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Count Domenico Lodron’s letter of recommendation for the Mozarts (27 Dec 1769)

Dexter Edge and Stefano Frega

Bologna, Archivio Pallavicini s. III c, b. 286, a. 1769, p. II

[recto:]

Eccellenza:
Quelli, che ha l’alto onore di presentare all’Eccellenza V[ost]ra Questo
mio ossequio foglio, si è l’eccellente Virtuoso Sig. Mozard
Maestro di Capella di sua Altezza l’Arcivescovo Principe di
Salisburgo. Se nota non mi fosse l’abilità, e scien=
za di Questo detto soggietto, che e un portento di Natura s’
acerti pure, ch’io presa non m’avrei la Libertà di
raccomandarlo al valido Patrocinio dell’Eccellenza V[ost]ra;
E ciò che maggiormente mi fà cuore a raccomandar=
glielo si è, perchè ha seco un figliuolo dell’età all’
incirca di tredici Anni, il Qualle a dire il vero è
un portento della Madre Natura; perchè egli è in gra=
do di far spicare la sua Virtù a Copella di Qualunque
anche consumato Professore, e Maestro di Capella
si nel suonare il Clavicembalo, che nel compore
all’improviso. Attese adunque Queste Me=
ravigliose Qualità, e doti del Padre; ma singo=
larmente quelle del tenero figlio, che non ha pari,
e degne le giudico de di Lei Riflessi, mi fò
a caldamente raccomandarli al Eccellenza V[ost]ra,
affine che si degni acompagnarli con Lettere
raccomandatizie per Roma, e Napoli, ove addriz=
zato [h]anno il loro Camino, ed affinchè graziar li
Voglia

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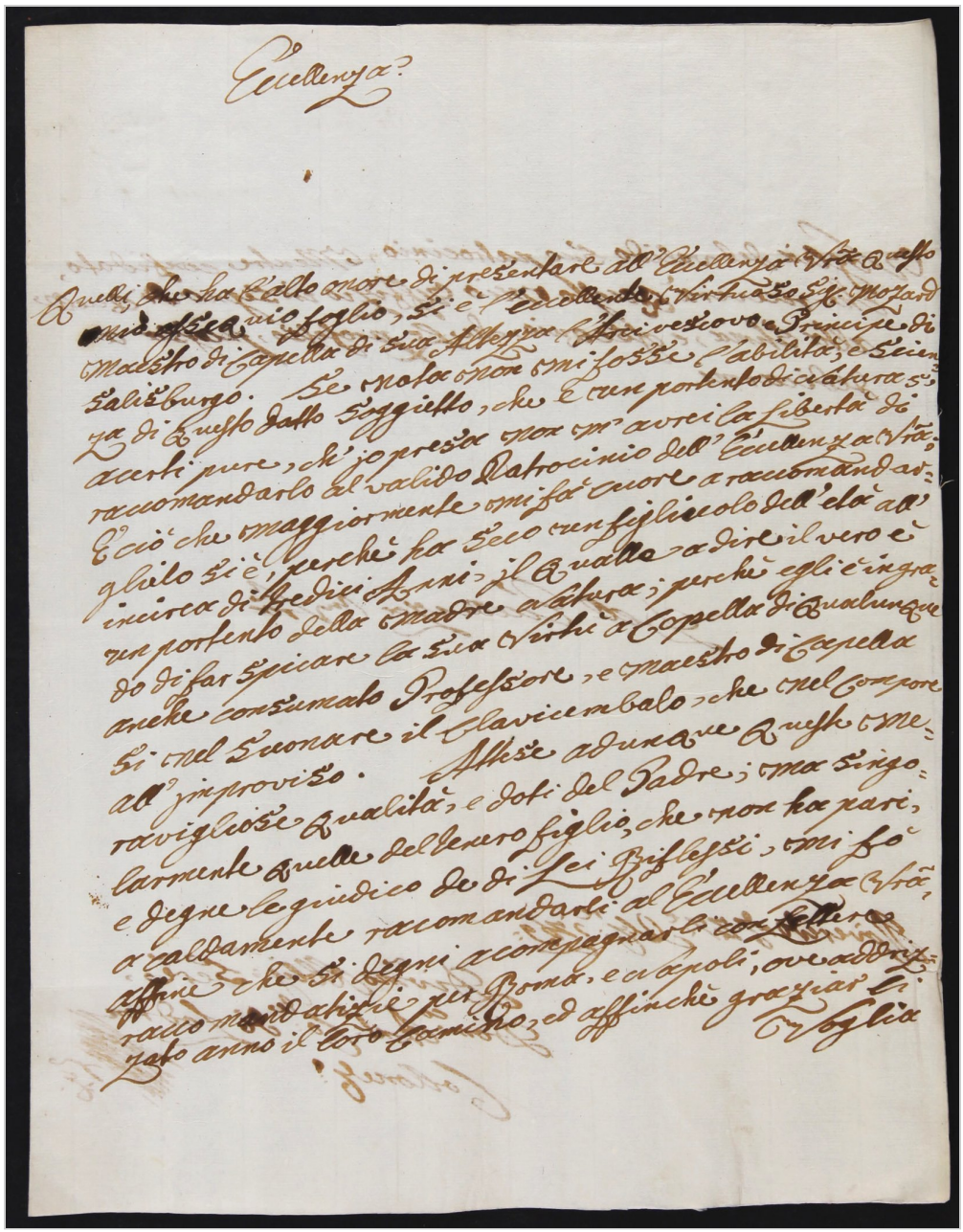


