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Paisiello and *Idomeneo* (1784)

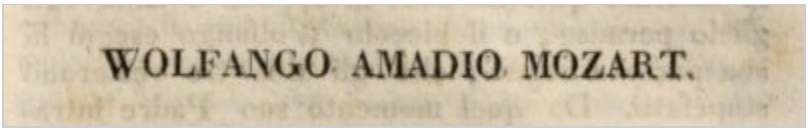
Dexter Edge and Bruce Alan Brown

[Giuseppe Antonio Bridi], *Brevi notizie intorno ad alcuni più celebri compositori di musica e cenni sullo stato presente del canto italiano*, Rovereto: Luigi Marchesani, 1827.

[45]

WOLFANGO AMADIO MOZART

[...]

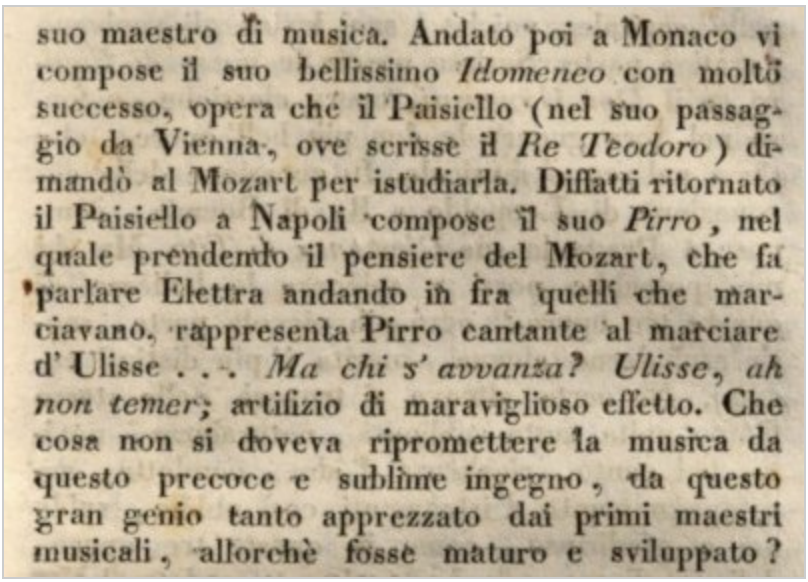

WOLFANGO AMADIO MOZART.

[47]

Andato poi a Monaco vi compose il suo bellissimo *Idomeneo* con molto successo, opera che il Paisiello (nel suo passaggio da Vienna, ove scrisse il *Re Teodoro*) dimandò al Mozart per istudiarla. Diffatti ritornato il Paisiello a Napoli compose il suo *Pirro*, nel quale prendendo il pensiere del Mozart, che fa parlare Elettra andando in fra quelli che marciavano, rappresenta Pirro cantante al marciare d’Ulisse ... *Ma chi s’ avvanza? Ulisse, ah non temer*; artifizio di maraviglioso effetto. Che cosa non si doveva ripromettere la musica da questo precoce e sublime ingegno, da questo gran genio tanto apprezzato dai primi maestri musicali, allorchè fosse maturo e sviluppato?

[...]

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suo maestro di musica. Andato poi a Monaco vi compose il suo bellissimo *Idomeneo* con molto successo, opera che il Paisiello (nel suo passaggio da Vienna, ove scrisse il *Re Teodoro*) dimandò al Mozart per istudiarla. Diffatti ritornato il Paisiello a Napoli compose il suo *Pirro*, nel quale prendendo il pensiere del Mozart, che fa parlare Elettra andando in fra quelli che marciavano, rappresenta Pirro cantante al marciare d'Ulisse . . . *Ma chi s' avvanza? Ulisse, ah non temer*; artifizio di maraviglioso effetto. Che cosa non si doveva ripromettere la musica da questo precoce e sublime ingegno, da questo gran genio tanto apprezzato dai primi maestri musicali, allorchè fosse maturo e sviluppato?

[translation:]

[...] Having then gone to Munich, *Mozart]* composed there his most beautiful *Idomeneo* with great success, an opera that Paisiello (when passing through Vienna, where he wrote *Il re Teodoro*) requested from Mozart for study. In fact, back in Naples, Paisiello composed his *Pirro*, in which—taking the idea from Mozart, who has Elettra speak while walking among those marching—he has Pirro singing while Ulysses is marching ... *But who is approaching? Ulysses, ah, fear not*; a marvelously effective artifice. What things could not be promised to music from this precocious and sublime mind, from this great genius, so esteemed by the leading masters of music, when he was mature and developed? *[...]*

Commentary

In Mar 1786 Mozart's *Idomeneo* was given at the palace theater of Prince Johann Adam von Auersperg in the Josephstadt suburb of Vienna, the only known production of the opera during Mozart's lifetime after its premiere run in Munich in 1781 (see our entry on Auersperg's production). It is generally agreed that the title role in the production of 1786 was sung by the young Italian businessman Giuseppe Antonio Bridi (1763–1836). The evidence for this claim is an item published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1824. Bridi's participation in *Idomeneo* is mentioned only in passing: the topic is a monument to Mozart that Bridi had recently erected in his garden at Rovereto and a "Temple of Harmony" that he was in the process

of building there as a shrine to his personal pantheon of composers, one of whom was Mozart. The relevant portion of the item reads:

> *Vermischte Nachrichten. [...]*
>
> — Der Banquier Jos. Ant. Bridi in Roveredo, der sich als junger Mann in Wien befand und Mozarts grosser Freund war, auch in den Privatvorstellungen seines Idomeneo sang, hat diesem grossen Meister in seinem Garten ein Monument errichten lassen mit der Aufschrift: *Herrscher der Seele durch melodische Denkkraft. [...]*
> [*AmZ*, xxvi:6, col. 92, 5 Feb 1824]


Donnerstage aufgeführt werden. — Der Banquier Jos. Ant. Bridi in Roveredo, der sich als junger Mann zu Wien befand und Mozarts grosser Freund war, auch in den Privatvorstellungen seines *Idomeneo* sang, hat diesem grossen Meister in seinem Garten ein Monument errichten lassen mit der Aufschrift: *Herrscher der Seele durch melodische Denkkraft.*

> *Miscellaneous News [...]*
>
> — The banker Joseph Anton Bridi in Rovereto, who was in Vienna as a young man and was a great friend of Mozart, and also sang in the private performances of his *Idomeneo*, has had a monument constructed in his garden to this great master with the inscription: *Sovereign of the Soul through the power of melodic thought. [...]*

This item was first cited (although not quoted) by Jahn in a footnote in the fourth volume of the first edition of his Mozart biography (Jahn 1856–1859, iv:561n12). The item itself is seldom mentioned today, but Jahn's identification of Bridi as Mozart's Idomeneo in 1786 has been accepted by Mozart scholars ever since.

Although this item was published in 1824, we have no real reason to doubt that Bridi took part in the production in 1786, and because he was a tenor, it is reasonable to assume that he sang the role of Idomeneo (for a more complete discussion, see our entry on Auersperg's *Idomeneo*). Bridi came to Vienna for his commercial education around 1781 (Falcone 1999, 252–53) and spent a good part of his career there. Mozart, in a letter to Gottfried von Jacquin from Prague on 4 Nov 1787, refers to Bridi as a "good friend":

> Ich wollte meinen guten freunden | besonders bridi und ihnen :| wünschen, daß Sie nur einen einzigen Abend hier wären, um antheil an meinem vergnügen zu nehmen! [*Briefe*, iv: 58]

> I would wish for my good friends (especially Bridi and you), that you were here only for a single evening in order to share my pleasure!

