick wall (Fig. 14) as well as a farmer's cottage in an overgrown front garden; the accompanying backdrop displays a hilly landscape with farmsteads, cultivated fields and kitchen gardens.<sup>52</sup> The image is characterised by a certain painterly disorder that can be judged as a deliberate counter-design to the courtly principles of clarity and symmetry. The components of the set highly likely came from the opera house, built in 1767, in the secondary residence at Kirchheim, which Duke Carl Eugen liked to visit especially in the fall, as he enjoyed hunting in nearby Schönbuch. The interior decor and probably also the stage inventory of the venue, which was built in a former horticultural nursery, were created under the leadership of Giosué Scotti.

The elements of the *Agricultural Landscape* were later raised a considerable amount, and their new dimensions suggest that they were very likely resized for use in the Opernhaus Stuttgart. The transfer might have been carried out between 1775 and 1779, after Carl Eugen had again relocated his main residence to Stuttgart and the students of the ducal theatre institute were for a time working in the large opera hall in all fields of the performing arts. At that moment, not only opera seria was performed there, as in former times, but also with increasing frequency the lighter genres of singspiel, opéra comique and popular ballet; in this context, a rural ambience was in great demand. In this phase, the picturesque vil-

<sup>50</sup> See *ibid.*, ch. III.2.5.5 and ch. III.3.4.

<sup>51</sup> On the *Vineyard Area* see *ibid.*, ch. III.4.

<sup>52</sup> The *Agricultural Landscape* can be assigned to the opera buffa *Il filosofo di campagna* (text: Carlo Goldoni), which was performed for the first time in Kirchheim on 3 October 1767, before which it had likely been mounted in the Opernhaus Grafeneck or in Theater Solitude. Acts I and III of the libretto call for, among others, a "Campagna con casa rustica" (countryside with a rustic house), see *Il filosofo di campagna* [textbook], Venice 1754 (Library of Congress ML48 [S3452]), pp. 14, 36). It is very likely that the scenery related to this theme that was created for Kirchheim was also used in other secondary residences when *Il filosofo* was programmed there.



Fig. 11. *Rocks Scene*, complete picture in combination with elements of the *Forest Landscape*. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/Joachim Feist)



Fig. 12. *Rocky Hill*, set piece. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater, Sch.L. 5688 (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/Joachim Feist)





Fig. 13. *Vineyard Area*, complete picture. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/Joachim Feist)



Fig. 14. *Vineyard Area*, two flats, canvas, lean bound colour, softwood. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater, Sch.L. 5657 and 5665 (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/Joachim Feist)

lage-house flats may have been added, with which the *Agricultural Landscape* could be expanded into a spacious countryside idyll. Two of the left-side flats are erstwhile tent flats, the front sides of which were painted over without changing the external contour, lending the house façades an unusual shape. This approach reveals the heavy toll that the necessity of economising was already taking at that time. When the *Vineyard Area* was created in the context of the revivification of the Schlosstheater at the beginning of the nineteenth century, probably those elements of the countryside idyll that had been used in a centre or rear stage position in Stuttgart and were lower in height were chosen as they could be used in the smaller venue without extensive modifications.<sup>53</sup> That the adopted flats of the former *Agricultural Landscape* – due to the previous generous elevation – were nevertheless all somewhat too high for the Ludwigsburg stage and the upper reaches of it were partially hidden by the borders was deemed acceptable.

### 5. Street Scene (*Straßenbild*)

The urban *Street Scene* (Fig. 15) is completely heterogenous in its composition.<sup>54</sup> Two flats depicting arcade segments, which through a sophisticated folding mechanism consisting of movable canvas sections can change shape from an intact building to ruins on the open stage, are the only preserved examples of their kind and thus are of the highest value in the context of theatre history. Both of these unusual objects give an idea of how the illusionistic effects that were highly prized by the public could be realised on the Baroque stage. Also of particular interest is an artistically attractive fountain wall put together from a flat and a contra-flat. Based on a study of sources, the design can be attributed to Jean Nicolas Servandoni (1695–1766), the widely renowned Parisian court decorator. For a little more than a year between 1763/64, he was engaged in Stuttgart as theatre architect Colomba was temporarily unavailable due to family commitments. The Ludwigsburg inventory thus contains the only extant scenery element designed by Servandoni, which is yet another treasure for theatre history. In addition to this, there is a flat depicting a wall segment as well as five house façades from various contexts featuring both Baroque and early-neoclassicist style elements (Fig. 16), making the complete collection of flats into a colourful, mixed potpourri.