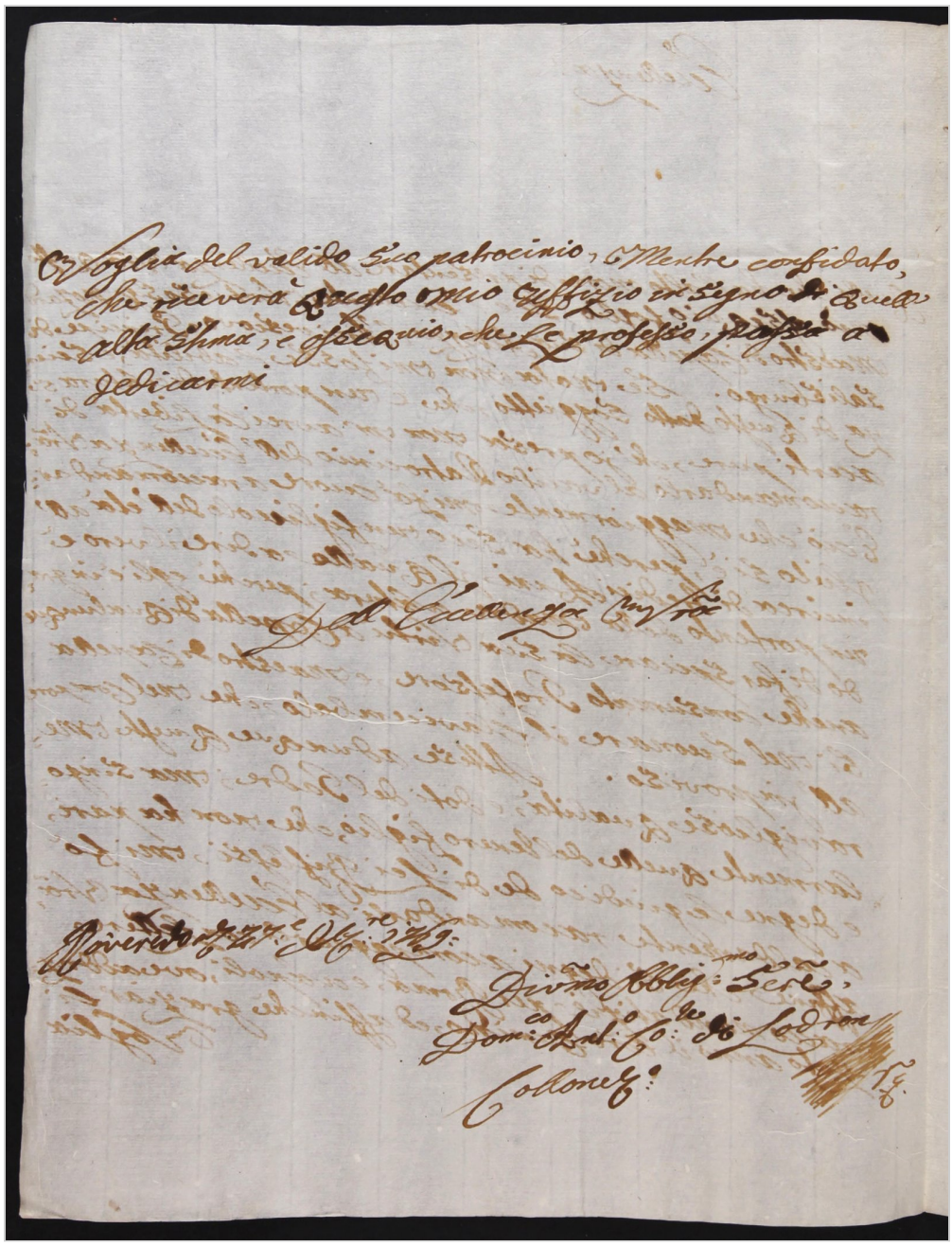
[verso:]

