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Mozart and the Davies sisters (Ortes to Hasse, addendum) (2 Mar 1771)

Dexter Edge

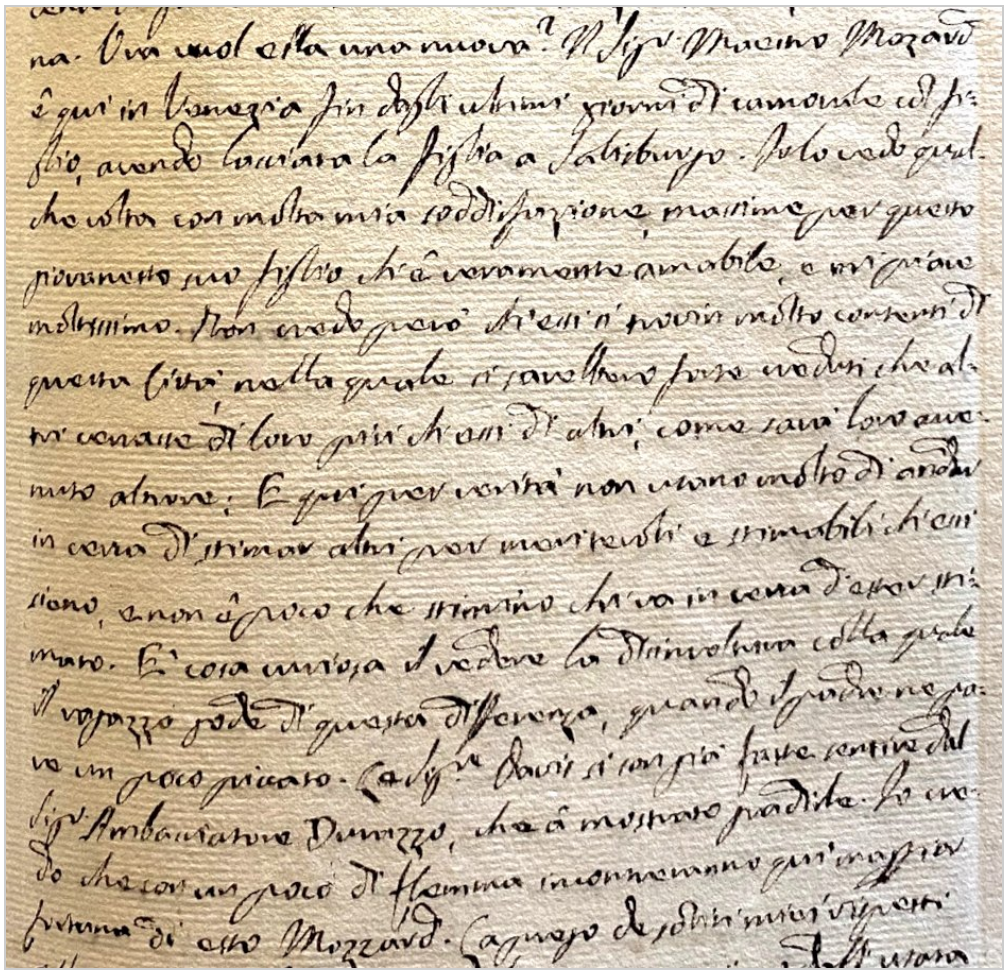
Letter from Giammaria Ortes in Venice to Johann Adolph Hasse in Vienna

[...]

Ora vuol ella una nuova? Il Sig.r Maestro Mozard è qui a Venezia fin dagli ultimi giorni di carnovale col figlio, avendo lasciata la figlia a Salisburgo. Io lo vedo qualche volta con molta mia soddisfazione, massime per questo giovenetto suo figlio, e ch’è veramente amabile, e mi piace moltissimo. Ma non credo però ch’essi si trovin molto contenti di questa città, nella quale si sarebbero forse creduti che altri cercasse di loro più ch’essi d’altri, come sarà loro avvenuto altrove. E qui per verità non usano molto di andar in cerca di stimar altri, per meritevoli e stimabili ch’essi siano, e non è poco che stimino chi va in cerca di esser stimato. È cosa curiosa veder la disinvoltura colla quale il ragazzo gode di questa differenza, quando il padre ne pare un poco piccato. Le Sig.re Davis si son già fatte sentire dal Sig.r Ambasciatore Durazzo, che â mostrato gradirle. Io credo che con un poco di flemma incontreranno qui maggior fortuna di esso Mozard.

