After Count Brühl had assumed direction of the theater in January 1815, the *Dramaturgisches Wochenblatt in nächster Beziehung auf die königlichen Schauspiele zu Berlin* (DW) was established. The editor of this new weekly journal was the classical archeologist and author Konrad Levezow (1770-1835); author Franz Horn (1781-1837) was his coeditor. In the first issue of 8 July 1815, the editors praised the theater's new management and declared that the journal's main objective was to regularly inform the public about the most recent developments onstage and behind the scenes, and to take note of the improvements, from a historical perspective, that could now be expected in the development of German dramatic art.\(^1\) The fact that the journal was also the official organ of the new management is evident from Levezow’s defense a year later against allegations of publishing excessively mild reviews in his journal. True criticism, he stated, is grounded in love for the cause and for art, of which mildness and leniency are intrinsic qualities.\(^2\)

The journal was just one month old when Brühl asked Hoffmann to contribute musical reviews to the *DW*. Hoffmann commented on this request in a letter to Fouqué:

Brühl hat […] mich zugleich aufgefordert, in dem (äußerst steifen und langweiligen) dramaturgischen Blatt die musikalische Parthie zu übernehmen. Vielleicht gelingt es mir, da ich weder Professor noch Doktor bin, etwas Leben hineinzubringen, wenn mir der Himmel viel Laune und Athem schenkt!

(\(\text{Brühl [...] at the same time asked me to take over the musical part of the (extremely stiff and boring) Dramaturgisches Wochenblatt [Dramaturgical Weekly]. I}\))

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\(^1\) *Dramaturgisches Wochenblatt* (DW) no. 1 (8 July 1815), p.2

\(^2\) ‘Sie glauben es sich eher zum Lobe als zum Tadel anrechnen zu können, wenn man ihnen zuweilen den Vorwurf einer zu großen Milde in ihren Kritiken gemacht hat. Die ächte Kritik ist fern von allen persönlichen Rücksichten und stützt sich nur auf Liebe zur Sache und der Kunst, und von dieser ist Milde und Schonung unzertrennlich’. (‘They believe it should be taken as praise rather than criticism, if they have sometimes been met with allegations of too much mildness in their critiques. Genuine criticism is far removed from all personal considerations and is only based on love for the cause and the arts, from which mildness and consideration are inseparable.’) *DW* no. 26 (29 June 1816), p.201.
may succeed in bringing some life into it, since I am neither a professor nor a
doctor, provided heaven gives me a lot of good humor and breath.)}

Hoffmann’s poor opinion of the new journal and his rather malicious barb
against Professor Levezow and Doctor Horn, who wrote many of the
articles themselves, clearly indicated that their efforts left much to be
desired with regard to artistic insight and creativity. Hoffmann’s reviews for
the journal, which ceased publication after 28 June 1817, can be divided into
two groups: the first appearing in 1815, the second in 1816, followed by his
final contribution of 1817, entitled Die Kunstverwandten (*The Ones Related
through Art*), a lengthy satire on the problems of staging an opera, and
theatrical issues in general.

**Reviews of 1815**

Hoffmann took up his task seriously and reviewed five out of the ten
operatic productions staged during September 1815. As the subjects of his
reviews, he selected two German works, (Winter’s *Opferfest* and B. A.
Weber’s *Sulmalle*), two Italian operas (Paer’s *Camilla* and Mozart’s *Don
Giovanni*), and one French work (Sacchini’s *Œdipe à Colonnes*). Since only one
of these five reviews has been translated into English, each will be briefly
discussed here. Considering these reviews in light of the cultural and
political developments in Berlin and its theater reveals that they are more
than simply routine reviews of random performances at the Prussian
capital’s theater. Hoffmann’s careful selection of German, Italian, and
French works indicates his interest in various opera traditions, but more
importantly, the way he formulated his critiques and the aspects he
commented on also reveal both his awareness of his reviews’ political and
personal implications and a conscious agenda for the future of opera,
particularly in Berlin.

In the first review, which appeared on 23 September 1815, Hoffmann
discussed a performance of Peter von Winter’s *Das unterbrochene Opferfest* (*The

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4 Review of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, see Charlton, pp.397-401.
5 Norbert Miller uses the term ‘Routine-Besprechung’, and states that Hoffmann’s
Berlin reviews of 1815 and 1816 add almost nothing new. Miller, ‘Hoffmann und
Spontini’, pp.416 fn.25, 420, 421). Gerhard Allroggen sees these reviews as being
cursory reflections of day-to-day performances, sometimes scribbled in haste.