Voglia del valido suo patrocinio, Mentre confidato,
che riceverà Questo mio Uffizio in segno di Quell’
alta stima, e ossequio, che Le professo, passo a
dedicarmi

Dell *[sic]* Eccellenza V[ost]ra

Roveredo a[dì] 27:[e] Dec:[re] 1769:

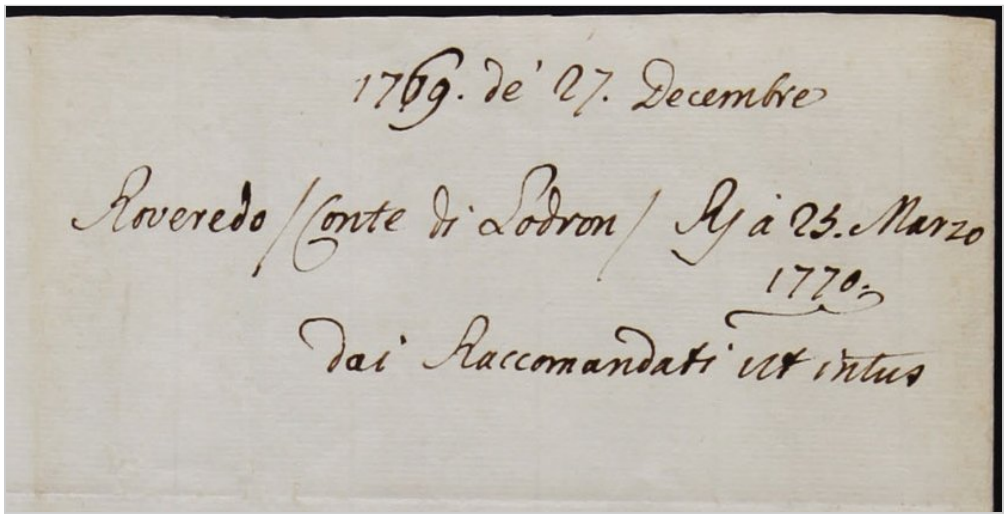
Div[ottisimo]mo Oblig:[mo] Ser[vitor]e,
Dom:[co] Ant:[o] Co:[te] di Lodron[mpia]
Collonel:[o]



[wrapper:]

Lettere ~~N~~.o 1. 1769. de’ 27. Decembre
Roveredo / Conte di Lodron / Rj à 25. Marzo
1770.
dai Raccomandati ut intus

[transcription by Bruce Alan Brown]



[translation:]

Excellency:

He who has the high honor of presenting to Your
Excellency my respectful letter is the excellent virtuoso Sig.
Mozart, Maestro di Cappella to His Highness the Prince-
Archbishop of Salzburg. If the ability and skill of said subject
were not known to me—that he is without doubt a prodigy
of nature—I would not have taken the liberty to recommend
him as worthy of Your Excellency's patronage; and that which
principally gives me courage to recommend him is that
he has with him a boy around thirteen years of age, of whom
it can truly be said that he is a prodigy of Mother Nature;
because his refined virtuosity is of a degree that stands
out from any other seasoned professors and maestri di cappelli,
whether in cembalo playing or composing on the spot.
Given therefore these marvelous qualities and talents of the
father; but especially those of the young son, who is without
equal and is worthy of Your considered judgement, I can
warmly recommend him to Your Excellency, in order that you
might deign to accompany them with letters of recommendation
for Rome and Naples, to which their journey takes them; and
in order that you favor him with your worthy patronage;
while I am confident that my charge will be received as
a token of the high esteem and respect I hold for you,
I therefore commend myself

To Your Excellency

Rovereto on 27 Dec 1769:

Your most devoted and obliged servant,
Domenico Antonio Count di Lodron
Colonel

Commentary

On 13 Dec 1769 Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart departed Salzburg for the first of their three trips to Italy. Following a brief stopover in Innsbruck from 17 to 19 Dec, they traveled across the Alps via the Brenner pass, arriving in Bressanone (Brixen) on 20 Dec and Bolzano (Bozen) the next day. They then proceeded to Rovereto in Trentino, where they arrived on 24 Dec and stayed over Christmas, before continuing on to Verona on 27 Dec (see our entries for 5 Jan 1770 and 8 Jan 1770).

This letter of recommendation for the Mozarts, dated the day of their departure from Rovereto, was written by Count Domenico Lodron to Count Gian Luca Pallavicini-Centurione in Bologna. The letter is today preserved in the Archivio Pallavicini in the Archivio di Stato di Bologna; it was first published by Anelide Nascimbene in 1994 in her "Mysliveček e i Mozart a Bologna. Documenti, cronaca e critica" (Nascimbene 1994, 10–12). The letter is not in *Dokumente* or *Neue Folge*, and remains little known to Mozart scholars. It is published here in facsimile for the first time, with a new and corrected transcription by Bruce Alan Brown.

The geneaology of the noble Lodron family is long and complex, and secondary sources disagree on details. For this commentary it sufficient to understand that the primogenital and secundogenital lines of the family can be traced back to two sons of Count Francesco I di Lodron (1468–1505): Paride (Paris V) and Nicola. (On sources for the genealogy of the Lodron family, see the *Notes* below.) The head of the main branch of the primogenital line at the time of Leopold and Wolfgang's Italian trips was Count Ernst Maria von Lodron (1716–1779) in Salzburg. Ernst Maria's second wife, Countess Antonia *née* von Arco (1738–1780), was a daughter of Count Johann Georg Anton Felix von Arco (see our entry for 11 Dec 1769); Wolfgang later composed his "Lodron" divertimenti for her name-day (13 Jun) in 1776 (K. 247, with the March, K. 248) and 1777 (K. 287), and he wrote his "Lodron" Concerto in F Major for Three Keyboards, K. 242 (1776) for her and her daughters Maria Aloysia and Maria Josepha. Count Ernst Maria von Lodron's sisters Maria Theresia (1733–1764) and Maria Johanna (b. 1735) were the second and third wives respectively of Prince (Fürst) Michael II von Thurn und Taxis in Mantua. It was Prince Michael and Johanna who snubbed Leopold and Wolfgang when they attempted to visit the couple in Mantua on 11 and 12 Jan 1770 (see our entry for 11 Dec 1769).

