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Le nozze di Figaro in Prague (addendum) (14 Oct 1787)

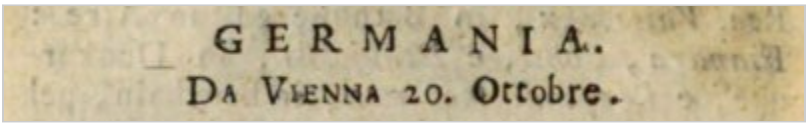
Dexter Edge

***Notizie del mondo*, No. 86, Sat, 27 Oct 1787, 696**

[696]

GERMANIA.

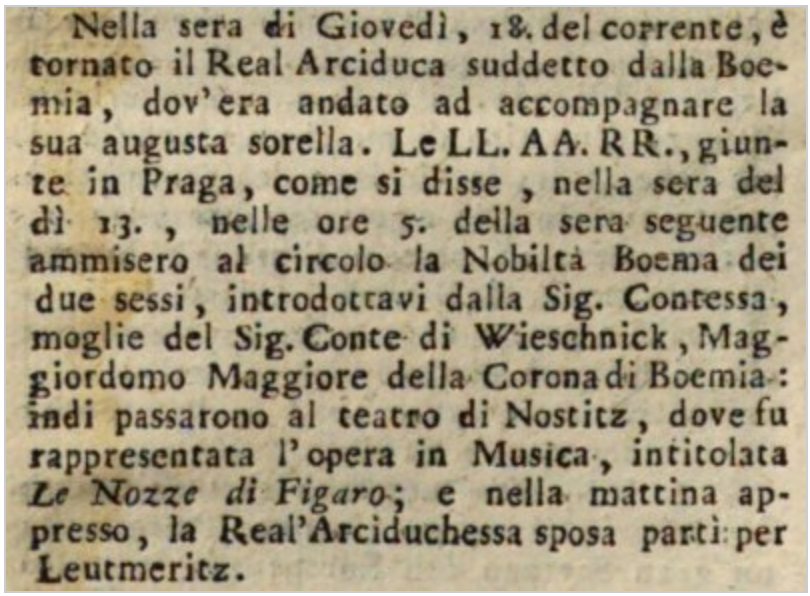
DA VIENNA 20. Ottobre.


GERMANIA.
DA VIENNA 20. Ottobre.

[...]

Nella sera di Giovedì, 18. del corrente, è tornato il Real Arciduca suddetto dalla Boemia, dov'era andato ad accompagnare la sua augusta sorella. Le LL. AA. RR., giunte in Praga, come si disse, nella sera del dì 13., nelle ore 5. della sera seguente ammisero al circolo la Nobilità Boema dei due sessi, introdottavi dalla Sig. Contessa, moglie del Sig. Conte di Wieschnick, Maggiordomo Maggiore della Corona di Boemia: indi passarono al teatro di Nostitz, dove fu rappresentata l'opera in Musica, intitolata *Le Nozze di Figaro*; e nella mattina appresso, la Real'Arciduchessa sposa partì per Leutmeritz.

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[translation:]

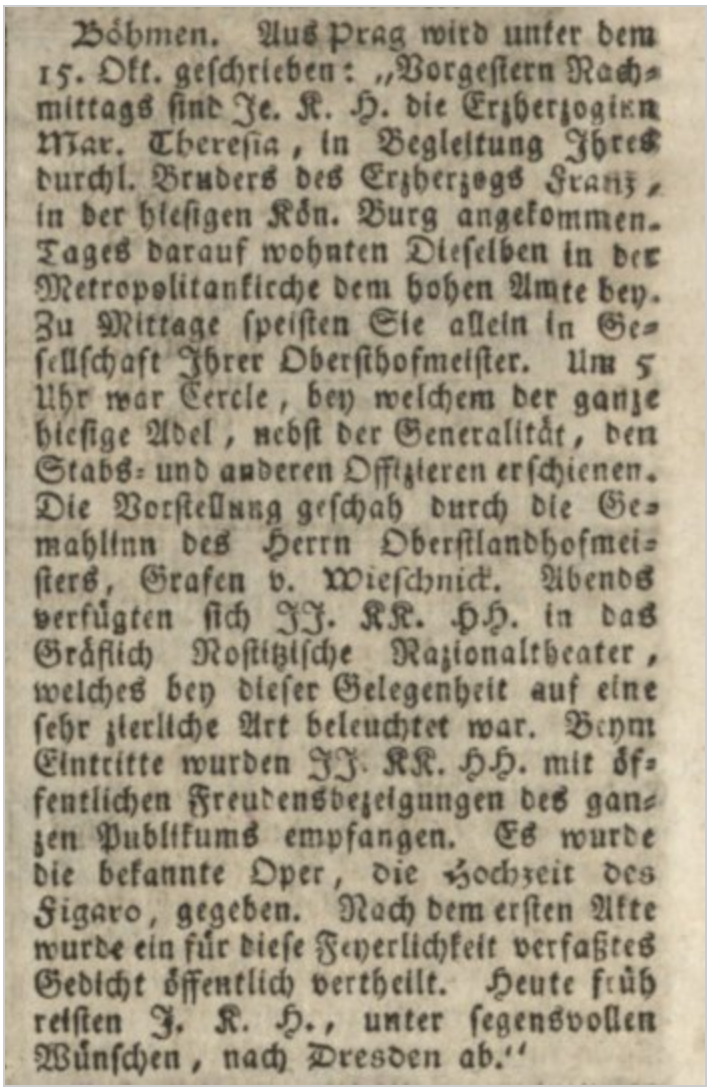
GERMANY
FROM VIENNA, 20 October.