Bridi's name does not appear in the diaries of Count Zinzendorf during the 1780s (see Link 1998), and at present we have no other contemporaneous documentation of Bridi as a singer in Vienna during that decade. But he is mentioned several times as an amateur singer in Vienna in the 1790s and the first decade of the nineteenth century. Schönfeld's article on Bridi in the *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag* in 1796 describes him as the leading amateur tenor in Vienna at that time:

> Bridi, ein junger Großhändler. Als Di=
> lettant ist er gewiß die Krone aller unserer
> Tenoristen. Er liest ohne Schwierigkeit al=
> les vom Blatte weg, und hat eine sanfte,
> seelenvolle Stimme, in welche er durch die
> gefühlvollste Methode so viel Zauber legt,
> als ihm selbst beliebt. In scherzhaften Arie=
> ten schäckert er, in pathetischen Arien de=
> klamirt er mit ungeschmünktem Ausdruck,
> und in *Adagio* sind seine Töne schmelzend;
> sein *Recitativ* ist kräftig, wahr und hinreis=
> send. Kurz, er ist ein wahres Kind der
> schönen Natur, schöpft aus dem Herzen,
> und geht zum Herzen über. Wer ihn je=
> doch in seinem vollsten Glanze hören will,
> der muß ihn beym Klaviere hören; eine gro=
> ße volle Musik ist seinen feinen Manieren
> und weichen Modulazionen weniger günstig.
> [Schönfeld 1796, 10]

[translation:]

> Bridi, a young wholesaler. As a dilettante
> he is unquestionably the crown of all our
> tenors. He reads everything at sight without
> difficulty, and has a mellow, soulful voice,
> with which he can make as much magic as
> he wishes using the most sensitive technique.
> In humorous ariettas he plays the fool, in pathetic
> arias he declaims with unadorned expression,
> and in an *Adagio* his tone is mellifluous; his
> *Recitative* is powerful, true, and captivating.
> In short, he is a true child of beauteous nature,
> created from the heart and proceeding to the
> heart. Whoever wishes to hear him in fullest
> splendor must hear him at the keyboard; a full

> and grand ensemble is less favorable to his refined manner and soft modulations.

Schönfeld also names Bridi as one of the members of the private musical circle of Baroness Anna von Pufendorf (Mozart's Ilia in 1786), a group focused on "Fugen, Chöre und Kirchenmusik" ("fugues, choruses, and church music", Schönfeld 1796, 69–70; see the section on Pufendorf in our entry on Prince Auersperg's *Idomeneo*). Bridi appears in three entries in Morrow's calendar of private concerts in Vienna, all at the palace of Prince Lobkowitz: on 23 Mar 1798, in a quartet from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (perhaps the quartet at the end of the fourth-act finale); on 16 Mar 1799 in Salieri's *Axur*; and on 3 Apr 1800 in Cartellieri's *Angarda, regina di Boemia* (Morrow 1989, 390 and 392). Bridi is one of the soloists singled out for praise in a report in the *Wiener Zeitung* about a festive Te Deum and Mass given in the Minoritenkirche by Vienna's Italian community on 22 Sep 1799 in celebration of the retaking of Mantua from the French by imperial forces on 28 Jul of that year (on this event, see Albrecht 2008, 29n5). Bridi is the only amateur listed among an impressive lineup of professionals from the court theater, the Hofkapelle, and the Theater in der Leopoldstadt:

> Unter den unentgeltlichen Sängern zeichneten sich besonders aus: Der hiesige Wechsler, Herr J. A. Bridi, einer der geschicktesten Musikfreunde, die Madame Ricardi Pär, Mad. Tomeoni, Mad. Willmann und Mlle. Gaßmann, vom hiesigen K. K. Hoftheater, Hr. Simoni, in wirklichen Diensten der K. K. Hofka= pelle, dann die Herren Pasgua, Saal, Cipriani, Lotti und a. m. ebenfalls von K. K. Hoftheater; endlich Hr. Bondra und Hr. Pfeiffer, vom Leopoldstädter=Theater. *[...]* [*WZ*, no. 78, Sat, 28 Sep 1799, 3250]

> Among the singers, who performed gratis, those particularly distinguishing themselves included: the local moneychanger Herr J. A. Bridi, one of our most skilled musical amateurs; Madame Riccardi Paer, Madame Tomeoni, Madame Willmann, and Mademoiselle Gaßmann of the court theater here; Herr Simoni in actual service of the Hofkapelle; then Herren Pasqua, Saal, Cipriani, Lotti, et al.likewise from the court theater; and finally Herr Bondra and Herr Pfeiffer from the Theater in der Leopoldstadt. *[...]*

Bridi is also listed later in the same report among those who subsidized the event.



Pencil portrait of Giuseppe Antonio Bridi, from Bridi's estate.
The portrait was heavily damaged at the end of the First World War.
(Courtesy of Mr. Giuseppe de Pobizer, Rovereto, Italy)

Empress Marie Therese, wife of Emperor Franz II, noted in her diary Bridi’s participation in a private concert that she attended on 25 Jan 1802, at which Bridi sang an aria from Paisiello’s *Elfrida*, a duet (with Luigi Marchesi) from Mayr’s *Lodoiska*, and a trio (with Marchesi and Christine Frank) from Tarchi’s *Alessandro nell’Indie* (see the transcription from Marie Therese’s diary in Rice 2003, 288–89). Johann Friedrich Reichardt mentions hearing Bridi in Vienna in 1809 in the amateur concerts of Frau von Rittersburg:

[456]

> Acht und zwanzigster Brief.
>
> Wien, den 1 Merz 1809.
>
> *[...]*

[465]

> Daher ist es mir auch sehr lieb, daß die
> Liebhaberkonzerte der Frau von Rittersburg,
> welche Abends von sieben bis zehn gehalten
> werden, wieder angehen, und die Fastenzeit
> über fortdauern werden. Die Einrichtung
> wird künftig auch für die Zuhörer vortheilhaf=
> ter sein; man wird die Musik im mittlern

Zimmer allen plaziren, und die Zuhörer in
den beiden geöffneten Nebenzimmern sitzen las=
sen. In diesem Konzerte werden besonders
angenehme Italienische Singsachen sehr gefäl=
lig ausgeführt. Die Frau von Ritterburg

[466]

selbst singt sehr angenehm, und das Fräulein
von Zois und die junge Frau von Franke,
alle sehr hübsche reizende Geschöpfe, sin=
gen Zusammen mit einigen Italienischen und
Deutschen Tenor= und Baßstimmen Ensem=
blestücke aus Italienischen Opern und Ope=
retten mit vielem Geist und Geschmack. Man
fühlt sich oft in die Italienische Bühne ange=
nehm versetzt, wozu die äußerliche, liebliche
und belebte Repräsentation gewiß nicht wenig
beiträgt. Ein Italienischer Banquier, Bri=
di, dessen Tenorstimme in einzelnen Tönen
noch ihre frühere Schönheit und Fülle aus=
drückt, singt da oft mit vielem Vortrage und
Ausdruck. An schönen Baßstimmen zeichnet
sich da ein Herr von Kiesewetter, Herr
von Hennigstein und ein Italienischer Ab=
bée aus. *[...]* [Reichardt 1810, 465–66]

[translation:]

Twenty-Eighth Letter

Vienna, 1 March 1809

[...]

Thus I am also very glad that the
amateur concerts of Frau von Rittersburg,
which take place from seven to ten in the
evening, have started up again and will
continue throughout Lent. The arrangements
for the listeners will also be more advantageous
in the future: all the musicians will be placed
in the middle room, and the listeners will be
seated in the two open side rooms. Enjoyable
Italian vocal works in particular are very
pleasingly performed at these concerts. Frau
von Rittersburg herself sings very pleasantly,
and Fräulein von Zois and the young Frau von
Franke, all pretty and charming creatures,
together with an ensemble of a few Italian and

> German tenor and bass voices, sing, with much spirit and taste, ensembles from Italian operas and operettas. One often feels oneself transported to the Italian stage, to which the outgoing, lovely and lively presentation certainly add no small part. An Italian banker, Bridi, whose tenor voice in individual notes still expresses its earlier beauty and fullness, sings there often with much style and expression. Among beautiful bass voices a Herr von Kiesewetter, Herr von Henigstein, and an Italian abbé distinguish themselves. *[...]*

Reichardt's reference to "frühere Schönheit" ("earlier beauty") suggests that he recalls Bridi's singing from an earlier time, perhaps from his visit to Vienna in 1783 (Bridi was in his mid 40s when Reichardt visited Vienna in 1808–1809).

Bridi's Mozart monuments in Rovereto survive: there are two stones, with inscriptions in German and Latin respectively. The German inscription is:

HERRSCHER
DER SEELE
DURCH
MELODISCHE
DENK KRAFT

(Sovereign of the Soul through the Power of Melodic Thought.)