The head of the secundogenital Lodron line was Count Nicola Sebastiano di Lodron-Laterano-Castelromano (Nikolaus Sebastian, 1719–1792), born in Trent, who at the time of the Mozarts' Italian journeys was Obersthofmarschall in Salzburg (Angermüller & Margreiter 2005, 268–69). During the Mozarts' stay in Rovereto over Christmas 1769, they encountered two of Nicola

Sebastiano's brothers, both likewise born in Trent: Counts Massimiliano Settimo (Max Septimus, 1727–1796) and Domenico Antonio (1728–1806). Leopold mentions both in his travel notes:

> *Roveredo:*
> *[...]*
>
> Il sig: Conte de septimo Ladron. *[sic]*
> Conte Domenico Ladron. *[...]*
> [*Briefe*, i:296–97]

In a letter to his wife from Verona on 7 Jan 1770, he also writes that at Christmas dinner in Rovereto he had met "Comte Septimo", to whom he had a letter of recommendation from "Sr: Ex: Hofmarschall" (His Excellency the Hofmarschall), meaning Settimo's brother Count Nicola Sebastiano in Salzburg (*Briefe*, i:298). Settimo had studied at the university in Salzburg in the 1740s, and Leopold may have known him from that time. In 1769 Settimo was *Erzpriester* (arch priest) and *Dechant* (dean) of the *comune* Villa Lagarina. His younger brother Count Domenico Antonio, who wrote the letter of recommendation at the top of this page, joined the Habsburg military in 1745, distinguishing himself during the seige of Schweidnitz (Świdnica) in 1762 during the Seven Years' War, for which he was awarded the cross of the Order of Maria Theresia (Maria-Theresien-Orden; Wurzbach 1866, xv:369–70). He left active service in 1765, and settled in his homeland. The meeting in Rovereto seems to have been the Mozarts' only encounter with Domenico, whose name does not occur elsewhere in the family's correspondence.

Wurzbach (1866) includes two detailed Lodron family trees (here and here). His genealogy conflicts in various details with other secondary sources, but according to Wurzbach, Count Ernst Maria of the primogenital line and Counts Nicola Sebastiano, Settimo, and Domenico of the secundogental line shared a fifth-great-grandfather, Francesco I, and were thus sixth cousins.

Domenico's letter of recommendation is addressed to Count Gian (also Giovanni) Luca Pallavicini-Centurione (1697–1773) in Bologna. Count Gian Luca was born in Genoa. Following a brief stint as Genoa's ambassador to the Habsburg court in Vienna, he entered imperial service, heading Habsburg naval forces during the War of the Polish Succession (1733–1735) and its flotilla on the Danube during a war with the Ottomans (1737–1739). He was Governor of Mantua from 1742–1745, and Governor of Austrian Lombardy (with some gaps) from 1747. In 1753, Pallavicini settled in Bologna. He was named Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece that same year and General-Feldmarschall in 1754. He retired from all official duties in 1768; when the Mozarts met him in Mar 1770, he was 72 years old. (On Count Gian Luca Pallavicini, see *Treccani,* it.wikipedia, and Wurzbach.)

Leopold and Wolfgang left Rovereto on 27 Dec 1769, continuing on to Verona, where they stayed from 27 Dec to 10 Jan. Wolfgang performed at a concert of the Accademia filarmonica there and had his portrait painted (see our entries for 5 Jan 1770 and 8 Jan 1770). From 10 to 19 Jan they were in Mantua, where Wolfgang performed at a concert in the Teatro scientifico

dell'accademia (see our entry for 11 Dec 1769). They then proceeded on to Milan, where they stayed for seven weeks, departing on 14 Mar. They visited Parma and Modena on their way to Bologna, after which they went on to Florence and Rome, where they arrived on 11 Apr.

Their stopover in Bologna was intended to be brief, as Leopold hoped to reach Rome by Holy Week (Easter was on 17 Apr that year). In the event, they arrived in Bologna on 24 Mar, and stayed until 29 Mar. They presented themselves to Count Pallavicini on 25 Mar, the day after their arrival, and the count immediately organized a concert for Wolfgang the following day, to which he invited 150 of the first nobility, as well as the eminent composer and teacher Padre Martini. In Milan Leopold had been able to acquire a second letter of recommendation to Pallavicini, from Count Carlo di Firmian (1718–1782), Habsburg minister plenipotentiary in Austrian Lombardy (*Dokumente*, 100–101; on Firmian, see our entry for 4 Apr 1770). Firmian's letter of recommendation seems ultimately to have been more important than Count Domenico Lodron's for establishing the Mozarts' connection with Count Pallavicini: Firmian's letter is the only one that Leopold mentions (see below) and it is registered in Count Pallavicini's correspondence book in connection with the concert:

> Essendo stati raccomandati con lettera di S. E. il Sige. Conte Carlo di Firmian nel loro passaggio per Bologna Il Sige. Leopoldo Mozart Maestro di Musica al servizio del Sige. Principe Arcivescovo di Salisburgo, e il di lui figlio Gio. Giorgio Wolfango Mozart Maestro di Musica, e Compositore in età ora di 13. anni si è tenuta quest'oggi giorno 26. un'Accademia di Musica ... [*Dokumente*, 102]

> Having been recommended by a letter from His Excellency Count Carlo di Firmian, during their passage through Bologna, Leopold Mozart, Kapellmeister in the service of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, and his son Johann Georg Wolfgang Mozart, master of music and composer, presently aged 13, a musical academy was given this very day, 26 [Mar] ...

(See also the more extended transcription in Angermüller & Margreiter 2005, 67, which includes the names of the nobility invited to the concert.) The date on the wrapper shows that Lodron's letter was received the same day, 25 Mar 1770—but if it is recorded in Pallavicini's correspondence book, the entry has so far escaped the notice of Mozart scholars.

Count Firmian's letter might have been given precedence over Domenico's because Firmian would have been regarded as Pallivicini's equal in prestige and position, whereas Domenico was a step or two below. In addition, Leopold might have felt that Domenico's hasty scrawl would not make the best impression; in any case, Domenico's letter is unusual in mentioning Leopold's talents and referring to him as a "prodigy of nature," whereas Leopold was certainly attempting to promote his son, not himself, so he may have felt that Domenico's letter misrepresented his intention. Yet the preservation of Domenico's letter in the Pallavicini archive shows that the letter was indeed given to the count—and even if Firmian's letter was ultimately more important, Leopold's acquisition of a letter from Domenico in Rovereto on 27 Dec, three months before reaching Bologna, shows foresight and advance planning. Leopold seems in general to have seized

opportunities to acquire potentially useful letters of recommendation when he had the chance; in this case, he could not have been certain when they were in Rovereto that he would be able to acquire any other letter to Pallavicini—and any letter of recommendation was better than none. We do not know, in fact, whether Leopold planned from the start of the first Italian journey to visit Count Pallavicini in Bologna. It is not out of the question that the idea arose in conversation with Count Domenico and others in Rovereto. Although we do not know whether Domenico was personally acquainted with Pallavicini, he was probably chosen to write the letter (or he may have volunteered) because he and Pallavicini both had prominent careers in the Habsburg military. Domenico's letter also suggests that Pallavicini consider writing the Mozarts letters of introduction for Rome and Naples, whereas Firmian's letter does not mention this.

Whether or not Leopold planned in advance to visit Count Pallavicini in Bologna, and whatever the influence of Count Domenico's letter, the connection with Pallavicini proved to be an important one for the Mozarts. In addition to the concert and the badly needed 20 zecchini they received for it, as well as the introduction to Padre Martini, Pallavicini himself wrote at least three letters of recommendation for the Mozarts to take to Rome: one to his distant relation Cardinal Count Lazzaro Opizio Pallavicini (*Dokumente*, 103); one to Prince Andrea IV Doria Pamphilj-Landi (see the prince's response to Pallavicini, *Dokumente*, 107); and one to Dominique Mathieu Charles Poirot de la Blandinière, Baron de Saint-Odile, Tuscan ambassador to the Holy See (see the baron's response to Pallavicini, *Dokumente*, 107–108, and his own letter of recommendation to Giuseppe Bonechi in Naples, *Dokumente*, 110). Feldmarschall Pallavicini's letter to Cardinal Pallavicini raises the idea of arranging for Wolfgang to play for Pope Clement XIV; the Mozarts did, in fact, have an audience with the Pope on 8 Jul 1770, on their return to Rome after visiting Naples, and the Pope made Wolfgang a Knight of the Order of the Golden Spur. Count Gian Luca Pallavicini also hosted Leopold and Wolfgang at his country estate outside Bologna from 10 Aug to 1 Oct 1770. This period of respite allowed, among other things, Leopold finally to recover fully from the serious injury that he had suffered when their carriage overturned during their high-speed return from Naples to Rome, and it gave Wolfgang the opportunity to begin work on his opera for Milan, *Mitridate, re di Ponto*.

