

The political *Argenia*: the opera *Die beständige Argenia* by Johann Valentin Meder against the background of the political events of its time

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Abstract

The performance in Tallinn in 1680 of *Die beständige Argenia* (*Constant Argenia*; 1680), the first opera written and performed in Estonia, at a time when opera was quite new even in Germany, may be considered an absolutely extraordinary event. Its author Johann Valentin Meder (1649–1719) held the post of the *Kantor* of *Gymnasium* at this time and the opera was the greatest undertaking outside his official duties. Strong political, cultural and economic links with Sweden and Germany played an important role in the history of the opera; the connections between the subject of the opera and the real events (the Scanian War and marriage in 1679 of the Swedish King Karl XI and the princess of Denmark Ulrike Eleonore) caused several problems to Meder. Yet the attitude of the council of Tallinn in matters concerning the opera and Meder is to be interpreted as highly protective, the more so as the Council found itself in a complicated situation with Stockholm at the time. The paper considers the historical background of the opera in detail, establishing the chronological events relating to the performance on the basis of archive research.