[...]

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[translation:]

[...]

Now do you want to hear some news? Since the last days of Carnival, Signor Maestro Mozart has been here in Venice with his son, having left his daughter in Salzburg. I see them sometimes with much satisfaction, especially this young lad, his son, who is truly amiable and pleases me very much. But I do not believe, however, that they are very happy in this city, in which they may perhaps have thought that others would seek them out, as will have happened to them elsewhere, rather than they seeking out others. And it is true that here it is not the custom to go in search of others to praise, however meritorious and estimable they may be, but rather to praise those who come seeking esteem. It is a curious thing to see, the nonchalance with which the boy enjoys this difference, whereas the father seems rather piqued by it. The Misses Davies have already been heard at Ambassador Durazzo's, who showed his

satisfaction. I believe that with a little effort they will have better luck here than Mozart.
[...]

Commentary

The passage transcribed above appears in a letter dated 2 Mar 1771 from Giammaria Ortes (1713–1790) to Johann Adolph Hasse (1699–1783; for more on Ortes and his correspondence with Hasse, see our entry for 28 Oct 1769). The central portion of the passage was first published in German translation in Jan 1906 by Carl Mennicke in *Die Musik* (Mennicke 1906a, 36) and in the original Italian later that same year in Mennicke's *Hasse und die Brüder Graun als Symphoniker* (Mennicke 1906b, 431). Deutsch copied Mennicke's Italian transcription literally, apparently without reference to the original source (*Dokumente*, 119).

However, Mennicke omitted the first three sentences of the paragraph referring to the Mozarts, as well as the two sentences immediately following, which refer to them again. These sentences are given in blue above. Mennicke (and hence Deutsch) also omitted three words, likewise given here in blue, and both Mennicke and Deutsch incorrectly give "trovino" for "trovin" and "sieno" for "siano." We reproduce here the complete corrected passage referring to the Mozarts, using the transcription from Livia Pancino's fine scholarly edition of the complete Hasse-Ortes correspondence (Pancino 1998, here 228). Our punctuation and capitalization follow Pancino.

Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart visited Venice from 11 Feb to 12 Mar 1771 (for a summary and additional sources, see our entry for 24 Feb 1771). They had been in the city for nineteen days by 2 Mar, the date of Ortes's letter (which also happened to be his birthday); his wording thus implies that he had met with them more than once within that relatively short period.