The backdrop previously used in combination with the city flats has been lost; however, there is a photo from 1922 that provides us with an idea of the image.<sup>55</sup> Ancient buildings as well as ones bearing both Renaissance and Baroque charac-

<sup>53</sup> The stage set compiled for Ludwigsburg is listed as *Dorf* in the nineteenth-century inventories (as note 30, 1818, n. p.; 1823, n. p.; 1866, p. 4; 1893, p. 4). In the complete inventory Schloss Ludwigsburg of 1931 (as note 33, p. 883), it is named *Weinbergsgegend*, a designation that has been retained to this day, although it does not fully correspond to the depiction: a fruit tree plantation can be seen, in which only individual vines thrive.

<sup>54</sup> The commonly used designation *Straßenbild* also stems from the complete inventory (as note 33, p. 880). Research into all the individual elements of this set is found in Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. III.5.

<sup>55</sup> StAL EL 228 a I Nr 985.





Fig. 15. *Street Scene*, complete picture. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/Joachim Feist)

teristics are united to form a veduta that was probably intended to depict the city of Rome. The compositionally not-fully mature work was likely created for the Theater Solitude under the leadership of Giosué Scotti by the academy students. Today, in the absence of an available and appropriate alternative, the backdrop from the *Vineyard Area* is used with the city-scene flats.

#### 6. Set pieces and stage curtains

The eighteenth-century stock contains three set pieces that cannot be immediately associated with any of the preserved decorations.<sup>56</sup> The *Ship* (*Schiff*) could belong to the few remaining objects in the entire collection that were originally created for the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg; in this case, it would be a product from Innocente Colomba's workshop.<sup>57</sup> The *Back Wall of a Throne* (*Thronrückwand*), viewed from the side, possesses an imperial character in its style and could stem from one of the grand opera seria productions from the 1760s that Colomba furnished; individual elements of the throne decor can also be found in oth-

<sup>56</sup> See Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. III.6.

<sup>57</sup> The inventory of set decorations from 1766, HStAS A 21 Bü 849, p. 9, lists a *Ship* in the Schlosstheater. The backside of the preserved set piece carries the inscription "No: 4 Academie"; so it was also used at times in the Kleines Theater Stuttgart, also known as the "Academy Theatre" (Akademietheater), and, after the fire there, may have returned to the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg.



Fig. 16. *Street Scene, two flats*, canvas, lean bound colour, softwood. Ludwigsburg, Schlosstheater, Sch.L. 5548 and 5553 (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/Joachim Feist)



er works of the artist.<sup>58</sup> The *Balustrade* (*Balustrata*) may likewise have come into being under Colomba. The lattice-like, openwork knobs in the middle of the narrow balusters correspond to the imaginative design of individual motifs that are typical of the unconventional set designer.<sup>59</sup>

Also included in the eighteenth-century inventory is the main curtain of the Schlosstheater (Fig. 17) with its depiction of *Apollo and the Muses* (*Apoll und die Musen*). This piece was traditionally considered to be the work of Innocente Colomba and was dated 1763 despite the lack of archival evidence to support this assertion.<sup>60</sup> The image nevertheless points to the work of the master in many respects such that the conception and also a portion of its execution can be attributed to him with some certainty.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, a smaller proscenium curtain painted with a depiction of a *Muses' Dance* (*Musenreigen*) can be connected to Giosué Scotti; according to inscriptions on the backside, it served in the theatres in both Grafeneck and Teinach.<sup>62</sup> This piece may have originally been produced for the Opernhaus Grafeneck, the furnishing of which can be proved to have been Scotti's responsibility, and later loaned to Bad Teinach. In particular, the physiognomies of the persons depicted correspond to works attributed with certainty to the artist.

