

When the Bonn stage was closed after the death of Elector Max Friedrich in 1784, the director of its theatre company, Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grobmann, decided to leave the city to further his career elsewhere in the Rhinelands. During the next few

years, he was kept informed about developments in Bonn by two of his erstwhile colleagues, Christian Gottlob Neefe and Nikolaus Simrock, whose correspondence paints a vivid picture of musical life in the city during the later 1780s. The new Elector, Maxilian Franz, permitted a visiting troupe to perform during Carnival each year, but repeatedly delayed the decision to re-establish a resident troupe. In 1787 Christoph Brandt, a singer in the Bonn Hofkapelle, attempted a home-grown initiative, perhaps to test the market for a new permanent company. Although this failed almost immediately, a single, well-attended public rehearsal of Monsigny's *Le Déserteur* was given, in which Johann van Beethoven made what was probably his last stage appearance. In a letter dated 14 May 1787, Simrock rated his performance 'zünftig gut'. In the event, a new Bonn troupe was not recruited until 1789, when it featured the young singer Magdalena Willmann. Neefe and his musical colleagues were relieved finally to be able to resume their theatrical careers.