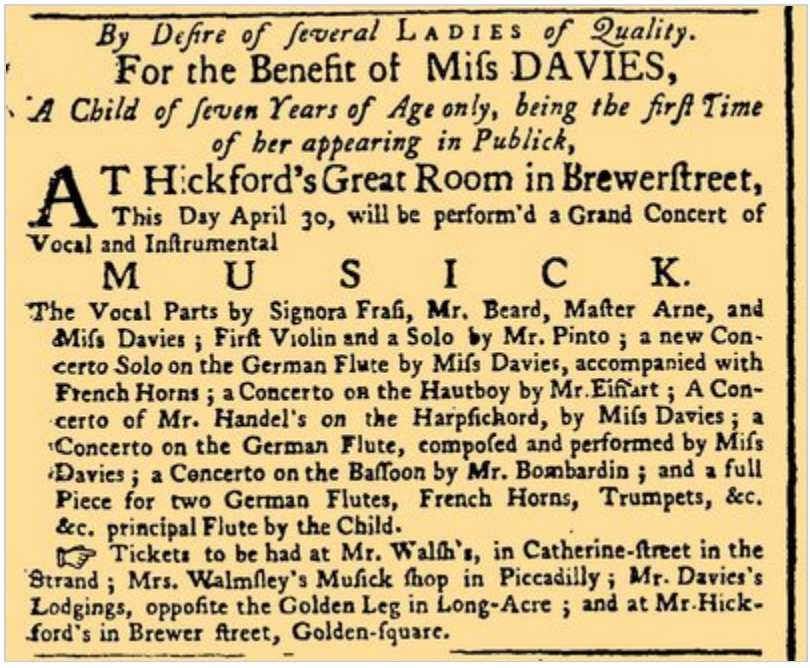
The first three sentences of the passage should be read in the context of prior references to the Mozarts in the correspondence between Hasse and Ortes. Hasse first mentioned the Mozarts in his letter to Ortes of 30 Sep 1769 (Pancino 1998, 197–98; *Dokumente*, 84–85). Hasse had evidently received a letter from Leopold Mozart regarding his plan to travel to Italy; this letter is lost, but Leopold had probably asked Hasse for potential contacts and letters of recommendation. At that point, according to Hasse, Leopold planned to leave Salzburg on 24 Oct. The letter of 30 Sep 1769 was intended to serve as Ortes's informal introduction to the Mozarts; a few days later, Hasse also wrote a short formal letter of introduction, dated 4 Oct 1769, which he would have sent to Leopold in Salzburg to deliver personally (Pancino 1998, 198–99; *Dokumente*, 85). Hasse sent his letter of 30 Sep to Venice, but Ortes was in Bologna at the time, hence the letter had to be forwarded to him there, and his reply was delayed. He responded to Hasse in his letter of 28 Oct 1769, writing that he looks forward to meeting Leopold Mozart and "suoi figli" ("his children"), the plural showing that he understood Hasse to mean that both Wolfgang and Nannerl would be coming to Italy.

In the event, Leopold and Wolfgang did not leave Salzburg until 13 Dec 1769, and neither Nannerl nor Leopold's wife made the journey. As things developed, Leopold and Wolfgang did not visit Venice until nearly the end of their long first tour of Italy, arriving in the city on 11 Feb 1771 and leaving on 12 Mar. But they still had with them Hasse's letter of recommendation to Ortes. Thus Ortes's letter of 2 Mar 1771 is his report back to Hasse that the Mozarts had finally arrived, and contrary to expectation, Nannerl was not with them.

Ortes writes that Leopold Mozart seemed frustrated at the relative slowness of Wolfgang's progress with Venetian society (for more on this well-known portion of the letter, see our entry for 24 Feb 1771). The final two sentences transcribed above refer to the young musicians Marianne and Cecilia Davies, who were traveling through Italy with their parents. Mozart scholars seem to be largely unaware that the Davies sisters were in Venice at the same time as the Mozarts (for example, there is no reference to the Davies in Cattelan 2000), so this overlap is worth examining more closely.

Marianne and Cecilia Davies

Marianne Davies, a child prodigy, first performed publicly on 30 Apr 1751, at a concert for her own benefit in Hickford's Great Room in London. Her age is reported in the advertisement as seven, and from this it has been inferred that she was born in 1743 or 1744. The family was apparently Irish (Matthews 1975, 150 and 156).



By Desire of ſeveral LADIES *of Quality.*
For the Benefit of Miſs DAVIES,
A Child of ſeven Years of Age only, being the firſt Time of her appearing in Publick,
AT Hickford's Great Room in Brewerſtreet,
This Day April 30, will be perform'd a Grand Concert of Vocal and Inſtrumental
MUSICK.
The Vocal Parts by Signora Fraſi, Mr. Beard, Maſter Arne, and Miſs Davies; Firſt Violin and a Solo by Mr. Pinto; a new Concerto Solo on the German Flute by Miſs Davies, accompanied with French Horns; a Concerto on the Hautboy by Mr. Eiſſart; A Concerto of Mr. Handel's on the Harpſichord, by Miſs Davies; a Concerto on the German Flute, compoſed and performed by Miſs Davies; a Concerto on the Baſſoon by Mr. Bombardin; and a full Piece for two German Flutes, French Horns, Trumpets, &c. &c. principal Flute by the Child.
☞ Tickets to be had at Mr. Walſh's, in Catherine-ſtreet in the Strand; Mrs. Walmſley's Muſick ſhop in Piccadilly; Mr. Davies's Lodgings, oppoſite the Golden Leg in Long-Acre; and at Mr. Hickford's in Brewer ſtreet, Golden-ſquare.

