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Count Firmian to Count Salazar on Mozart and the wedding serenata (7 Mar 1771)

Dexter Edge

Count Firmian to Count Salazar, 7 Mar 1771 (draft), HHStA, Ält. ZA, Kart. 84, 8r–v

[8r]
Oltre l’Opera vuole la M. S. che
la
si dia una Serenata ~~della~~ quale
si è degnata di lasciare in mio arbitrio
la scelta tanto del Poeta, che dovrà
compor la Cantata, quanto del Maestro,
che dovrà farne la Musica. Di
questa ho stabilito di incaricarne
~~il~~ [Amadeo] Mozart, che ha fatto con appro=
=vazione la prim’ Opera dello scorso
Carnevale, e a tal’ effetto desidero ch’
faccia scrivere
Ella gli ~~scrive~~ a Verona, dove ritrovarsi
presentemente; riservandomi di dirle
un’ altra volta la Persona, che avrò

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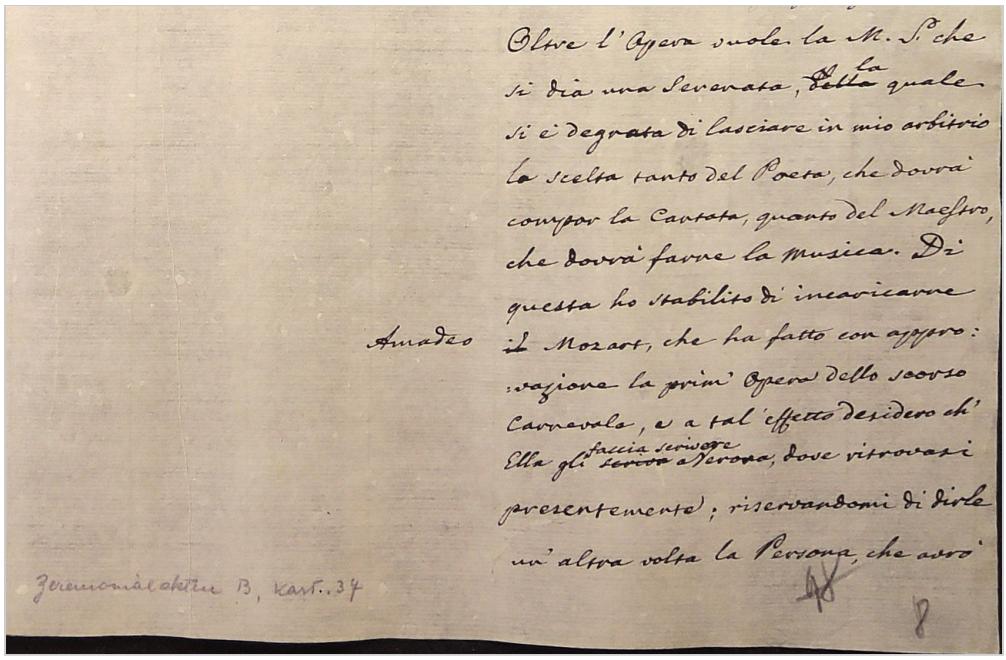
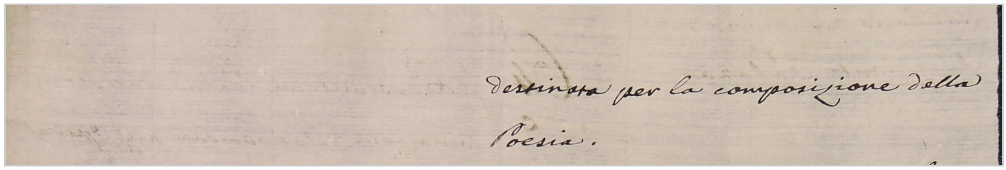

Oltre l'Opera vuole la M. S. che
si dia una Serenata, della quale
si è degnata di lasciare in mio arbitrio
la scelta tanto del Poeta, che dovrà
comporr la Cantata, quanto del Maestro,
che dovrà farne la musica. Di
questa ho stabilito di incaricarne
Amadeo il Mozart, che ha fatto con applauso:
vazione la prim' Opera dello scorso
Carnevale, e a tal effetto desidero ch'
Ella gli faccia scrivere
scrivere a Verona, dove ritrovasi
presentemente; riservandomi di dirle
un' altra volta la Persona, che avrò
Ceremoniale ehetten B, Kart. 37
8

[8v]
destinata per la composizione della
Poesia.


destinata per la composizione della
Poesia.

[translation:]

In addition to the opera, Her Majesty
wishes a serenata to be given,
having deigned to leave to me the
choice regarding both the poet who will
compose the cantata, and the Maestro
who will write the music for it.
For the latter, I have appointed Amadeo
Mozart, who created with approval the
first opera for this past carnival; and to
this effect I wish you to have a letter
written to him in Verona, where he
presently finds himself. I reserve for
another time telling you the person

I will have designated for the
composition of the poetry.