That Count Pallavicini made an excellent impression on Leopold is clear from a passage in his letter to his wife on 27 Mar 1770, the day following the concert in Bologna:

> Gestern war bey Se: Ex: H: feld Marschallen Grafen Pallavicini ein Concert, dazu Se: Eminez *[sic]* der Cardinal und die erste Nobleße eingeladen wurde. Du kennst S^{e}: Ex: Graf Carl v Firmian; nun wünschte ich, daß du auch S^{e}: Ex: Gr: Pallavicini kennen möchtest, dies sind 2 Cavalier, die in allen Stücken gleiche denkungsart, freundlichkeit, Großmuth, gelassenheit und eine besondere Liebe und Einsicht in alle Gattungen der Wissenschaften besitzten. Sontags [25 Mar] hatte ich die Gnade S^{e}: Ex: dem H: Gr: Pallavicini aufzuwarten und ihm das schreiben S^{r}: Ex: Gr: v Firmian zu überreichen; und kaum hörte er, daß ich in der Heil: Woche in Rom einzutreffen gedenke, sagte er mir gleich,

er wolle trachten es so einzurichten, daß er morgen das vergnügen haben möge diesen ausserordentl: jungen Virtuosen nicht nur allein zu hören, sondern auch dem ersten Adl hiesiger Statt das nämliche Vergnügen zu verschaffen. [*Briefe*, i:327]

Yesterday there was a concert at His Excellency Feldmarshall Count Pallavicini’s, to which his Eminence the Cardinal and the first nobility were invited. You know Count Karl von Firmian; now I wish that you could also get to know His Excellency Count Pallavicini. These are two gentlemen who have the same manner of thinking in all things, amicability, generosity, tranquility of mind, and a special love and insight into all branches of knowledge. On Sunday [25 Mar] I had the favor of attending His Excellency Count Pallavicini and to hand over to him the letter of His Excellency Count von Firmian; and scarcely had he heard that I was thinking of arriving in Rome during Holy Week, than he immediately said to me that he would seek to arrange it so that tomorrow, not only might he have the pleasure of hearing this extraordinary young virtuoso, but also that he might give the first nobility of this city the same pleasure.

Notes (⇧)

Nascimbene’s transcription is reproduced in Basso’s *I Mozart in Italia* (2006, 59). Our transcription differs in several details from Nascimbene’s, most importantly in the first line of the letter’s main text. Lodron’s ostensibly plural “Quelli” might seem to conflict with the singular third-person “ha” in the embedded clause; however, “ha” is certainly correct and clarifies the reading and meaning of the rest of the clause, and in any case, in the eighteenth century, “quelli" could function as a kind of formal singular. On the word “Copella” (modern spelling “coppella”) in Lodron’s “Virtù a Copella,” see the definition on Treccani. We have translated this as “refined virtuosity.” (In the original version of this commentary, we mistranscribed the phrase as “Virtù a Capella”; we are tremendously grateful to Carlo Vitali for pointing out our error.)