The General Advertiser, no. 5160, Tue, 30 Apr 1751, 3
(NewspaperArchive)

At the concert Marianne sang, played pieces on the German flute (including one she is said to have composed), and performed a concerto by Handel on the harpsichord. From 1751 until 1761 she performed in London at least once a year.

On 8 Feb 1762, at around the age of 18, she gave what was apparently the first public performance on Benjamin Franklin's newly invented "armonica" (glass harmonica), an improvement of the musical glasses; she appears to have been at that time the only person to own an instrument on Franklin's design, apart from Franklin himself.



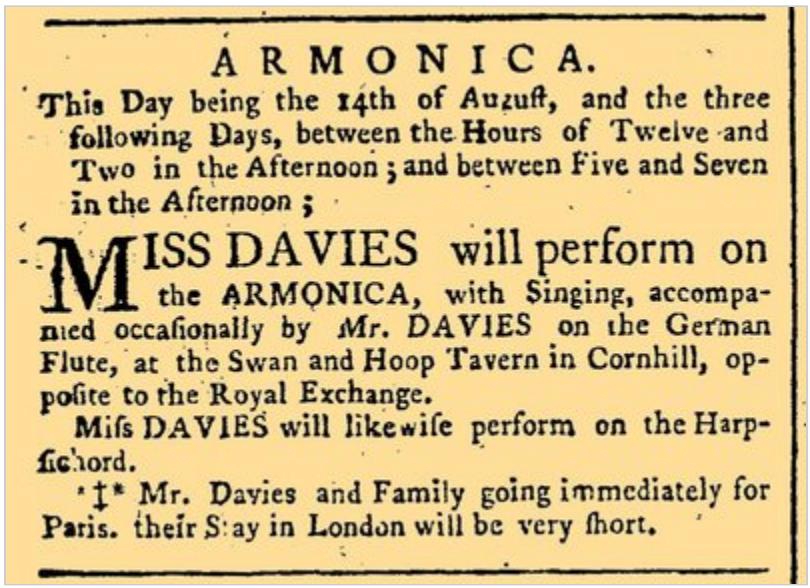
The ARMONICA.

AT the Great Room in Spring-Gardens, late Cock's Auction-Room, To-morrow, between the Hours of One and Three, Miſs DAVIES will perform on the ARMONICA (being the Muſical Glaſſes without Water, formed into a complete Inſtrument, capable of thorough Baſs, and never out of Tune) accompanied occaſionally with the Voice and German Flute. This is the firſt and only Inſtrument of the Kind ever exhibited in Public. Miſs Davies will alſo (if deſired) perform on the Harpſichord or German Flute. Admittance 2s. 6d. each.

To be continued every Day, Sundays excepted.

The Public Advertiser, no. 8615, Wed, 17 Feb 1762, 1
(newspapers.com)

From this point onward, Marianne began to appear in public much more frequently, always principally on the glass harmonica, with announcements appearing in the *Public Advertiser* once a month from Apr to Aug 1762, and similarly from Feb to Aug 1763. In late 1763 and early 1764 she and her family were in Dublin; her only known performances in London that year took place on 9 Jul and 14 Aug. The advertisement on 14 Aug includes the notice: "Mr. Davies and Family going immediately for Paris. their Stay in London will be very short."



ARMONICA.

This Day being the 14th of Auguſt, and the three following Days, between the Hours of Twelve and Two in the Afternoon; and between Five and Seven in the Afternoon;

MISS DAVIES will perform on the ARMONICA, with Singing, accompanied occaſionally by Mr. DAVIES on the German Flute, at the Swan and Hoop Tavern in Cornhill, oppoſite to the Royal Exchange.

