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Count Rogendorf on *Ascanio in Alba* (9 Nov 1771)

Dexter Edge

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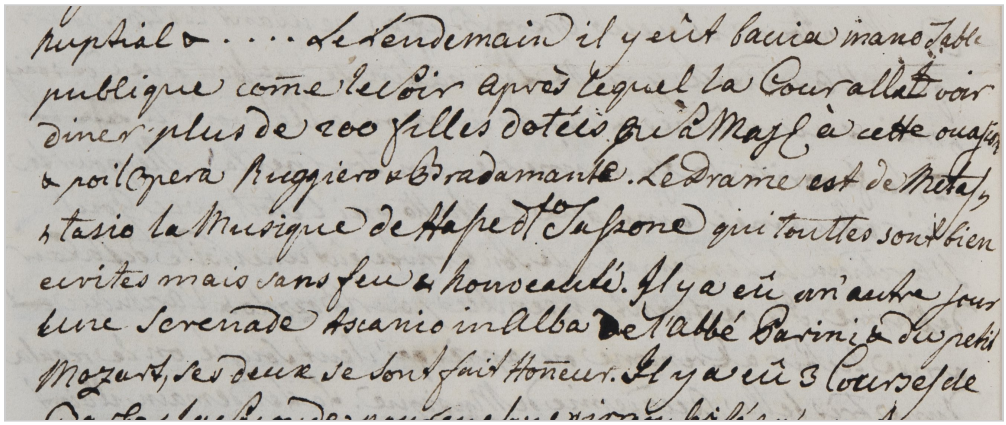
[facsimile of the complete letter here]

Milano 9 9bre 1771

Mon trés Cher Ami,
[...]

. . . . Le Lendemain il y eût baccia mano
publique com[m]e le Soir après lequel la Cour alla ^Table voir
diner plus de 200 filles dotées p[ar] Sa Maj[esté] à cette occasion
& poi l'Opera Ruggiero & Bradamante. Le Drame est de Metas=
tasio la Musique de Hasse d[etto] Sassone qui touttes sont bien
ecrites mais sans feu & nouveauté. Il y a eû un' autre jour
une Serenade Ascanio in Alba de l'Abbé Parini & du petit
Mozart, ses deux se sont fait Hon[n]eur. *[...]*

Vos amis les plus devoués Rogendorf$_{mpia}$



[translation:]

Milan, 9 November 1771

My very dear friend,
[...]

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. . . . The next day there was a public baciamano, also
the following evening, after which the court went to^table to watch
dine more than 200 girls endowed on this occasion by Her Majesty,
& poi the opera Ruggerio e Bradamante. The drama is by
Metastasio, the music by Hasse, called "Sassone," all of which
were well written but without fire and novelty. On another day
there was a serenade, Ascanio in Alba, by Abbé Parini &
the little Mozart; both did themselves honor. *[...]*

Your most devoted friend Rogendorf$_{mpia}$

Commentary

This reference to Mozart and *Ascanio in Alba*, in a letter by Count Cajetan von Rogendorf, was discovered by Clemente Lunelli (1982, 418). It is the second of three Mozart references in letters written to Count Pio Fedele von Wolkenstein in Trent, all discovered by Lunelli: the others are discussed in our entries for 2 Jan 1772 (a letter from violinist Francesco Galoardi, who visited the Mozarts in Salzburg) and 29 Nov 1772 (a letter from Countess Antonia von Lodron in Salzburg).

Count Pio Fedele von Wolkenstein was born in Trent on 5 May 1749. He studied at the Jesuit high school in Trent; in 1766 he published a thesis, *Conspectus assertionum ex universa philosophia tam theoretica quam practica*, dedicated to Count Leopold Ernst von Firmian, Prince-Bishop of Passau and brother of Franz Laktanz, Obersthofmeister in Salzburg, and Karl (Carlo), Habsburg minister plenipotentiary in Lombardy (on the Firmians, see our entry for 4 Apr 1770). That same year, Wolkenstein's sister Maria Aloisia (1737–1815) married Franz Laktanz's son Leopold Anton Virgil (1737–1828), an official at his uncle's court in Passau (Geffray 2005, 125–26).

Wolkenstein, after completing his studies, spent two years working with Count Karl Firmian in Milan. From Dec 1770 to May 1771 he made an educational tour of Italy together with Antonio Giacomo Bridi (1721–1799), uncle of Giuseppe Antonio Bridi (1763–1836), who in 1786 sang the title role in Mozart's *Idomeneo* at the theater of Prince Johann Adam von Auersperg in Vienna (see our entries "Paisiello and *Idomeneo*" and "*Idomeneo* at Prince Auersperg's"). On 14 Jul 1771, following his return to Trent, Wolkenstein married Countess Maria Maximiliana von Lodron (1751–1808), daughter of Count Ernst Maria (1716–1779) in Salzburg from his first marriage. Maria Maximiliana's stepmother was thus Ernst Maria's second wife, Countess Antonia von Lodron (1738–1780), an important patron of the Mozarts (see our entry for 29 Nov 1772). Wolkenstein was named "capitano" (essentially the governor) of Trent in 1773. In 1796, he fled Napoleon's advancing army, taking refuge in Salzburg, and returning to Trent in 1798. Wolkenstein's wife died on 28 Jun 1808, and he died on 21 Nov 1826. The couple had no children. (On sources for Wolkenstein's biography, see the *Notes* below.")

The Wolkensteins were enthusiastic amateur musicians. Wolkenstein began regular violin lessons in 1771, initially with Francesco Galoardi (see our entry for 2 Jan 1772), and then with

Sebastiano Hölzl. Wolkenstein's wife Maximiliana played keyboard, and she continued her studies in Trent with Francesco Antonio Berera. Particularly in the early years of their marriage, the couple also gave frequent private concerts in their home (see Lunelli 1989).