Edge & Frega 2020	Nascimbene 1994
Eccellenza: Quelli, che ha l’alto onore di presentare all’Eccellenza V[ost]ra Questo mio ossequio foglio, si è l’eccellente Virtuoso Sig. Mozard Maestro di Capella di sua Altezza l’Arcivescovo Principe di Salisburgo. Se nota non mi fosse l’abilità, e scienza di Questo detto soggietto, che e un portento di Natura s’ acerti pure, ch’io presa non m’avrei la Libertà di raccomandarlo al valido Patrocinio dell’Eccellenza V[ost]ra; E ciò che maggiormente mi fà cuore a raccomandarglielo si è, perchè ha seco un figliuolo dell’età all’incirca di tredici Anni, il Qualle a dire il vero è un portento della Madre Natura; perchè egli è in grado di far spicare la sua Virtù a Capella di Qualunque anche consumato Professore, e Maestro di Capella si nel suonare il Clavicembalo, che nel compore all’improviso. Attese adunque Queste Meravigliose Qualità, e doti del Padre; ma singolarmente quelle del tenero figlio, che non ha pari, e degne le giudico de di Lei Riflessi, mi fò a caldamente raccomandarli al Eccellenza V[ost]ra, affine che si degni acompagnarli con Lettere raccomandatizie per Roma, e Napoli, ove addrizzato [h]anno il loro Camino, ed affinchè graziar li Voglia del valido suo patrocinio, Mentre confidato, che riceverà Questo mio Uffizio in segno di Quell’alta stima, e ossequio, che Le professo, passo a dedicarmi Dell [sic] Eccellenza V[ost]ra Div[ottisimo]mo Oblig:^{mo} Ser[vitor]e, Dom:^{co} Ant:^{o} Co:^{te} di Lodron$_{mpia}$ Collonel:^{o} Roveredo a[dì] 27:^{e} Dec:^{re} 1769:	Eccellenza Quelli, che ho l’alto onore di presentare all’Eccellenza V[ost]ra a mezzo mio questo mio foglio si è l’eccellente Virtuoso Sig[nor] Mozart, maestro di Cappella di Sua Altezza l’Arcivescovo Principe di Salisburgo. Se nota non mi fosse l’abilità e scienza di questo dotto soggetto, che è un portento di natura si accerti pure, ch’io presa non m’avrei la libertà di raccomandarlo al valido patrocinio dell’Eccellenza Vostra. E ciò che maggiormente mi fà onore a raccomandarglielo si è perchè ha seco un figliolo dell’età all’incirca di tredici Anni, il qualle a dire il vero è un portento della madre Natura, perchè egli è in grado di far spicare la sua virtù a Capella di quallunque anche consumato Professore e maestro di Capella si nel suonare il clavicembalo che nel comporre all’improvviso. Attese adunque queste meravigliose qualità, e doti del Padre; ma singolarmente quelle del tenero figlio, che non ha pari, e degne le giudico che di Lei [?], mi fò a caldamente raccomandarli all’Eccellenza Vostra affine che si degni accompagnarli con Lettere raccomandatizie per Roma e Napoli ove addrizzato anno il loro cammino, ed affinchè graziarli Voglia del valido suo patrocinio, mentre confidato, che riceverà questo mio uffizio in segno di quell’alta stima e ossequio che Le professo possa a dedicarmi dell’Eccellenza V[ost]ra Div[otissi]mo Obblig[atissimo] Se[rvito]re Dom[enico] Ant[onio] Co[nte] di Lodron Roverето 27 dic[embre] 1769

The sources for the genealogy of the Lodron family used for this commentary are Wurzbach (1866), Schuler (1983), and the "Lodron" articles on it.wikipedia and de.wikipedia; we have also referred to Angermüller & Margreiter (2005), who discuss only those Lodrons with connections to Salzburg. We have not attempted to unravel or correct the numerous small discrepancies among these sources. Note, however, that Wurzbach and Schuler both give 1726–1793 as the dates for Count Massimiliano Settimo, whereas other references (including more recent ones) give 1727–1796. We have adopted the latter in the commentary above.

We are very grateful to Bruce Brown for his excellent transcription of Lodron's difficult scrawl and his advice on our translation; and to Brown, Janet Page, and Steven Whiting for reading and commenting on a draft of this commentary. Our special thanks to Catherine Sprague, who first brought to our attention Basso's splendid *I Mozart in Italia* (2006) and the little-known Mozart documents that it contains.

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Wurzbach, Constantin. 1866. "Lodron, Dominik Anton Graf." In: *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaisertums Österreich*, vol. 15:369–83, with an extended genealogy of the Lodron family, and two extensive family trees,

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Credit: Anelide Nascimbene

Authors: Dexter Edge, Stefano Frega

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