Miſs DAVIES will likewiſe perform on the Harpſichord.

‡ Mr. Davies and Family going immediately for Paris. their Stay in London will be very ſhort.

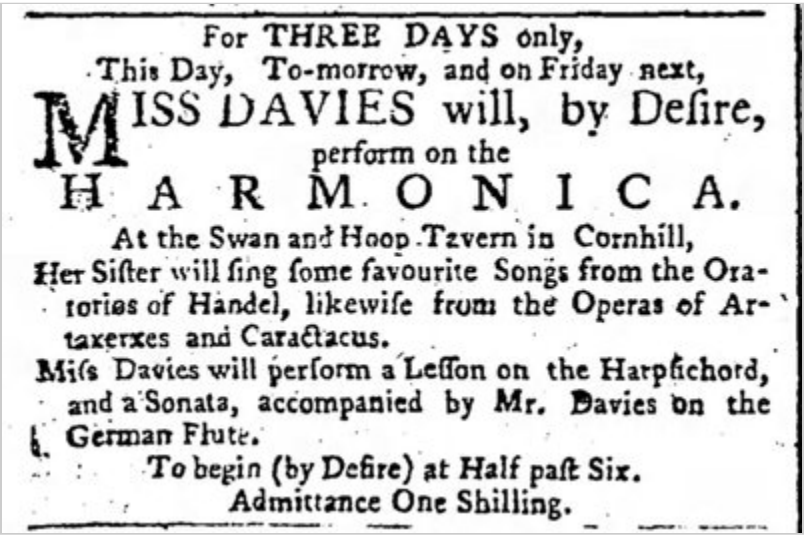
The Public Advertiser, no. 9298, Tue, 14 Aug 1764, 1
(NewspaperArchive)

These are the only public performances that Marianne gave while the Mozarts were in London. The Davies family spent the next two years on the continent, and Marianne did not perform

again in London until 1 Jun 1767, making several appearances there over the next few weeks, before the family left once again for the continent.

The birth year of Marianne's younger sister Cecilia is uncertain. In a letter to a friend, Marianne copied out a sonnet in Italian written on the occasion of Cecilia's appearance in Naples as Bradamante in Hasse's *Il Ruggiero*, a production that premiered on 20 Jan 1772. At the head of the sonnet, Marianne has written "In lode della Sigra Cecilia Davies detta L'Inglesina, che a l'Età di 15 è stata Prima Donna del Real Teatro di S. Carlo di Napoli 1772" (Matthews 1975, 161; "In praise of Signora Cecilia Davies, called 'L'Inglesina', who at the age of 15 was prima donna of the royal Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, 1772"). If this age is correct, then Cecilia was probably born in 1756, and no later than Jan 1757.

The earliest known reference to Cecilia singing in public in London is an advertisement for Marianne's appearances at the Swan and Hoop Tavern on 11–13 Aug 1767, shortly before the family left London. Cecilia would probably have been around eleven years old.


For THREE DAYS only,
This Day, To-morrow, and on Friday next,
MISS DAVIES will, by Desire,
perform on the
HARMONICA.
At the Swan and Hoop Tavern in Cornhill,
Her Sister will sing some favourite Songs from the Oratorios of Handel, likewise from the Operas of Artaxerxes and Caractacus.
Miss Davies will perform a Lesson on the Harpsichord, and a Sonata, accompanied by Mr. Davies on the German Flute.
To begin (by Desire) at Half past Six.
Admittance One Shilling.

The Public Advertiser, no. 10227, Tue, 11 Aug 1767, 1
(newspapers.com)

When the Davies family traveled again to the continent, they had with them several letters of recommendation, and they accumulated many more along the way. A group of these letters survives, along with an extensive list of the writers and intended recipients of others; this source is preserved at the Dorset Record Office in England under the title "Letters of recommendation for the Miss Davies's." (The source was first described in Matthews 1975, and has been discussed more recently by Thomsen-Fürst 2003). When the Davies family left England, they had with them, among others, seven letters from Johann Christian Bach and two from Count Christian August von Seilern, Habsburg ambassador in London. It is from the letters of recommendation that we know the family was Catholic.