The Latin inscription is:

Amadeo Wolfgango Mozart
in mvsice principi
Ios[ephus] Ant[onius] Bridivs
amico opt[imo] ac desideratiss[imo]
l[ibens] m[erito] p[osuit]
Ave delicivm nostrvm

(For Amadeo Wolfgango Mozart, foremost in music.
Giuseppe Antonio Bridi willingly and deservedly erected [this]
for his best and most sadly missed friend. Hail, our delight.)

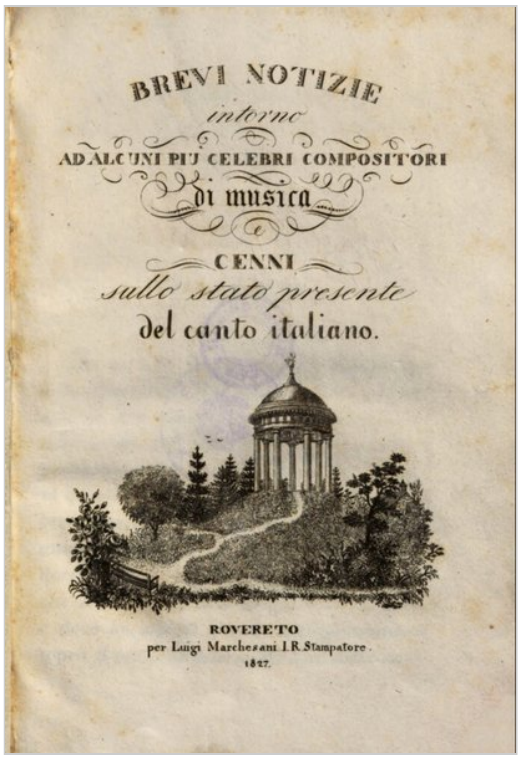
Bridi's Temple of Harmony ("Tempietto dell'Armonia") was apparently badly damaged in the Second World War, but a reconstructed version is in the gardens of Bridi's estate today, where it provides a beautiful setting for weddings and other events.



The Temple of Harmony in the gardens of the former estate of
Giuseppe Antonio Bridi in Rovereto
(Bibliolore: The RILM Blog)

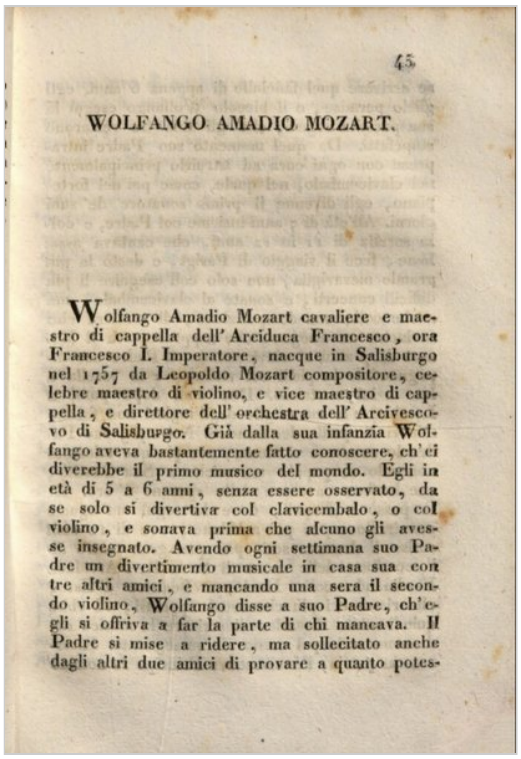
Sadly, the fresco that originally decorated the inside of the dome, with portraits of Bridi's pantheon of composers, does not survive (for a pre-war photograph, see Vettori 1991, Fig. 4, 35).

Bridi published a book about his temple in 1827, *Brevi notizie intorno ad alcuni più celebri compositori di musica e cenni sullo stato presente del canto italiano* (*Brief notes about some of the most famous composers of music and remarks on the present state of Italian singing*).



(ÖNB)

The book contains short vignettes on the seven composers honored in the temple: Sacchini, Handel, Gluck, Jommelli, Joseph Haydn, Palestrina, and Mozart. The vignette on Mozart is mainly based on other biographies that had been published by that time, mixed with Bridi's romantic effusions, and it contains a number of factual errors. The first sentence already contains two: a wrong year of birth for Mozart (1757) and the incorrect claim that Mozart was Kapellmeister to Archduke Franz, which he was not. Bridi later gives an incorrect year for Mozart's death, 1793, and this incorrect death year was apparently incorporated into a Latin inscription for Mozart in Bridi's Temple of Harmony (on the incorrect years, which were common in other Italian sources of the time, see Fornari 2006, 229–30).



45

WOLFANGO AMADIO MOZART.

Wolfango Amadio Mozart cavaliere e maestro di cappella dell' Arciduca Francesco, ora Francesco I. Imperatore, nacque in Salisburgo nel 1757 da Leopoldo Mozart compositore, celebre maestro di violino, e vice maestro di cappella, e direttore dell' orchestra dell' Arcivescovo di Salisburgo. Già dalla sua infanzia Wolfango aveva bastantemente fatto conoscere, ch' ci diverebbe il primo musico del mondo. Egli in età di 5 a 6 anni, senza essere osservato, da se solo si divertiva col clavicembalo, o col violino, e sonava prima che alcuno gli avesse insegnato. Avendo ogni settimana suo Padre un divertimento musicale in casa sua con tre altri amici, e mancando una sera il secondo violino, Wolfango disse a suo Padre, ch' egli si offriva a far la parte di chi mancava. Il Padre si mise a ridere, ma sollecitato anche dagli altri due amici di provare a quanto potes-

(ÖNB)

At one point in his vignette, Bridi refers explicitly to his friendship with Mozart:

> *[...]* Ecco
> un altro dei molti fatti, che potrei recare in
> mezzo circa il merito del Mozart, della cui confidenza, e amicizia non posso che andar superbo per tutta la mia vita. *[...]*
> [Bridi, *Brevi notizie*, 51*]*

> *[...]* This
> is another of the many facts I could cite
> concerning Mozart's merit, whose intimacy
> with me and friendship I cannot help but be
> proud of for my entire life. *[...]*

Although Bridi's vignette on Mozart is derivative and sometimes factually inaccurate, it contains two anecdotes about Mozart in Vienna that are not known from any other source: one about Mozart's celebrated duel with Clementi at court in Vienna on 24 Dec 1781 (see our entry for that date), and one about Paisiello and *Idomeneo*, transcribed and translated here. Bridi writes that when Paisiello was in Vienna to finish his *Il re Teodoro in Venezia* and prepare for its premiere, he borrowed the score of *Idomeneo* from Mozart for study. Bridi then notes a passage in Paisiello's opera *Pirro* (1787) that Bridi believed was inspired by (what Bridi took to be) a novel musical procedure in *Idomeneo*.

Bridi is inaccurate about some fundamental facts of Mozart's life, but we have no reason to doubt the story of Paisiello borrowing the score, and it fits plausibly with what we already know. Paisiello was indeed in Vienna for several months in 1784 to finish *Il re Teodoro in Venezia*, which had been commissioned by the court theater; it was premiered in the Burgtheater on 23 Aug 1784. Mozart, who had first met Paisiello in Naples in 1770, notes his presence in Vienna in a letter to Leopold dated 8 May 1784:

> Nun ist *Paesiello* hier, welcher von Rußland wieder zurückkehrt, — er wird eine Oper hier schreiben. Sarti wird alle Tage erwartet, um nach Rußland hier durchzureisen. — [*Briefe*, iii:313]
>
> *Paisiello* is here now; he is returning from Russia. — He will write an opera here. Sarti is expected any day, passing through on his way to Russia.