### *The Ludwigsburg eighteenth-century inventory in the European context*

The findings regarding the art-historical classification of the eighteenth-century set decorations in the Ludwigsburg collection now make it possible to relate these to the other extant holdings of that period. It turned out that the objects that were produced before 1766 – eight flats from *The Elysian Fields*, the forest backdrop, the flat portraying a wall segment, the double flat forming a fountain wall and the rock frames for a mountain decoration – are the oldest-known surviving exterior decorations of the Baroque theatre.<sup>63</sup> The four youngest flats from *The Elysian Fields*, the majority of the flats from the *Forest Landscape*, the flats from the *Agricultural Landscape* as well as both arcade flats with a transformation mechanism, which all can be dated to the years 1766/67, were created in the same period as the collection in Český Krumlov and the oldest objects in Drottningholm, so com-

<sup>58</sup> The set piece could, for example, have belonged to the furnishing of the opera *L'Alessandro nell'Indie*. The 1766 inventory, p. 7, mentions "Alexsander's throne and chariot" ("Thron und Wagen von Alexsander").

<sup>59</sup> The 1766 inventory, HStAS A 21 Bü 849, p. 13, lists a balustrade in the collection of the Opernhaus Stuttgart.

<sup>60</sup> See Klaus Merten, *Schloss Ludwigsburg*, München 1989, p. 37; Berger, *Die Feste des Herzogs*, pp. 137–139.

<sup>61</sup> See Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. III.7.

<sup>62</sup> See *ibid.*, ch. III.8.

<sup>63</sup> Only the interior set of the *Temple de Minerve*, created by the Slodtz brothers for a performance of the opera *Thésée* (Quinault/Lully) in 1754 in the theatre of Fontainebleau, which was transferred to the théâtre de la Reine in Versailles in 1846, is older, see Gousset/Richter, *Les décors de scène*, pp. 23f.

parisons may be instructive. While the Krumau forest scene (Fig. 18), for example, is characterised by decoratively stylised, vividly intertwined forms that appear closely indebted to Rococo aesthetics, among the Ludwigsburg landscape elements in particular the forest flats testify to an artistic approach more closely oriented towards nature and geared towards formal calming, which can be associated with the tendencies of emerging neoclassicism. Comparable in this respect are the flats of a forest scene preserved at Drottningholm and originating from Gripsholm<sup>64</sup> that can be dated at least fifteen years later than the Ludwigsburg flats – proof of the advanced quality of Colomba's designs. The pieces of the Ludwigsburg inventory that are produced in the 1770s and 1780s, however, such as the city backdrop, which survives only in illustration, and the village-house flats, show similarities with objects in Drottningholm and Litomyšl in terms of motifs. This indicates that, after the departure of Innocente Colomba, who had preferred an independent formal language, there was a growing orientation towards generally accessible design models. The more contrasting, more strongly contoured painting style, which is observable in the Ludwigsburg village-house flats, also finds correspondence in Drottningholm and Litomyšl and can be understood as part of an overarching development in the stage design art of the later eighteenth century.

## Conclusion

The eighteenth-century stage decorations in the collection of the Ludwigsburg Schlosstheater can be regarded not only as the valuable legacy of theatre activity under Duke Carl Eugen but also as descriptive evidence of fundamental developments in European set design. Through the attribution of numerous elements to Innocente Colomba and the predating that has been revealed in contrast to previous estimates, the independent and progressive features of these objects can be grasped through international comparison. At the same time, the artistic quality of these pieces, which is still recognisable despite their blighted condition and considerable revisions, is brought into the spotlight. Further research into the essence of Württemberg set decoration in the second half of the eighteenth century, such as examining the organisation of the workshop and the respective roles of the forces involved in the production process, is a worthy endeavour, especially since the detailed archival material promises still more information. An additional desideratum is the undertaking of a thorough investigation of the neoclassicist decorations so that the complete inventory can be made accessible for interested readers in the context of a comprehensive publication.

<sup>64</sup> See Stribolt, *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres*, pp. 350f., inv. nos. GRH 3800 A–H; also Schumacher, *Zeugnisse fürstlichen Glanzes*, ch. III.2.6.



Fig. 17. *Apollo and the Muses*, proscenium curtain, canvas, lean bound colour. Ludwigsburg, Schloss-theater, Sch.L. 5541 (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg/Joachim Feist)



Fig. 18. *Forest (Les)*, complete picture. Český Krumlov, castle theatre (Stiftung des Barocktheaters Český Krumlov)