The "Letters" allow much of the family's itinerary to be reconstructed (the following is based on Thomsen-Fürst 2003, 355–56). They gave a concert in Brussels on 28 Feb 1768 and another in

Antwerp on 6 Mar. They then visited Leuven, Liège, Bonn, and Koblenz. In June they were in Mainz and in July in Hanau, then on to Schwetzingen, the summer residence of Elector Carl Theodor, where they acquired a letter of recommendation to Gluck in Vienna. In August they were in Bruchsal and at Schloß Grafeneck. No other dates are recorded before their arrival in Vienna, but apparently they also stopped in Augsburg, Munich, and Regensburg. One might cautiously guess, then, that they arrived in Vienna around Oct 1768. If so, they would have overlapped with the Mozart family, who departed Vienna at the end of December that year. But there is no known direct evidence that the families encountered each other in Vienna at that time.

It is often said that the Davies sisters were taken into employment by Empress Maria Theresia and that they taught music to the empress's daughters (see, for example, Matthews 1975, 157); however, we have not seen any citation of a primary source for this claim. It does seem that the empress enjoyed hearing them; in a letter of recommendation for the sisters dated 16 Jan 1772, Metastasio wrote from Vienna:

> Qui sono state universalmente ammirate ed applaudite: e la nostra augustissima padrona, che ha voluto risentirle più volte, ha date loro, con l'innata sua imperiale munificenza, replicate prove del suo benignissimo gradimento. [Brunelli 1954, 134]
>
> Here they have been universally admired and applauded: and our most august ruler, who wished to hear them repeatedly, gave them, with her innate imperial munificence, repeated proofs of her most benevolent appreciation.

From Charles Burney we know that in Vienna, the Davies family lived in the same house as the Hasses, and that Hasse taught young Cecilia singing:

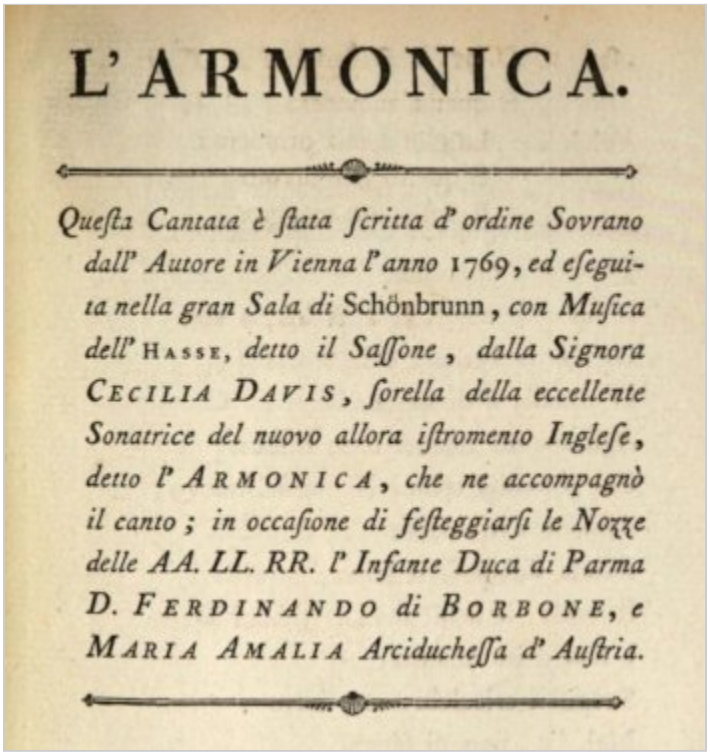
> When Miss Davis, who played the Armonica, and her sister, who sung the first woman's part last year, in the great opera at Naples, resided at Vienna, they lodged in the same house with the Hasse family, and it was during this period, that the daughters of Signor Hasse learned English of the two Miss Davis's, and that this great master, by his instructions, enabled the youngest of them to sing the principal part in the first opera of Europe. [Burney 1773, 275–76]

"[T]he great opera at Naples" was the production of Hasse's *Il Ruggiero* in that city in Jan 1772, with Cecilia as Bradamante.