Count Cajetan von Rogendorf (Roggendorf) was born in Brünn (Brno) on 27 Nov 1745. He studied canon law and Kameralwissenschaft (administrative science) at the University of Vienna, publishing a dissertation in 1764, *Versuch über das Verhältniß der Stände*, with an appendix "Lehrsätze aus der Polizeywissenschaft." In 1768 Rogendorf went to Milan, where he initially worked as an intern with Count Firmian. It was during this period that he met and became friends with Wolkenstein. In 1771 Rogendorf was made "consigliere" to the provincial government in Milan; he later became "intendente delle finanze" in Padua, and then a court counselor in Milan. Bergman writes of Rogendorf:

> Er kannte die vorzüglicheren Sprachen Europa's, war besonders in der römischen Literatur erfahren, verstand vortrefflich Tanz und Musik, und liebte Mailand so sehr, dass er lieber seinen glänzenden Aussichten entsagte, als dass er den Hof des Erzherzogs Ferdinand, bei dem er in Gnaden stand, verlassen wollte. [Bergmann 1851, 94]
>
> He knew the preeminent languages of Europe and was especially well versed in Roman literature. He had an excellent understanding of dance and music, and loved Milan so much that he preferred to forsake his brilliant prospects, rather than to leave the court of Archduke Ferdinand, in whose favor he stood.

Rogendorf likewise fled Napoleon's advancing army, initially taking refuge with his relative the Prince-Bishop of Gurk, who advised him to become a priest in order to obtain a secure living. Rogendorf spent his last years in Hungary, and died in Széphalom on 7 Jan 1809 at the age of 63.

Eight letters survive from Rogendorf to Wolkenstein in the years 1771 to 1778. Rogendorf's chatty five-page letter of 9 Nov 1771, written in French interspersed with a few Italian words, mainly describes events surrounding the wedding of Archduke Ferdinand and Princess Maria Beatrice d'Este, which took place on 15 Oct 1771 (see our entry for 17 Oct 1771, the premiere of Mozart's *L'Ascanio in Alba*). Rogendorf writes that he is recovering from rheumatic fever ("une fievre rheumatique") that he had contracted eight days previously (thus 1 Nov). He explains that he is still coughing and is writing from bed. He begins by noting that the previous day (Fri, 8 Nov 1771) the Archduke had given a musical academy "de distingué deux Dlles Angloises dont l'une avec peu de voix chante superieurement bien, l'autre touche egalement avec beaucoup d'habilité dell'istromento *Armonico*" ("by two refined English demoiselles, one of whom sings superlatively well with a small voice, and the other who plays equally with much ability on the glass harmonica"). The reference is to the sisters Cecilia and Marianne Davies, who had been in Vienna from around 1768 to 1770, and were now touring Italy (on the Davies sisters, see our entry for 2 Mar 1771). Because of his illness, it seems unlikely that Rogendorf attended this academy, but

that he was instead simply reporting what he had heard, knowing that Wolkenstein liked to be kept up to date about significant musical events in the big city.

Rogendorf then backtracks to recount some of the events surrounding the wedding. He describes at some length the collapse of a specially constructed outdoor balcony for spectators at the Cuccagna (Cockaigne) on 24 Oct, in which one young noblewoman was killed, her sister badly injured, and the nephew of Salvadori (Firmian's secretary) broke his leg (see our entry for 17 Oct 1771). Rogendorf goes on to note that *opere buffe* were performed in Mantua when the Archduke stopped there on his way to Milan. Just before the passage quoted at the top of this page, Rogendorf lists the order in which the principal dignitaries entered the cathedral for the wedding on 15 Oct. Thus when he writes "Le Lendemain" at the beginning of the passage transcribed here, he is referring to Wed, 16 Oct 1771, the day after the wedding and the day of the premiere of Hasse and Metastasio's *Ruggiero*, which had been commissioned for the festivities. The premiere of Parini and Mozart's serenata *Ascanio in Alba* took place the following day, 17 Oct. It seems certain that Rogendorf attended performances of both works, which had been given several times each by the close of the festivities on 30 Oct, before Rogendorf fell ill. His opinion that *Ruggiero* lacked "fire and novelty" ("feu & nouveauté"), whereas Parini and "little Mozart" did themselves honor, confirms what we know from other sources about the reception of the two works: it is evident that *Ascanio* outshone *Ruggiero* (see our entry for 17 Oct 1771).

Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart had met Wolkenstein and Rogendorf during their first visit to Milan, from 23 Jan to 15 Mar 1770, when both young nobleman were working with Firmian: both are mentioned in Leopold's travel notes, directly after Firmian:

> Comte de *Firmian*, Comte *Rogendorff*, C: *Fugger*, C: *Wolkenstein*,
> Secretario *Salvatori*, Sen: Troger e due della Secretaria. [*Briefe*, i:321]

It is likely that both Rogendorf and Wolkenstein had heard Mozart perform during that visit, so Wolkenstein would have understood Rogendorf's reference in his letter of 9 Nov 1771.

Notes (⇧)

Lunelli, in his 1982 article on Galoard, mentions Rogendorf's Mozart reference, but does not transcribe it (Lunelli 1982, 519n17). In his 1989 article on Wolkenstein, he transcribes only the phrase referring to *Ascanio* (Lunelli 1989, 418). Rogendorf's entire letter is transcribed in Basso (2006a, 94–95), citing a personal communication from Antonio Carlini. In the passage given here, the transcription in Basso omits the inserted word "Table."

Principal sources for Wolkenstein's biography are Lunelli (1989) and Parvopassu (2006); principal sources for Rogendorf's biography are Bergmann (1851) and Wurzbach (1874).

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