

Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben
von Johann Peter Pixis

Shortly after Johann Peter Pixis died in Baden-Baden 1874, the local newspaper published on the day of his funeral an extended necrology which ended with the words »...his name shall be remembered with honour. « Nevertheless the name of Johann Peter Pixis nowadays, if at all, is only familiar in specialist circles. Even specific contributions and dedications in relevant specialist dictionaries like „Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart“, or the „New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians“ could not prevent his fate of being mostly forgotten. Perhaps things would have been different if his memoirs had been published during his lifetime, of which his obituary says: »In the last years of his life he used his loneliness to write down his memories which are richly equipped with descriptions of adventures and personalities. Their publication by his cousin from Prague can be expected.« Nevertheless this publication never occurred. It seems that the Austrian musical scientist and critic Richard Batka had the opportunity to have a glance at the end of the 19th Century, as they served him as a basis for a short biography, which appeared in the form of 5 articles in the Prague Paper “Bohemia” between March 1899 and February 1900. After that the track of these memories is lost until at the end of 2018 they were offered on loan to the KUG-University Library to be scientifically developed. Johann Peter Pixis was born in Mannheim February 10th 1788 and was the second son of the organist Friedrich Wilhelm Pixis. The musical education of both boys started at an early stage. The elder boy – Friedrich Wilhelm the younger – would become a highly regarded violinist. After the father lost his position as an organist, the parents took both brothers as prodigies (as they were in a sense wonder children) on an extensive concert tour through northern Germany, Scandinavia and the Baltic countries, before settling down in Vienna, where the boys would become the last pupils that J. G. Albrechtsberger would accept. Johann Peters concert tour to Paris 1829 led to his permanent relocation to Paris, where he lived and worked as a respected composer and music teacher for over ten years and where he became friends to the musical celebrities of those days, like Liszt, Paër, Meyerbeer, Donizetti and Rossini.

During a Spa stay in Baden-Baden he became acquainted to the 15 year old Franziska Göhringer, daughter of a local innkeeper, and recognized her vocal talent at once. Once her parents more or less instructed Pixis to educate the girl, she accompanied him to Paris where she received a solid musical education (her voice teacher was Ferdinando Paër, at that time 69 years old) and finally was adopted by J. P. Pixis. Together they undertook extensive travels through Germany, the Habsburg Countries and especially Italy, during which course Francilla Pixis (as she called herself now) became a celebrated Prima Donna, performing on the leading stages in these countries. That her name doesn't have the same ring as a Giulia Grisi or Maria Malibran is caused by the fact that at 26 she married the Sicilian nobleman Ugo di Sant' Onofrio del Castillo and retired from the stage.

Goal of the nascent thesis is to open up the 5 volumes of the ”Memories from my Live”, as Pixis calls them, into a scientific profound edition and make them accessible for an interested audience. They are supplemented by a so far unknown diary from a travel to Italy that young Pixis undertook with the violinist Joseph Böhm in the year 1818. Altogether these memories with their almost 900 pages, and the journal, allow a fascinating insight in the musical life of the first third of the nineteenth century in general and of the opera metier and business in particular.