[...]
On the evening of Thursday, the 18th of the current month, the Royal Archduke returned from Bohemia, where he had gone to accompany his distinguished sister. Having arrived in Prague, as mentioned, on the evening of the 13th, the next evening at 5 o'clock their Royal Highnesses welcomed to Circle the Bohemian Nobility of both sexes, introduced by the Countess, wife of Count Wieschnick, Chief Land Steward of the Bohemian Crown; then they went to the Nostitz theater, where the opera entitled *Le nozze di Figaro* was performed; and the next morning, the Royal Archduchess left for Leutmeritz *[Litoměřice]*.

Commentary

This item in the Venetian newspaper *Notizie del mondo* appears at first glance to be a shorter version of a report from Prague that was published in the *Wiener Zeitung* on 20 Oct 1787 (see *Dokumente*, 264):

Böhmen. Aus Prag wird unter dem 15. Okt. geschrieben: "Vorgestern Nach= mittags sind Ie. K. H. die Erzherzoginn Mar. Theresia, in Begleitung Ihres durchl. Bruders des Erzherzogs Franz, in der hiesigen Kön. Burg angekommen. Tages darauf wohnten Dieselben in der Metropolitankirche dem hohen Amte bey. Zu Mittage speisten Sie allein in Ge= sellschaft Ihrer Obersthofmeister. Um 5 Uhr war Cercle, bey welchem der ganze hiesige Adel, nebst der Generalität, den Stabs= und anderen Offizieren erschienen. Die Vorstellung geschah durch die Ge= mahlinn des Herrn Oberstlandhofmei= sters, Grafen v. Wieschnick. Abends verfügten sich II. KK. HH. in das Gräflich Nostitzische Nazionaltheater, welches bey dieser Gelegenheit auf eine sehr zierliche Art beleuchtet war. Beym Eintritte wurden II. KK. HH. mit öf= fentlichen Freudensbezeigungen des gan= zen Publikums empfangen. Es wurde die bekannte Oper, die Hochzeit des Figaro, gegeben. Nach dem ersten Akte wurde ein für diese Feyerlichkeit verfaßtes Gedicht öffentlich vertheilt. Heute früh reisten I. K. H., unter segensvollen Wünschen, nach Dresden ab."
[*WZ*, no. 84, Sat, 20 Oct 1787, 2542]



Böhmen. Aus Prag wird unter dem 15. Okt. geschrieben: „Vorgestern Nachmittags sind Je. K. H. die Erzherzogin Mar. Theresia, in Begleitung Ihres durchl. Bruders des Erzherzogs Franz, in der hiesigen Kön. Burg angekommen. Tages darauf wohnten Dieselben in der Metropolitankirche dem hohen Amte bey. Zu Mittage speisten Sie allein in Gesellschaft Ihrer Oberstihofmeister. Um 5 Uhr war Cercle, bey welchem der ganze hiesige Adel, nebst der Generalität, den Stabs- und anderen Offizieren erschienen. Die Vorstellung geschah durch die Gemahlinn des Herrn Oberstlandhofmeisters, Grafen v. Wieschnick. Abends verfügten sich JJ. KK. HH. in das Gräflich Nostitzische Nazionaltheater, welches bey dieser Gelegenheit auf eine sehr zierliche Art beleuchtet war. Beym Eintritte wurden JJ. KK. HH. mit öffentlichen Freudensbezeigungen des ganzen Publikums empfangen. Es wurde die bekannte Oper, die Hochzeit des Figaro, gegeben. Nach dem ersten Akte wurde ein für diese Feyerlichkeit verfaßtes Gedicht öffentlich vertheilt. Heute früh reisten J. K. H., unter segensvollen Wünschen, nach Dresden ab."