Mozart is known to have met with Paisiello at least once socially during this time: he took Paisiello to a concert at the country house of Gottfried Ignaz von Ployer in the Viennese suburb of Döbling on 13 Jun 1784, at which Ployer's niece Barbara, who was Mozart's student, performed (on this house, see Lorenz 2000). In a portion of a letter to Leopold written the day before, 12 Jun, Wolfgang writes:

> Morgen wird bey H: Agenten Ployer zu döbling auf dem Lande Academie seyn, wo die frl: Babette ihr Neues Concert ex g — ich das Quintett — und wir beyde dann die grosse Sonate auf 2 Clavier spiellen werden. — ich werde den Paesello [*sic*] mit dem Wagen abhollen, um ihm meine Composition und meine schüllerin hören zu lassen; — wenn Maestro Sarti nicht heute wegreisen hätte müssen, so wäre er auch mit mir hinaus. — [*Briefe*, iii:318]
>
> Tomorrow at Herr Agent Ployer's in Döbling in the country there will be an academy, at which Fräulein Babette will play her new concerto in G, I the quintet, and the two of us the big sonata for 2 keyboards. I will pick up Paisiello with the coach, to have him hear my composition and my student; if Maestro Sarti had not had to leave today, he also would have gone out with me.

The Concerto in G was K. 453, the quintet was K. 452, for piano and winds, and the sonata was K. 448.
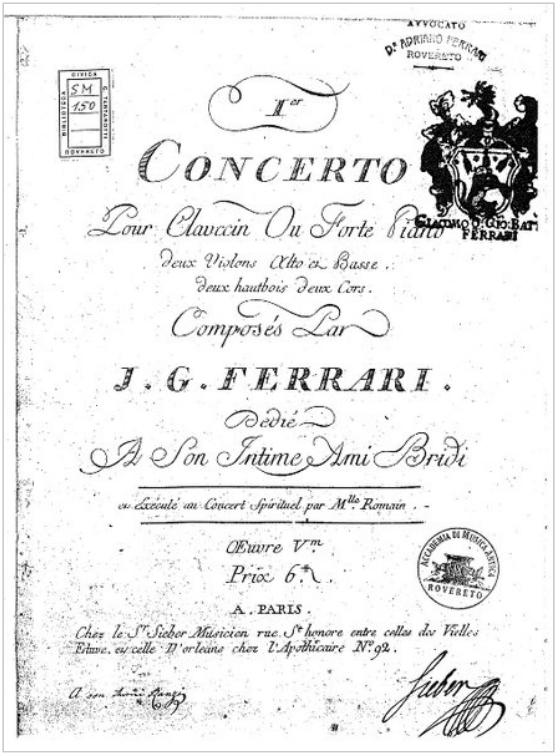
Although very little is known about Bridi in Vienna in the 1780s, an anecdote in the memoir of Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari explicitly places Bridi in Vienna at the time of Paisiello's visit:

> Stava a Vienna in quel tempo il celebre Paisiello, la cui musica drammatica mi avea toccata più di qualunque altro maestro: egli componeva il suo famoso *Rè Teodoro in Venezia*: scrissi subito al mio intimo amico Bridi, colà banchiere, acciò mi procurasse Paisiello per maestro di contrappunto al suo ritorno a Napoli. Bridi,

sempre pronto a favorirmi tentò, e riuscì
col mezzo del Marchese Circello Ambasciator di Napoli e del suo secretario privato l’abate Leprini. Paisiello promise non
solo d’istruirmi, ma non volle sentir parlare
d’alcuna specie di ricompensa.
[Ferrari 1830, 105]

In Vienna at that time was the famous
Paisiello, whose dramatic music had touched
me more than that of any other composer: he
was composing his famous *Il re Teodoro in Venezia*. I wrote right away to my intimate
friend Bridi, a banker there, so that he might
arrange for Paisiello to be my counterpoint
teacher upon his return to Naples. Bridi, always
ready to help me, attempted and succeeded
by means of Marchese Circello, the Neapolitan
Ambassador, and his private secretary the
Abate Leprini. Paisiello promised not only to
instruct me, but he also did not wish to hear
anything about any sort of compensation.

Ferrari dedicated his first keyboard concerto to Bridi, perhaps in appreciation.



(IMSLP)

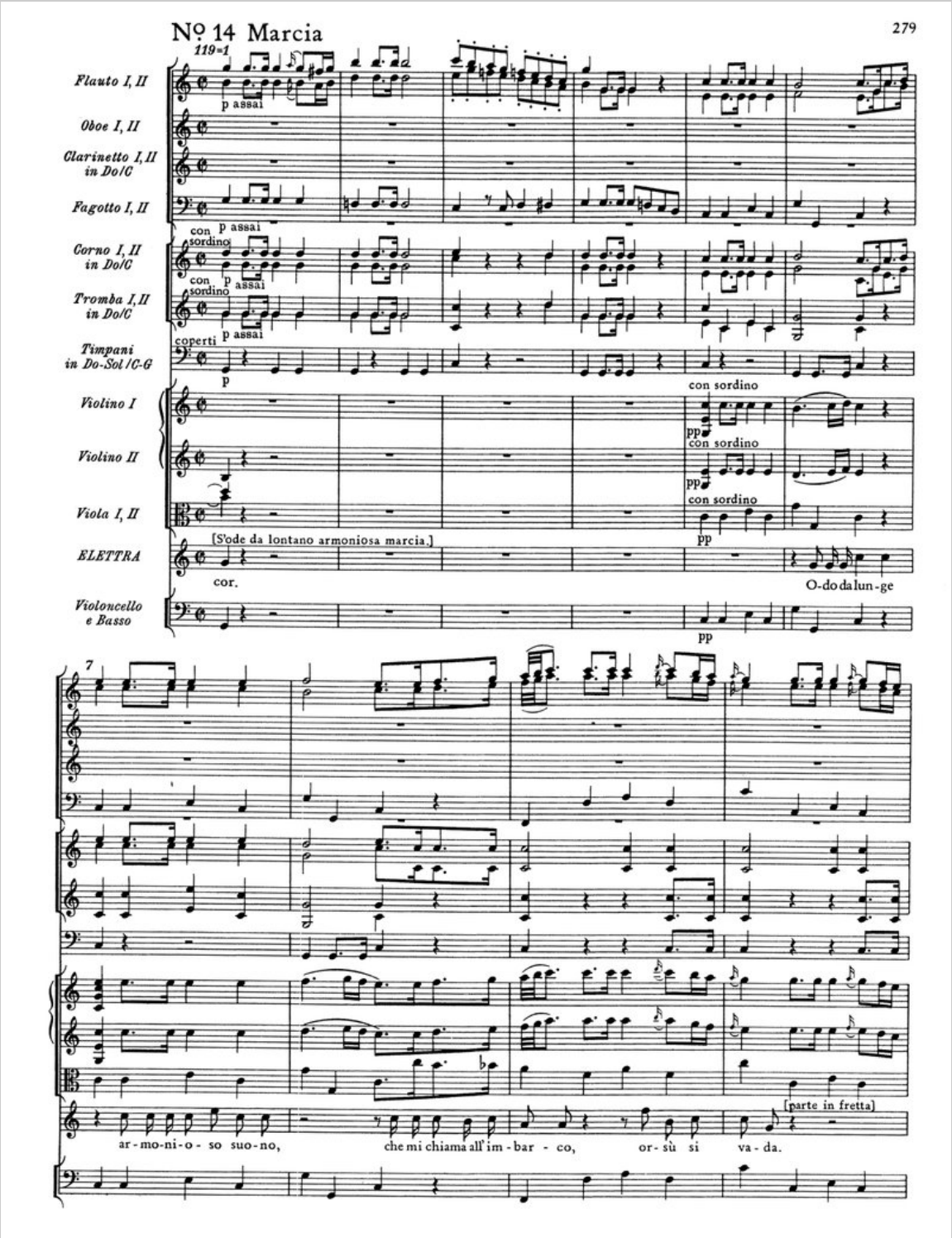
Michael Kelly writes in his memoir that he and Bridi visited Joseph Haydn in (apparently) Eszterháza (not Eisenstadt, as Kelly writes). Although Kelly does not give a date, Pohl places the visit in the summer of 1784 (Pohl 1882, ii:201):

> In the midst of my devotion to tragedy and comedy, I did not forget what I owed to music, and what more favourable opportunity could offer for evincing my devotion to the science of harmony, than that which presented itself, of visiting the immortal Haydn. He was living at Eisenstadt *[sic]*, the palace of Prince Esterhazy, in whose service he was, and thither I determined to go and pay my respects to him; accordingly, accompanied by a friend of mine of the name of Brida *[sic]*, a young Tyrolese merchant, I set off post to fulfil my intentions.
>
> I had the pleasure of spending three days with him, and received from him great hospitality and kindness. *[...]*
>
> [Kelly 1826, i:221]

Whether or not Pohl is correct in placing the visit in 1784, Kelly's anecdote does show that Bridi was acquainted with at least one member of the court opera around that time: Kelly made his debut in Vienna in Salieri's *La scuola de' gelosi* on 22 Apr 1783 (Michtner 1970, 149). It is not difficult to imagine that Kelly and Bridi might quickly have become friends: they were almost exactly the same age—Kelly was born on 25 Dec 1762 and Bridi on 1 Feb 1763—and Kelly had just spent nearly four years in Italy studying voice and making his first professional appearances, so he would have appreciated having an Italian-speaking friend of similar age and interests. Bridi would likely also have met Kelly's friends Nancy and Stephen Storace, who had come to Vienna at the same time as Kelly.