Commentary

The passage transcribed and translated above appears in a draft letter from Count Carlo di Firmian, Habsburg minister plenipotentiary and de facto ruler of the Duchy of Milan, to Count Lorenzo Salazar, *direttore* of the Regio Ducal Teatro. who was in charge of local arrangements for the wedding of Archduke Ferdinand and Princess Maria Beatrice d'Este that coming autumn. (On the wedding, see especially our entry for 17 Oct 1771; on Firmian, see our entry for 4 Apr 1770.) In a letter dated 9 Feb 1771 to Count Johann Wenzel Sporck in Vienna, Firmian had written that Empress Maria Theresia had left to him the choice of composer and poet for a new serenata to be commissioned for the wedding festivities, and Firmian suggested Mozart (see our entry for 9 Feb 1771). His initial suggestion for the author was Giovanni Ambrogio Migliavacca. In his response to Firmian dated 21 Feb 1771, Sporck reported that he had informed the empress of Firmian's recommendations, and she had replied that she trusted Firmian's judgment (the relevant passage of Sporck's letter is cited in our entry for 9 Feb 1771). By the time of Firmian's letter to Salazar on 7 Mar, Migliavacca seems to have been out of the running: Firmian now wrote that he would let Salazar know later his choice of poet. Just two days later, Firmian wrote to Sporck informing him that he had chosen Giuseppe Parini (see our entry for 9 Mar 1771). In the passage transcribed above, Firmian instructs Salazar to have a letter written to Mozart in Verona informing him of the commission. This was the commission that became *Ascanio in Alba*, first performed on 17 Oct 1771 in Milan during the festivities for the imperial wedding.

Wolfgang and Leopold were still in Venice on the date of Firmian's letter to Salazar. They left Venice on 12 Mar 1771, arriving in Padua on 13 Mar, Vicenza on 14 Mar, and Verona on 17 Mar, where Salazar's letter would have been waiting for them. Leopold alludes to the letter the following day, in a letter to his wife:

> Gestern habe Briefe aus Mayland erhalten, der mir ein Schreiben v Wienn ankündigte, so in Salzb: erhalten werde, und das euch in Verwunderung setzen wird, unserm Sohne aber eine unsterbliche ehre macht.
>
> Der nämliche Brief hat mir eine andre sehr angenehme zeitung mit gebrach.
> [*Briefe*, i:246]
>
> Yesterday I received a letter from Milan that notified me of a communication from Vienna that will be received in Salzburg, and will astonish you, but bring immortal honor to our son.
>
> The same letter brought me another very pleasant piece of news.

The "sehr angenehme zeitung" ("very pleasant piece of news") was Wolfgang's commission to compose one of the carnival operas for Milan in the season 1772–73, the opera that became *Lucio*

Silla. The "unsterbliche ehre" ("immortal honor") was Salazar's news that Wolfgang would be commissioned to compose the serenata for the imperial wedding in the autumn of 1771. The "Schreiben v Wienn" ("communication from Vienna") has not been found.

Notes (⇧)

Firmian's letter to Salazar is a draft. We have given a diplomatic transcription of the passage mentioning Mozart, which was only lightly edited. The fair copy sent to Salazar has not yet been found.

Firmian's reference to Mozart in his letter to Salazar of 7 Mar 1771 was first mentioned by Andrea Sommer (later Sommer-Mathis) in 1981 in her Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Vienna (Sommer 1981, 492ff). She does not transcribe any portion of the letter or give an archival reference. However, the letter is part of the same collection of documents (HHStA, Ält. ZA, Kart. 84) that include Firmian's other draft letters discussed elsewhere on this site (see our entries for 9 Feb 1771, 9 Mar 1771, and 19 Aug 1771). Sommer-Mathis also refers to Firmian's letter to Salazar in the book derived from her dissertation (Sommer–Mathis 1994, 207).

Count Salazar seems to have received very little scholarly attention, perhaps oddly, considering his role in the history of opera in Milan (he also went on to be the first *direttore* of La Scala); for example, *Treccani* has no article on him. On Salazar at the time of the imperial wedding in 1771, see (in addition to Sommer 1981 and Sommer-Mathis 1994) especially Hansell (1979) and Rice (2004). Palidda (2017, 7) refers to a folder of Salazar documents in the La Scala museum (Museo teatrale alla Scala e biblioteca 'Livia Simoni'). It is unclear whether these documents have been fully evaluated in regard to the period under investigation here.

We are grateful to Michael Lorenz for his photographs of the documents in Vienna, HHStA, Ältere Zeremonialakten, Karton 84, and to Bruce Brown and Janet Page for their comments.

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Credit: Andrea Sommer-Mathis

Author: Dexter Edge

Link(s): NA

Search Term: NA

Source Library: HHStA. Ält. ZA, Karton 84

Categories: Biography

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