[translation:]

Bohemia. Written from Prague under the date 15 Oct: "In the afternoon of the day before yesterday, Her Royal Highness the Archduchess Maria Theresia arrived in the Royal Castle here accompanied by her illustrious brother the Archduke Franz. The following day they attended High Mass in the Metropolitan Church. At midday they dined alone in the company of their Chief Steward. At 5 was Circle, at which appeared the entire local nobility, along with the body of generals, the staff officers, and other officers. The introduction was made by the wife of the Chief Land Steward, Count von Wieschnick. In the evening Their Royal Highnesses went to the National Theater

> of Count Nostitz, which was very delicately illuminated for this occasion.On entry Their Royal Highnesses were received with open demonstrations of joy by the public. The well-known opera *Die Hochzeit des Figaro* was given. After the first act, a poem written for this festivity was distributed. Early today Her Royal Highness departed with beneficent wishes for Dresden."

This report from the *Wiener Zeitung* was reprinted verbatim in the *Preßburger Zeitung* on 24 Oct 1787. It contains several details missing from the report in *Notizie del Mondo*: the attendance of the visitors at mass, the presence of generals and military officers at "circle," the illumination of the Nostitz Theater, and the distribution of the poem. On the other hand, the report in *Notizie del Mondo* mentions two details not in the *Wiener Zeitung*: the presence of nobility of "both sexes" at circle; and Leutmeritz (today Litoměřice) in northern Bohemia as the Archduchess's immediate destination after leaving Prague, a logical layover on her journey to Dresden. Because of this difference in detail, it seems likely that the report in the *Notizie del Mondo* is not simply a shortened adaptation and translation of the one in the *Wiener Zeitung*.

Yet another version of this report was published in *Gazzetta universale* in Florence on 3 Nov 1787. Like the one in *Notizie del Mondo*, the dateline is "Vienna," it mentions the attendance of both sexes at "circle," and it gives Leutmeritz as the Archduchess's immediate destination upon leaving Prague. But *Gazzetta universale* also contains details found in the *Wiener Zeitung*, but not in *Notizie del Mondo*:

> G E R M A N I A
>
> VIENNA 22. Ottobre.
>
> Partita, come si disse, da questa Dominante la R. Arciduchessa Maria Teresa, giunse nella sera del dì 13. a Praga in compagnia del R. Arciduca suo Fratello, e seguitata dal suo Nobile accompagnamento, essendo stata alloggiata nel Castello di antica Regia Residenza. Nella mattina del dì 14. il R. Arciduca , e la Sorella furono al servizio Divino in quella Metropolitana, e pranzarono con i Cavalieri, e Dame del loro seguito. Alle ore 5. del dopo pranzo servita dalla Consorte del Conte de Wieschnick Maggiordomo Maggiore della Corona di Boemia, la R. Sposa ricevè le visite, e complimenti di tutta la Nobilità Boema dell'uno, e dell'altro sesso, e quin-

di con numerosa Comitiva le LL. AA.
RR. si trasferirono al Teatro a gode-
re dell' Opera Buffa. Nella seguente
mattìna 15. del corrente partirono al-
la volta di Leutmeritz *[...]*
[*Gazzetta universale*, no. 88,
Sat, 3 Nov 1787, 701]



GERMANIA 701

VIENNA 22. Ottobre.