We can plausibly speculate that Bridi may have known Mozart by 1784, if not earlier. Even if he did not, he certainly knew Mozart later on and could have heard the anecdote about Paisiello and *Idomeneo* from Mozart directly.
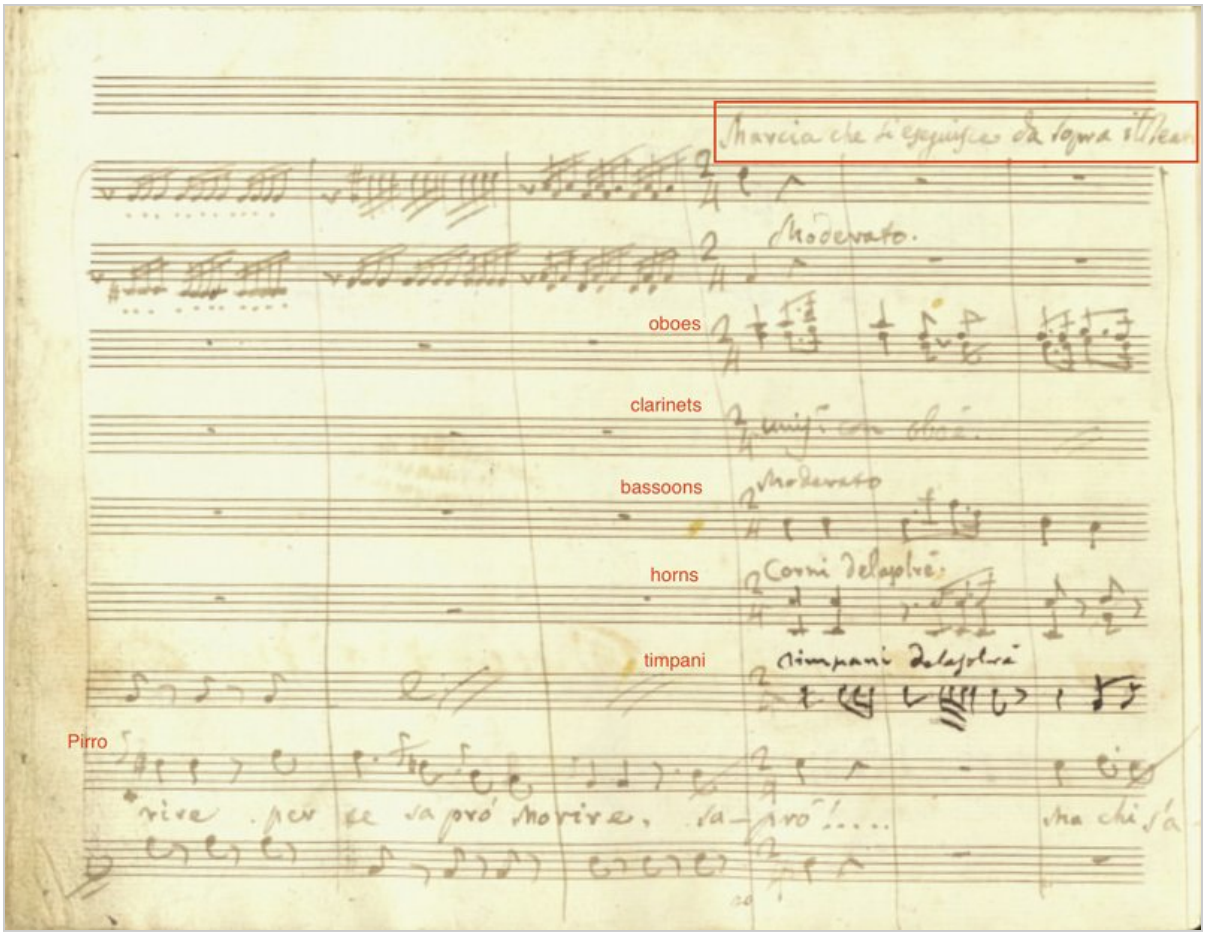
The passage in *Idomeneo* to which Bridi refers is scene 14 of Act 2, just after Elettra finishes her aria "Idol mio." Bridi misremembers the context slightly: Elettra does not walk *among* the marchers; she hears a band approaching from the distance playing a march, and she sings a few lines over it. The transition from aria to march is a direct elision via the final cadence chord of the aria. Mozart does not use an offstage band, and after four bars played piano by the orchestral winds alone (with muted trumpets, horns, and timpani), he discretely brings in the muted strings pianissimo, giving him a broad palette with which to build a powerful crescendo using the entire orchestra as the march approaches.

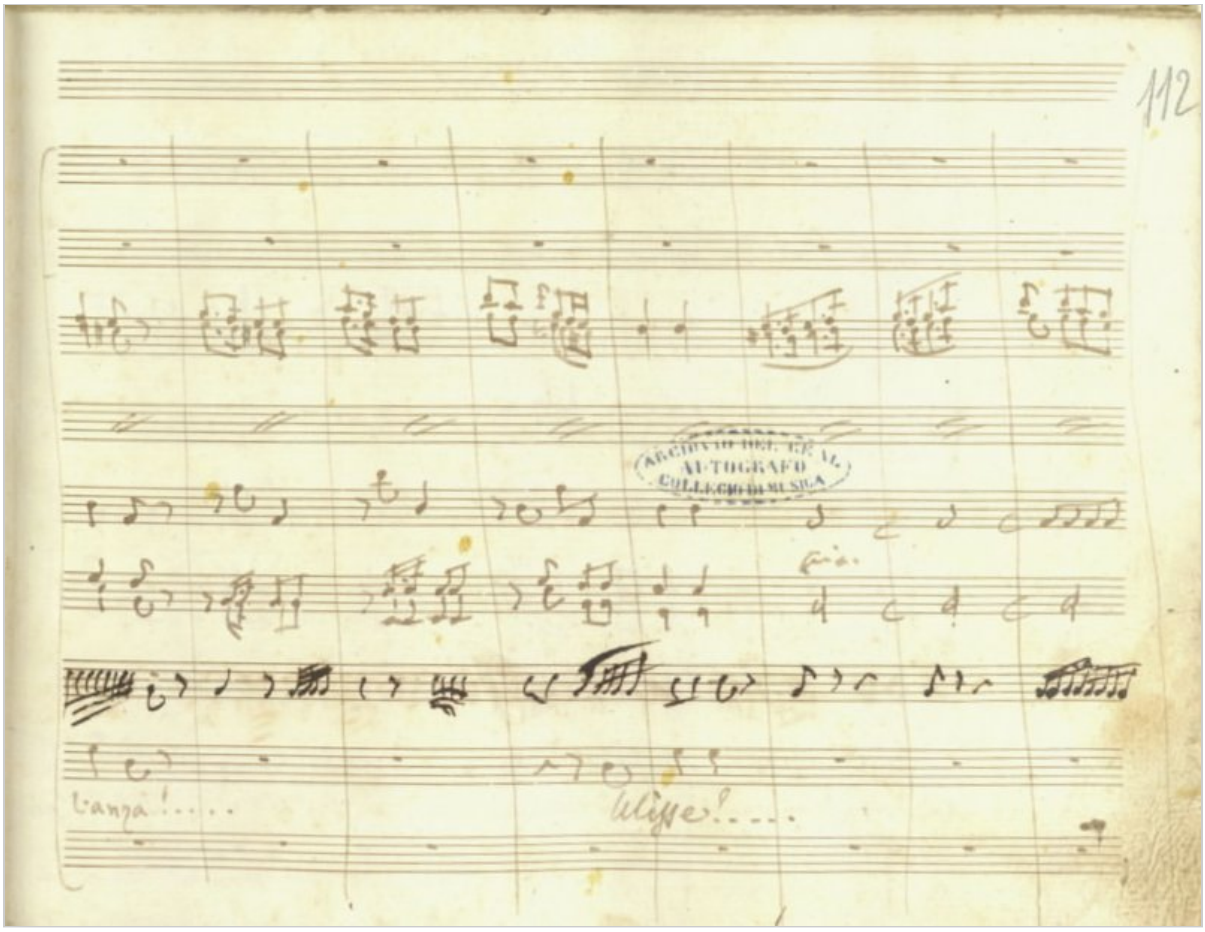


NMA II/5/11/1, no. 14
(Digital Mozart Edition, NMA Online)