Hasse and Metastasio wrote a cantata, *L'armonica*, for the Davies sisters to perform as part of the festivities in Vienna for the marriage by proxy of Archduchess Maria Amalia and Duke Ferdinand of Parma in Jun 1769. An annotation at the beginning of the text of the cantata in the 1782 Paris edition of Metastasio's works reads:

L'ARMONICA.

Questa Cantata è stata scritta d'ordine Sovrano dall'Autore in Vienna l'anno 1769, ed eseguita nella gran Sala di Schönbrunn, *con Musica dell'HASSE, detto il Sassone, dalla Signora CECILIA DAVIS, sorella della eccellente Sonatrice del nuovo allora istromento Inglese, detto l'ARMONICA, che ne accompagnò il canto; in occasione di festeggiarsi le Nozze delle AA. LL. RR. l'Infante Duca di Parma D. FERDINANDO di BORBONE, e MARIA AMALIA Arciduchessa d'Austria.* [Metastasio 1782, 283]



L'ARMONICA.

Questa Cantata è stata scritta d'ordine Sovrano dall'Autore in Vienna l'anno 1769, *ed eseguita nella gran Sala di* Schönbrunn, *con Musica dell'*HASSE, *detto il Sassone, dalla Signora* CECILIA DAVIS, *sorella della eccellente Sonatrice del nuovo allora istromento Inglese, detto l'*ARMONICA, *che ne accompagnò il canto; in occasione di festeggiarsi le Nozze delle AA. LL. RR. l'Infante Duca di Parma D.* FERDINANDO *di* BORBONE, *e* MARIA AMALIA *Arciduchessa d'Austria.*

L'ARMONICA.

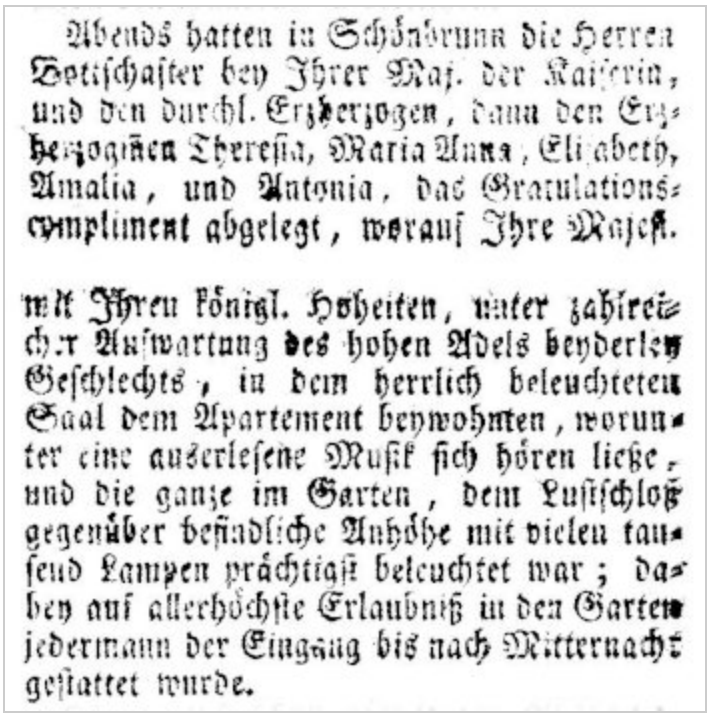
This cantata was written by the Author at the order of the Sovereign in Vienna in the year 1769, with music by HASSE, called "Il Sassone," and performed in the great hall at Schönbrunn *by Signora CECILIA DAVIES, sister of the excellent player of the then new English instrument called the ARMONICA, who accompanied the singing; on the occasion of the celebrations of the wedding of Their Royal Highnesses the Infante, the*

Duke of Parma, FERDINAND OF BOURBON,
and MARIA AMALIA, Archduchess of Austria.