Partita, come si disse, da questa Dominante la R. Arciduchessa Maria Teresa, giunse nella sera del dì 13. a Praga in compagnia del R. Arciduca suo Fratello, e seguitata dal suo Nobile accompagnamento, essendo stata alloggiata nel Castello di antica Regia Residenza. Nella mattina del dì 14. il R. Arciduca, e la R. Sorella furono al servizio Divino in quella Metropolitana, e pranzarono con i Cavalieri, e Dame del loro seguito. Alle ore 5. del dopo pranzo servita dalla Consorte del Conte de Wieschnick Maggiordomo Maggiore della Corona di Boemia, la R. Sposa ricevè le visite, e complimenti di tutta la Nobiltà Boema dell'uno, e dell'altro sesso, e quindi con numerosa Comitiva le LL. AA. RR. si trasferirono al Teatro a godere dell' Opera Buffa. Nella seguente mattìna 15. del corrente partirono alla volta di Leutmeritz. S. A. R. l'Ar-

[translation:]

Having left this capital as mentioned,
the Royal Archduchess Maria Theresia
arrived in Prague on the evening of
the 13th in the company of her brother,
the Archduke, and her noble retinue,
and they were quartered in the Castle of
the old Royal Residence. The morning
of the 14th the Royal Archduke and his
sister attended the sacred service in that
city and dined with the Knights and
Ladies of their retinue. At 5 o'clock,
after the meal, assisted by the wife of the

> Count of Wieschnick, Chief Land Steward of the Bohemian Crown, the Royal Spouse was visited and honored by all the Bohemian nobility of both sexes; after this, accompanied by a large party, Their Royal Highnesses went to the theater to enjoy the opera buffa. The following morning, the 15th of the current month, they left for Leutmeritz *[...]*

Yet this report varies in some details from the one in the *Wiener Zeitung*, suggesting that it was not modeled directly on the latter, but that the two may instead derive from a common source. The version in *Gazzetta universale* does not mention the title of the opera.

Archduchess Maria Theresia was the eldest child of Grand Duke Leopold (later Emperor Leopold II), and a niece of Joseph II. Her brother, Archduke Franz, was Leopold's eldest son, who himself later became emperor after the premature death of his father. On 8 Sep 1787 Archduchess Maria Theresia had been married by proxy in Florence to Prince Anton of Saxony, and she stopped in Prague on 13 and 14 Oct 1787 on her journey to Dresden, where she was to have a second ceremony with Anton in person on 18 Oct. Although it is sometimes stated or implied in the secondary literature that Anton was with Maria Theresia in Prague, it seems certain that he was not (see the discussion in the *Notes* below).

The original intention had been to give the premier of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* on 14 Oct in honor of the Archduchess's visit. This intention is made clear on the title page of the incomplete libretto of *Don Giovanni* printed in Vienna in 1787, probably for the censor (see the facsimile in Warburton 1992, 345):

IL
DISSOLUTO
PUNITO
O SIA
IL D. GIOVANNI.

DRAMMA GIOCOSO
IN DUE ATTI.
DA RAPPRESENTARSI
NEL TEATRO DI PRAGA
PER L'ARRIVO DI SUA ALTEZZA REALE
MARIA TERESA
ARCIDUCHESSA D'AUSTRIA: SPOSA DEL
SER. PRINCIPE ANTONIO DI SASSONIA
L'ANNO 1787.

IN VIENNA.

In the event, the production of *Don Giovanni* was not ready in time, and *Mozart's Figaro* was given on 14 Oct instead.

Mozart and his wife had left Vienna on 1 Oct, arriving in Prague on 4 Oct; this is the journey famously fictionalized in Eduard Mörike's *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag* (1855–56). Mozart explains, in a letter to his friend Gottfried von Jacquin begun on 15 Oct (the day after the performance of *Figaro*) why *Don Giovanni* had not been given and how, in spite of a campaign to block its performance, *Figaro* had been performed instead at the express order of the emperor:

> Sie werden vermuthlich glauben daß nun meine Oper schon vorbey ist — doch — da irren sie sich ein bischen; Erstens ist das hiesige theatralische Personale nicht so geschickt wie das zu Wienn um eine solche oper in so kurzer Zeit einzustudiren.
>
> zweytens fand ich bey meiner Ankunft so wenige vorkehrungen und Anstalten, daß es eine blosse unmöglichkeit gewesen seyn würde, Sie am 14:ten als gestern zu geben; — Man gab also gestern bey ganz illuminirten theater meinen figaro, den ich selbst dirigirte. — bey dieser gelegenheit muß ich ihnen einen Spass erzehlen. — einige von den hiesigen ersten damen |: besonders eine gar hocherläuchte :| geruhten es sehr lächerlich, unschicklich, und was weis ich alles zu finden, daß man der Prinzessin den figaro, *den tollen tag* |: wie sie sich auszudrücken beliebten :| geben wollte; — Sie bedachten nicht daß keine oper in der Welt sich zu einer solchen gelegenheit schiken kann, wenn Sie nicht beflissentlich dazu geschrieben ist; daß es sehr gleichgültig seye, ob sie diese oder Jene oper geben, wenn es nur eine gute und der Prinzessin unbekannte oper ist; und das lezte wenigstens war figaro gewis. — kurz, die Radl=führerin brachte es durch ihre wohlredenheit so weit, daß dem impreßario von der Regierung aus dieses Stück auf Jenen tag untersagt wurde. — Nun triumphirte Sie! — — hò vinta schrie Sie eines abends aus der Loge; — Sie vermuthete wohl gewis nicht daß sich das hò in ein Sono verändern könne! — des tags darauf kamm aber le Noble — brachte den befehl S: Mayt: daß wenn die Neue oper nichtgegeben werden könne, figaro gegeben werden müsse! — wenn Sie, mein freund, die schöne, herrliche Nase dieser dame nun gesehen hätten! — O es würde ihnen so viel vergnügen verursacht haben wie mir! — [*Briefe*, iv:54–55]

[translation:]

> You will probably think that my opera is now over — but — you will be a little bit wrong. First, the theatrical personnel here are not so skilled as those in Vienna to be able to prepare such an opera in so short a time.
>
> Second, I found on my arrival so little provision and arrangement that it would have been simply impossible to give it on the 14th (that is, yesterday). Instead, my *Figaro* was given yesterday with a fully illuminated theater, and I directed myself. — I must take the opportunity to tell you a funny story. — Some of the first ladies here (especially one of the most highly illustrious) deemed it quite ridiculous, improper, and I don't know what all

> that the plan was to give *Figaro*, *The Crazy Day* (as they like to call it), for the Princess. It didn't occur to them that no opera in the world is proper to such an occasion unless it is intentionally written for it; that it is immaterial whether this or that opera is given, provided only that it is a good one and unknown to the Princess, and *Figaro* was certainly the latter, at least. — In short, the ring leader, through her smooth talking, brought things to the point that the impresario was forbidden by the government to give this piece on that day. Now she was triumphant! — — *I have conquered*! she cried one evening from her box. — She certainly didn't imagine that her "have" could change to "am"! — The following day Le Noble came with the order from His Majesty, that if the new opera could not be given, the *Figaro* must be given! — If you, my friend, could only have seen the beautiful magnificent nose of this lady! — Oh, it would have given you just as much pleasure as it gave me.

The identity of the "ring leader" ("Radl=führerin") seems not to have been investigated.

The most detailed report of the performance on 14 Oct was printed in the *Prager Oberpostamtszeitung* on 16 Oct:

> ... Um halb sieben Uhr verfügten Sie [die Hoheiten] Sich in das gräfl. Nostitische Nationaltheater, welches bey dieser Gelegenheit auf eine sehr auszeichnende Art enbellirt und beleuchtet. Der Schauplatz war durch den Schmuck der zahlreichen Gäste dergestalt verherrlicht, daß man noch nie eine so prachtvolle Scene gesehen zu haben, gestehen muß. Beym Eintritte der höchsten Herrschaften wurden Sie mit der öffentlichen Freudenbezeugung des ganzen Publikums empfangen, welches Höchstdieselben mit liebevollem Danke erwiederten. Auf Verlangen wurde die bekannte und dem allgemeinen Geständniß nach bei uns so gut exequirte Oper "Die Hochzeit des Figaro" gegeben. Der Eifer der Tonkünstler und die Gegenwart des Meisters Mozart erweckte bey den höchsten Herrschaften allgemeinen Beyfall und Zufriedenheit. Nach dem 1. Acte wurde eine Sonette, welche auf diese Feierlichkeit von einigen Patrioten Böhmens veranstaltet wurde, öffentlich vertheilt. Der frühzeitigen Abreise wegen erhoben sich Höchstdieselben noch vor Ende der Oper in die k. Burg zurück. [*Dokumente*, 264–65]

[translation:]

> ... At half past six, they [their Highnesses] betook themselves to Count Nostitz's National Theater, which on this occasion was decorated and illuminated in a distinctive manner. The theater was glorified in such a way by the jewelry of the numerous guests that one must admit never having seen such a magnificent spectacle. Upon their entry, their Highnesses were received with open expressions of joy by the entire public, which they reciprocated with loving thanks. By request, the well-known opera *Die Hochzeit des Figaro*, which is generally acknowledged to be so well executed here, was given. The efforts of the musicians and the presence of the master Mozart inspired general approval and satisfaction in their Highnesses. After the first act, a sonnet prepared by some Bohemian patriots was publicly distributed. On account of their early-morning departure, their Highnesses returned to the royal palace before the end of the opera.