It is a simple device but an effective one, and one he liked well enough to use again in more elaborate form in the third-act finale of *Le nozze di Figaro*.
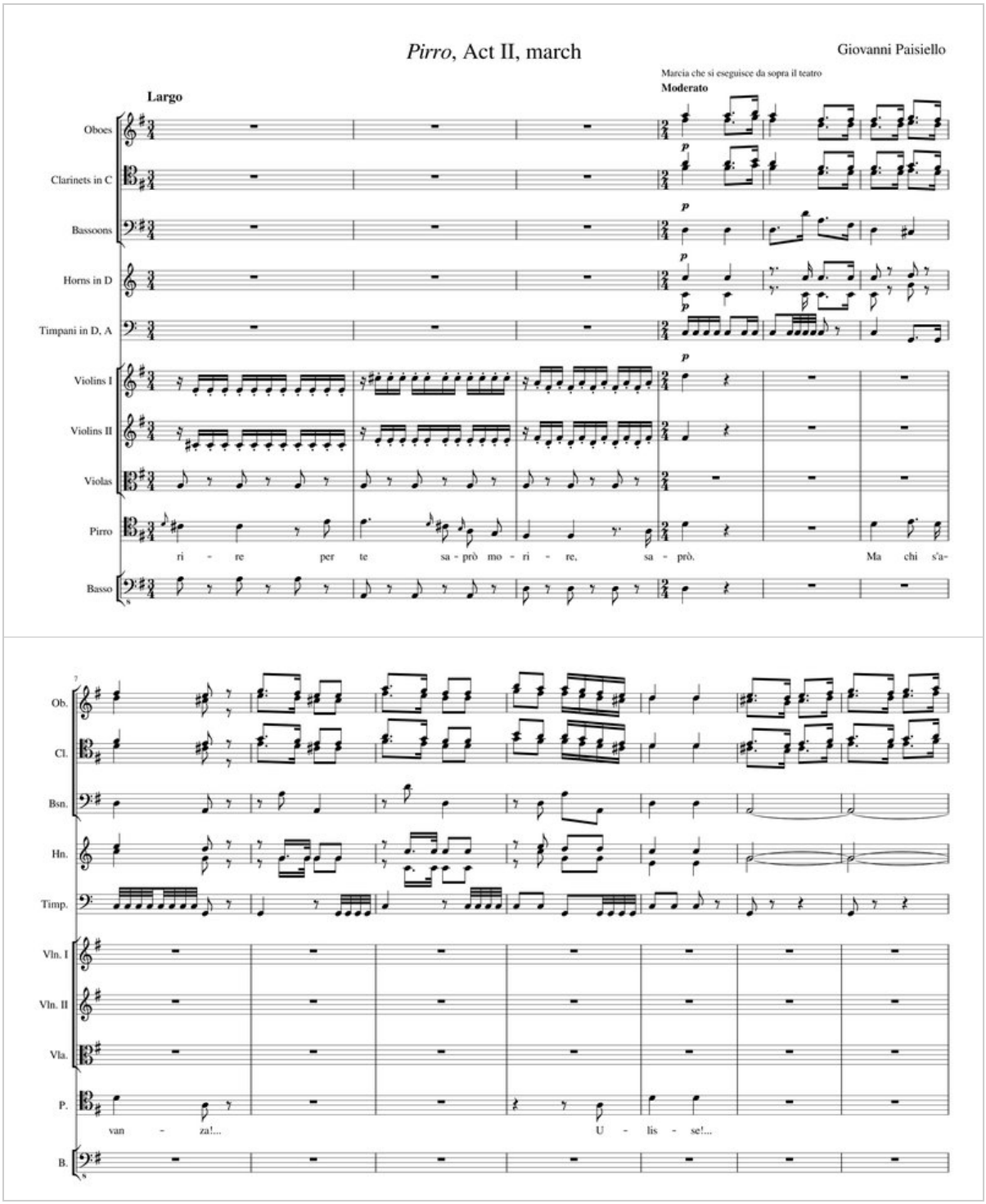
Paisiello's *Pirro* was premiered in the Teatro San Carlo in Naples on 12 Jan 1787. The autograph score of *Pirro* survives.
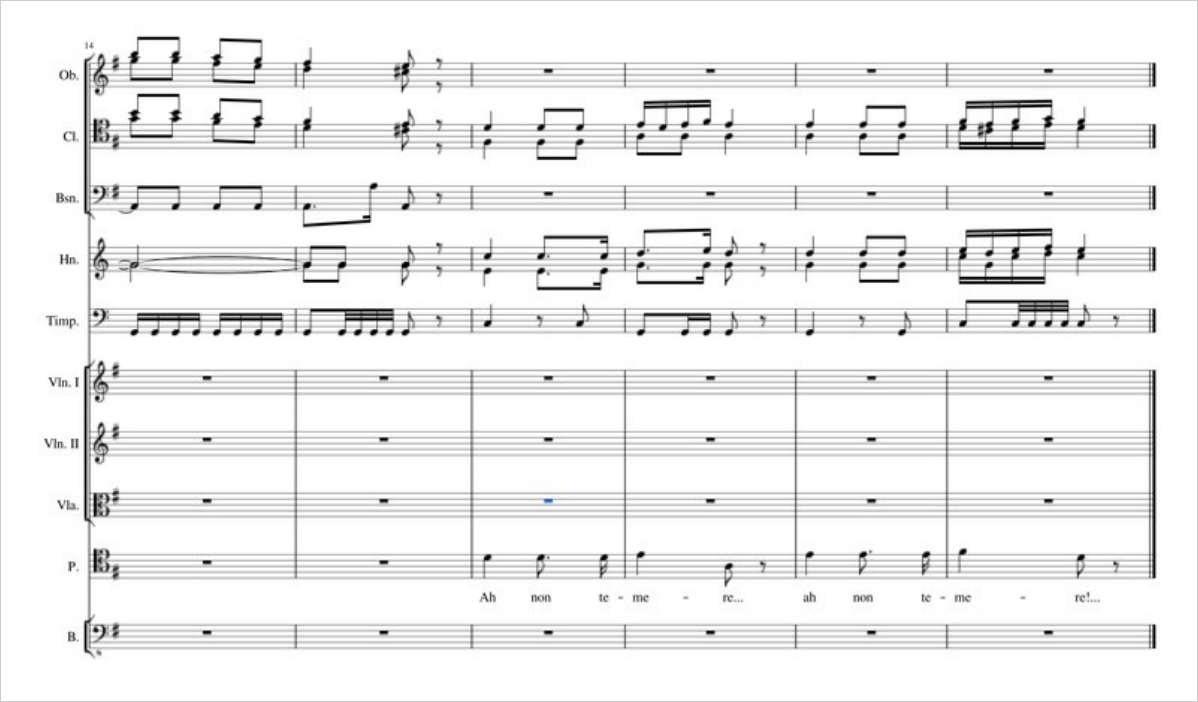

Marcia che si eseguisce da tutta la Banda
Moderato.
oboes
clarinets
bassoons
Moderato
horns
Corni delaplue
timpani
timpani delaplue
Pirro
rire . per se va pro morire . va — pro' .....
ma chi sa



Giovanni Paisiello, *Pirro*, autograph.
Naples, Biblioteca del Conservatorio di musica S. Pietro a Majella (I-Nc)
Rari 2.9.11–12, vol. ii, 111v–112r
(IMSLP)

The passage that Bridi compares to Mozart's is at the end of scene 9 in Act 2. Pirro (Pyrrhus, son of Achilles) sings a short Largo aria to Polissena (Polyxena), "Cara negl'occhi tuoi." The music segues directly from the aria to the sound of a wind band approaching from the distance playing a march; Paisiello's stage direction indicates that the wind band is onstage ("Marcia che si eseguisce da sopra il teatro"; "March that is played onstage"), probably starting behind the scenes. Pirro sings over the approaching band: "Ma chi s'avanza? ... Ulisse! Ah cara non temere" ("But who is approaching? Ulysses! Ah, beloved, fear not ..."), just as Bridi remembers. Pirro goes on to sing several more lines over the approaching march, extending the effect further than Mozart does in *Idomeneo*, and Paisiello makes the timpani more active than Mozart's, giving the scene a more militaristic feel.


Pirro, Act II, march
Giovanni Paisiello
Marcia che si eseguisce da sopra il teatro
Largo
Moderato
Oboes
Clarinets in C
Bassoons
Horns in D
Timpani in D, A
Violins I
Violins II
Violas
Pirro
Basso
ri - re per te sa - prò mo - ri - re, sa - prò. Ma chi s'a-
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
P.
B.
van - za!... U - lis - se!...



It is unclear whether this effect—a vocal line sung over a march approaching from the distance—was indeed a novelty in 1781 when Mozart used it in *Idomeneo* (the history of the technique seems not to have been studied), but Bridi evidently thought that it was. In any case, Paisiello's imitation of Mozart's effect may well have been a novelty for *Pirro*'s Neapolitan audiences in 1787. It is striking that the most famous and successful composer of Italian operas in Europe in the 1780s would adapt this idea from Mozart and extend it, and that Bridi, remembering back forty years, would pick this particular passage, which does not seem at all unusual to a listener today, as an example of Mozart's genius.

Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart had passed through Rovereto, Bridi's hometown, at the beginning of their first trip to Italy, remaining there over Christmas (24–26 Dec 1769). Leopold records in his travel notes meeting a "Doctor Bridi" in Rovereto; this was probably Antonio Giacomo Bridi (1721–1799), Giuseppe Antonio's uncle (*Briefe*, i:297, and commentary, v:214); Giuseppe Antonio would have been six years old at the time of the Mozarts' visit. Leopold refers to Dr. Bridi again nearly a year later in a letter to his wife, written from Milan on 10 Nov 1771: "H: Doctor Britti von Roveredo ist selbst ein guter Clavierist" ("Herr Doctor Bridi of Rovereto is himself a good keyboard player"; *Briefe*, i:403). Perhaps this earlier acquaintance with Bridi's uncle facilitated an acquaintance between Giuseppe Antonio and Wolfgang in Vienna.

Although we currently know little about Bridi's life in Vienna in the 1780s, his name begins to appear fairly often in commercial contexts in the *Wiener Zeitung* and other sources beginning in 1793. From 1793 until around 1802, notices and reports refer to the wholesalers (Großhändler) "Bridi Bessana und Comp" (sometimes also "Besana"), and from around 1803 to "Bridi, Parisi und Comp" (see *Vollständiges Auskunftsbuch* 1803, xiii). Bridi was also a "Wechsler" (a

moneychanger); he is listed as such in, for example, the *Beschreibung und Grundriß der Haupt- und Residenzstadt Wien* of 1802:

> Die Wechsler sind alle auch zugleich Großhändler, aber nicht alle Großhänd=ler sind auch zugleich Wechsler. Die bekanntesten Wechselhäuser sind gegenwärtig:Arnsteiner und Compagnie; Bienenfeld; Bridi; Brentano; Fries; *[etc.]* [*Beschreibung und Grundriß* 1802, 186]

> The moneychangers are also all likewise wholesalers, but not all wholesalers are likewise moneychangers. The best-known changing houses are currently: Arnsteiner & Co.; Bienenfeld; Bridi; Brentano; Fries; *[etc.]*

It is probably his work as a "Wechsler" that led writers to refer to Bridi as a "Banquier" (banker).

A few years later, Bridi seems to have been working independently. A directory listing from 1807 reads: "[Herr] Jos. Ant. Bridi, hat die Schreibstube am neuen Markt 1115" ("Herr Jos. Ant. Bridi has his office on Neuer Markt 1115"; *Hof= und Staats=Schematismus* 1807, 37). Another from 1811 describes him similarly, but at a new address: "Bridi, Hr. Joseph Anton, hat die Schreibstube in der Kärnthnerstraße 1001" ("Bridi, Herr Joseph Anton, has his office in the Kärntnerstraße 1001"; Redl 1811, 9). Bridi is mentioned twice in letters from Constanze Mozart to her son Karl in Milan. In a letter begun in Preßburg on 29 Jul 1809, she writes:

> *[...]* da wir nicht wißen können wie lange wir noch hierbleiben so habe ich alle meine *Musique* in einen verschlag zusamengepackt und sie unter deiner adresse an unsern Freund *Bridi* gegebender dir sie bey erster gelegenheit überschicken will. *[...]* [*Mozart Letters and Documents—Online Edition*, 2]

> *[...]* since we cannot know how long we will still remainhere, I have packed all of my music in a crate and givenit with your address to our friend Bridi, who will forward itto you at the first opportunity. *[...]*

Constanze refers to Bridi again in the first sentence of a letter to Karl from 7 May 1810:

> Lieber Karl! Wienn am 7 Maj 1810
> Ich eille dir zu sagen: daß ich so eben von Bridi kom[m]e und 5 # für dich Bezahlt haben, damit du das Piano-Forte deines Vaters so gleich bekomst. *[...]*
> [*Mozart Letters and Documents—Online Edition*, 1]

> Dear Karl! Vienna, 7 May 1810
> I write in haste to let you know that I have just come from Bridi and have paid 5 [ducats] for you, so that you will receive your father's pianoforte right away. *[...]*

Bridi also played a role as an intermediary in the delivery to Beethoven of the piano that Broadwood sent to the composer as a gift in 1818 (Forbes 1967, 694–95). On 30 Dec 1821, Bridi was best man at the wedding of Johann Baptist Malfatti and Countess Helena Ostrowska in St.

Michael's church in Vienna (Lorenz 2015), and he is listed among the "Repräsentanten" of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in 1823 (Böckh 1823, 352).

It seems to have been around this time that Bridi returned to Rovereto permanently. The item published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1824 refers to him as "Der Banquier Jos. Ant. Bridi in Roveredo." Constanze Mozart thanks Bridi in the acknowledgments at the end of the *Anhang* volume of Nissen's biography, similarly referring to him as "[Herr] Banquier A. Bridi in Roveredo" (Nissen 1828b, 218). Bridi's Temple of Harmony and its inscriptions are described in the *Anhang* (Nissen 1828b, 177–78), and he is on the list of subscribers to the biography (as "[Herr] Anton *Bridi*, Grosshändler in Roveredo") at the beginning of the first volume (Nissen 1828a, xxxvii).

Bridi died of cholera in Rovereto on 8 Aug 1836 at the age of 73 (Falcone 1999, 255).

Bridi's anecdote about Paisiello and *Idomeneo* describes a remarkable and early example of a prominent contemporary of Mozart studying one of his compositions, and apparently borrowing and adapting a procedure of Mozart's that he regarded as novel: a character on stage singing over a march approaching from the distance. Much research remains to be done on Bridi, particularly on his years in Vienna, where he was based for over forty years. But it is clear that during at least the first two and a half decades of that time, Bridi was a leading tenor in amateur musical circles in Vienna, one known for singing with great expression and refinement. Although Mozart refers to him only once in his known letters, Bridi may have been more prominent in Mozart's social life in Vienna than has previously been realized.