The report in the *Prager Oberpostamtszeitung* notes that Archduchess and Archduke left the performance before the end, because they were departing early the next morning, 15 Oct. The Archduchess needed to reach Dresden in good time to prepare for her wedding three days later.

This report in *Notizie del mondo* is of no special importance in itself, but it is representative of a wider point about the distribution of news in the eighteenth century. We now know of six reports about the same event in Prague, the performance of Mozart's Figaro on 14 Oct 1787. Of these six, only two are literal reprintings of one of the others: the *Preßburger Zeitung* reprints the report in the *Wiener Zeitung*, and *Provinzialnachrichten* (see the *Notes* below) reprints the report in the *Prager Oberpostamtszeitung*. The report in the *Prager Oberpostamtszeitung* was evidently written by someone on the scene, with direct knowledge of the events. The others—in the *Wiener Zeitung*, *Notizie del mondo*, and *Gazzetta universale*—seem likely to have been based on common sources, probably including reports from one or more correspondents in the form of letters. These letters from correspondents served the function that stories from news agencies like Reuters fulfill today. The example also shows that no one version of a report can necessarily be relied upon to give all relevant details.

Notes (⇧)

Franz Xaver Count von Wieschnick, whose wife introduced Archduchess Maria Theresia and her brother Archduke Franz at "circle," was Oberstlandhofmeister (translated here as "Chief Land Steward") of Bohemia (see *Dokumente*, 265)

It is sometimes stated in the secondary literature that Prince Anton was in Prague with Archduchess Maria Theresia. For example, Julian Rushton writes in his Cambridge Opera Handbook on *Don Giovanni*:

> The date of the first performance [of *Don Giovanni*] was then expected to be 14 October; it was to coincide with the honeymoon visit to Prague of the Archduchess Maria Theresia and Prince Anton Clemens of Saxony. [Rushton 1981, 2]

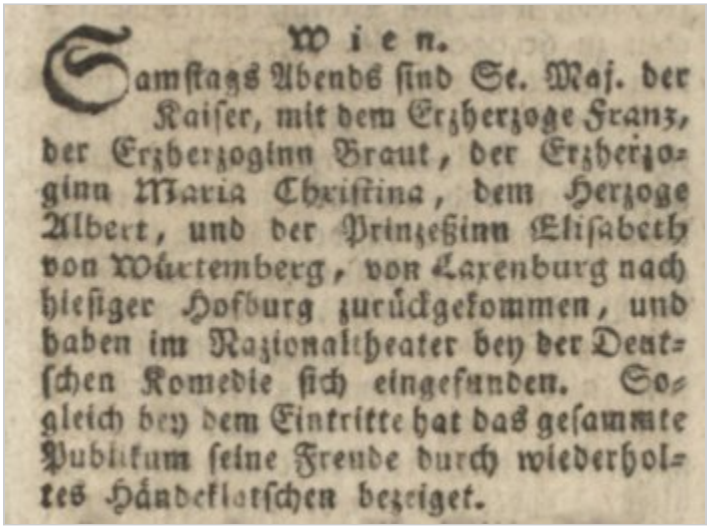
And more recently, Simon Keefe writes:

> In a letter to his Viennese friend Baron Gottfried von Jacquin, written over a ten-day period, Mozart documents the run-up to the premiere of *Don Giovanni*: it was initially delayed from 14 October by the inability of "local stage personnel" to master the opera quickly and by insufficient preparations prior to his arrival, *Figaro* being given instead to mark the attendance of the Archduchess Maria Theresa, Emperor Joseph II's niece, and her new husband Prince Anton of Saxony *[...]* [Keefe 2017, 372]

However, Prince Anton was not in Prague; he was in Dresden awaiting Maria Theresia's arrival. His name appears in none of the press reports about the Archduchess's Prague visit, an omission that would have been unthinkable had he actually been there. That Anton was not traveling with the Archduchess is particularly evident from the reports, spread over four issues of the *Wiener Zeitung*, of her visit to Vienna,

which lasted nearly two weeks: she arrived first at the court's summer palace in Laxenburg on 27 Sep 1787, coming to Vienna on 29 Sep, and departing to continue her journey northward on 10 Oct. The illustrious participants in the whirlwind of activities organized for her during her stay in Vienna are listed meticulously. The report for the evening of Sat, 29 Sep is typical:

Wien.
Samstags Abends sind Se. Maj. der
Kaiser, mit dem Erzherzoge Franz,
der Erzherzoginn Braut, der Erzherzo=
ginn Maria Christina, dem Herzoge
Albert, und der Prinzeßinn Elisabeth
von Würtemberg, von Laxenburg nach
hiesiger Hofburg zurückgekommen, und
haben im Nazionaltheater bey der Deut=
schen Komedie sich eingefunden. So=
gleich bey dem Eintritte hat das gesammte
Publikum seine Freude durch wiederhol=
tes Händeklatschen bezeiget.
[*WZ*, no. 79, Thu, 4 Oct 1787, 2389]


Wien.
Samstags Abends sind Se. Maj. der Kaiser, mit dem Erzherzoge Franz, der Erzherzoginn Braut, der Erzherzoginn Maria Christina, dem Herzoge Albert, und der Prinzeßinn Elisabeth von Würtemberg, von Laxenburg nach hiesiger Hofburg zurückgekommen, und haben im Nazionaltheater bey der Deutschen Komedie sich eingefunden. Sogleich bey dem Eintritte hat das gesammte Publikum seine Freude durch wiederholtes Händeklatschen bezeiget.

Vienna.
On Saturday evening, His Majesty the
Emperor, with Archduke Franz, the
Archduchess bride, Archduchess Maria
Christina, Duke Albert, and Princess
Elisabeth of Württemberg, came back
to the Hofburg here from Laxenburg, and
were present in the National Theater
for the German comedy. On their entry
the entire public showed its joy by
repeated hand-clapping.

The references here are to Joseph II, his nephew Archduke Franz, Franz's sister Archduchess Maria Theresia (the betrothed), Joseph's sister Archduchess Maria Christina, her husband Duke Albert von Sachsen-Teschen, and Princess Elisabeth of Württemberg, Franz's intended bride. There is no mention of Prince Anton. When Maria Theresia departed Vienna on 10 Oct, she was accompanied by her brother, Archduke Franz. Again, there is no mention of Anton. Had he been present, the *Wiener Zeitung* certainly would have said so.

The commentary in *Dokumente* (264) does not make this mistake, although its phrasing is somewhat unclear. *Dokumente* is, however, misleading regarding the Archduchess's future title: Deutsch writes that she became Queen of Saxony, giving the impression that she gained this title fairly soon after her marriage. In fact, she was queen for just six months in 1827, from her husband's accession on 5 Mar that year to her own death on 7 Nov.

The report in the *Prager Oberpostamtszeitung* (*Dokumente* 264–65) was reprinted in *Provinzialnachrichten* on 24 Oct 1788 (no. 85, 102–3). There are minor differences between the two: the *Prager Oberpostzeitung* (as transcribed in *Dokumente*) has "enbellirt und beleuchtet", "Scene", "Freudebezeugung", and "Sonette, welche", whereas *Provinzialnachrichten* has "enbellirt und beleuchtet wurde","Szene", "Freudebezeigung", and "Sonet, welches". There are also a few other inconsequential differences of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. *Dokumente* omits (with an ellipsis) the first portion of the report on the activities of Archduke Franz and Archduchess Maria Theresia during the morning and afternoon of 14 Oct, and also omits (without ellipsis) the end of the final sentence of the report:

> Der frühzeitigen
> Abreise wegen, erhoben sich Höchstdieselben noch vor Ende
> der Oper in die k. Burg zurück, und reisten heute früh
> um 8 ½ Uhr mit eben den segenvollen Wünschen ab,
> die jeder Unterthan des Erzhauses Oesterreich bey einer
> solchen Gelgenheit empfindet.
> [*Provinzialnachrichten*, no. 85, Wed, 24 Oct 1787, 103]
>
> On account of their
> early-morning departure, their Highnesses returned to the
> royal palace before the end of the opera, and departed
> today at 8:30 am with exactly the beneficent wishes that
> every subject of the August House of Austria feels on such
> an occasion.

We have not yet had the opportunity to see the original report in the *Prager Oberpostamtszeitung*.

We are grateful to Matteo Magarotto for his translation of the reports in *Notizie del mondo* and *Gazzetta universale*.

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