In his vignette on Mozart, Bridi makes one other remark that seems not to derive from any other source, and may have come from Bridi's personal experience with his friend:

> Il Mozart componeva con tale prestezza, che quando si metteva a scrivere due copisti appena bastavano per tenergli dietro *[...]* [Bridi, *Brevi notizie*, 50]
>
> Mozart composed with such rapidity that when he began to write, it took at least two copyists to keep up with him *[...]*

Notes (⇧)

Fornari gives the complete text of Bridi's vignette on Mozart in both transcription and facsimile (Fornari 2006, 232–37); he also quotes in his main text all but the final sentence of the passage that we give at the top of this page, and discusses it briefly (Fornari 2006, 229–30).

The report on Bridi in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of Feb 1824 appears in English in *The Harmonicon* of Jun 1824 (xviii:118–19).

Angermüller & Geffray (1994, 22–24) describe Wolfang and Leopold's stay in Rovereto on 24–27 Dec 1769, and include several photographs from Rovereto, including the Mozart memorial with the German inscription (not legible in their photograph) and the Temple of Harmony (Angermüller & Geffray, 1994, 30–31).

The (partial) autograph of Paisiello's *Pirro* is preserved in Naples, Biblioteca del Conservatorio di musica S. Pietro a Majella (I-Nc): Rari 2.9.11-12, and is available in facsimile at IMSLP. A scan of the libretto from the original production in Naples is available here. The National Library of the Czech Republic has in its collection a libretto from a production of *Pirro* in Warsaw on 17 Jan 1790 in honor of the birthday of the King of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski:



PIRRO

DRAMMA SERIO

PER MUSICA

IN TRE ATTI

DA RAPPRESENTARSI

NEL TEATRO NAZIONALE

IL DI 17 GENNAJO 1790.

GIORNO ANNIVERSARIO

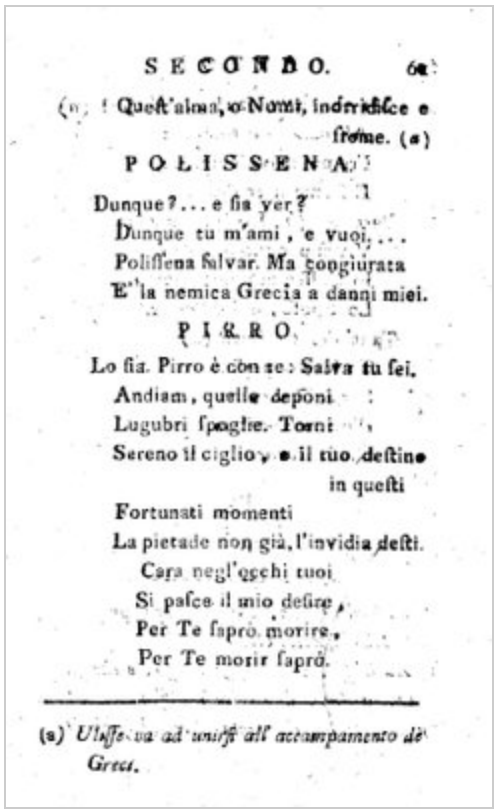
DI NASCITA

DI SUA MAESTA' IL RE DI POLONIA.

IN VARSAVIA

Presso di P. DUFOUR, Consiliere Aulico di S. M. e Direttore della Stamperia del R. Corpo de Cadetti.

M. DCC. XC.



SECONDO. 61

Quest'alma, o Numi, inorridisce e freme. (a)

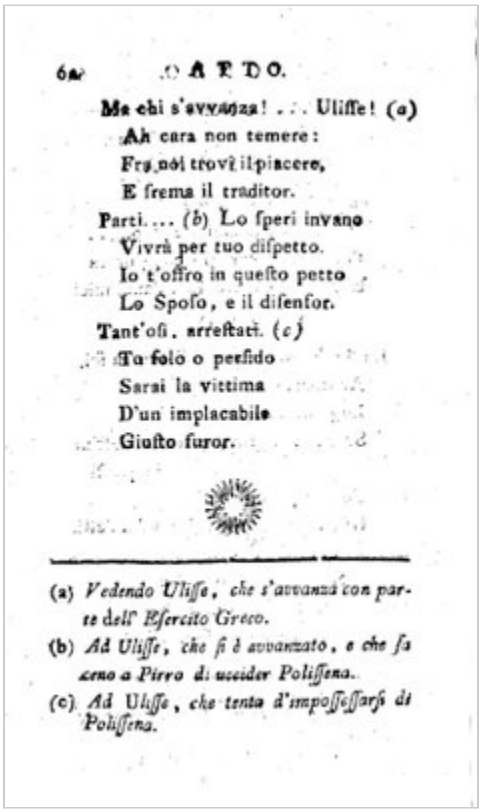
POLISSENA.

Dunque?... e fia ver?
Dunque tu m'ami, e vuoi...
Poliſſena ſalvar. Ma congiurata
E' la nemica Grecia a danni miei.

PIRRO.

Lo ſia. Pirro è con te: Salva tu ſei.
Andiam, quelle deponi
Lugubri ſpoglie. Torni
Sereno il ciglio, e il tuo deſtino in queſti
Fortunati momenti
La pietade non già, l'invidia deſti.
Cara negl'occhi tuoi
Si paſce il mio deſire,
Per Te ſaprò morire,
Per Te morir ſaprò.

(a) *Uliſſe va ad unirſi all'accampamento de' Greci.*



62 PARDO.

Ma chi s'avvanza! ... Uliſſe! (a)
Ah cara non temere:
Fra noi trovi il piacere,
E frema il traditor.
Parti.... (b) Lo ſperi invano
Vivrà per tuo diſpetto.
Io t'offro in queſto petto
Lo Sposo, e il diſenſor.
Tant'oſi, arreſtati. (c)
Tu ſolo o perfido
Sarai la vittima
D'un implacabile
Giuſto furor.

(a) *Vedendo Uliſſe, che s'avvanza con parte dell' Eſercito Greco.*

(b) *Ad Uliſſe, che ſi è avvanzato, e che fa cenno a Pirro di uccider Poliſſena.*

(c) *Ad Uliſſe, che tenta d'impoſſeſſarſi di Poliſſena.*

(Google Books)

Important recent work on Bridi has been done by Italian scholars (Vettori 1991, Falcone 1999, Fornari 2006). However, much basic research on Bridi remains to be done, particularly on his years in Vienna, where he was based for over four decades, from around 1781 to around 1823.

Falcone refers incorrectly to Bridi's firm as "Bridi e Desana" (Falcone 1999, 252). Although the designation "Dessana Bridi und Comp" does appear at least once in the *Wiener Zeitung* (no. 72, Wed, 7 Sep 1796, 2548), this is a typographical error; all other references we have seen give "Bessana" or "Besana," and always with Bridi's name listed first ("Bridi Bessana und Comp"). The Mozart literature (including the commentary to *Briefe*) has generally not paid careful attention to the chronology and focus of Bridi's businesses in Vienna.
Bridi also composed a little, although his activity as a composer seems not to have been studied. Vettori (1991, 39n10) lists five works:

- 6 Italian duets, with piano (Vienna: Mollo)
- 7 Canzonette (Vienna, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde)
- An item in the collection *34 Canzonette o romanze messe in musica dai più celebri musicisti e dilettanti in Vienna* (Florence, conservatory library)
- *VIII Petits airs italiennes et françaises avec pianoforte* (Prague, National Museum)
- *VIIII Petits airs italiennes et françaises avec guitare*

None of the published works currently appears in the RISM catalog.

It was suggested by Walter Senn that a score of *Don Giovanni* in the Cistercian abbey in Stams (A-ST) might come from Bridi's lost musical estate (see the RISM record here). Based on the two images from the score that are linked to the RISM record, it is clearly of Italian (not Viennese) provenance.

We are grateful to Giacomo Fornari, Michael Lorenz, Rebecca Harris-Warrick, and Lois Rosow for their responses to queries regarding this commentary. We also thank Ian Allan for the translation of the Latin inscription on Bridi's Mozart monument in Rovereto, Stefano Frega for tracking down the pencil portrait of Bridi, and Giuseppe de Pobizer for his permission to publish an image of it

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Authors: Dexter Edge, Bruce Alan Brown

Link(s): Google Books

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Source Library: Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon, 379325

Categories: Biography, Reception

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