It is widely stated in the secondary and reference literature that this performance took place on 27 Jun 1769, the date of the actual wedding ceremony (see, for example, Matthews 1975, 157). This is almost certainly wrong. The week-long series of events leading up to the wedding and Maria Amalia's subsequent departure for Parma can be traced through detailed reports in the *Wienerisches Diarium* and the *Gazette de Vienne*. On the day of the wedding, 27 Jun, all events took place in the city: the wedding ceremony itself in the Augustinerkirche, and the gala events afterward in the Hofburg.

Only two events with music are reported to have taken place at Schönbrunn that week. On Wed, 21 Jun, the French and Spanish ambassadors submitted the formal wedding proposal at Schönbrunn and presented the Duke's portrait; afterwards, there was a ball. On Fri, 23 Jun, following Maria Amalia's formal renunciation at the Hofburg of any claims to the various thrones that might come into play through the marriage, the court and dignitaries returned to Schönbrunn:

Abends hatten in Schönbrunn die Herren
Botschafter bey Ihrer Maj. der Kaiserin,
und die durchl. Erzherzogen, dann den Erz=
herzogin[n]en Theresia, Maria Anna, Elisabeth,
Amalia, und Antonia, das Gratulations=
compliment abgelegt, worauf Ihre Majest.
mit Ihren königl. Hoheiten, unter zahlrei=
cher Aufwartung des hohen Adels beyderley
Geschlechts, in dem herrlich beleuchteten
Saal dem Apartement beywohnten, worun=
ter eine auserlesene Musik sich hören ließe,
und die ganze im Garten, dem Lustschloß
gegenüber befindliche Anhöhe mit vielen tau=
send Lampen prächtigst beleuchtet war; da=
bey auf allerhöchste Erlaubnis in den Garten
jedermann der Eingang bis nach Mitternacht
gestattet wurde.
[*Wienerisches Diarium*, no. 52, Sat 24 Jun 1769, 7]



Abends hatten in Schönbrunn die Herren Botschafter bey Ihrer Maj. der Kaiserin, und den durchl. Erzherzogen, dann den Erzherzoginen Theresia, Maria Anna, Elisabeth, Amalia, und Antonia, das Gratulationscompliment abgelegt, worauf Ihre Majest. mit Ihren Königl. Hoheiten, unter zahlreicher Aufwartung des hohen Adels beyderley Geschlechts, in dem herrlich beleuchteten Saal dem Apartement beywohnten, worunter eine auserlesene Musik sich hören ließe, und die ganze im Garten, dem Lustschloß gegenüber befindliche Anhöhe mit vielen tausend Lampen prächtigst beleuchtet war; dabey auf allerhöchste Erlaubniß in den Garten jedermann der Eingang bis nach Mitternacht gestattet wurde.

In the evening at Schönbrunn the ambassadors presented their congratulations to Her Majesty the Empress and the princely archdukes, and the archduchesses Theresia, Maria Anna, Elisabeth, Amalia, and Antonia, whereupon Her Majesty with the Royal Highnesses presided at the *apartement* in the splendidly illuminated hall, attended by numerous nobility of both sexes, at which an exquisite music was heard, and all the heights in the garden opposite the summer palace were most magnificently illuminated with many thousand lamps; and by sovereign permission everyone was allowed entry into the garden until after midnight.

The "auserlesene Musik" at Schönbrunn on 23 Jun seems likely to have been (or at least to have included) Hasse and Metastasio's *L'armonica*, with Cecilia Davies singing and her sister Marianne accompanying on the glass harmonica. The adjective "auserlesen" ("exquisite"), rather than the more common "trefflich" or "vortrefflich" ("splendid," "excellent"), often used when referring to music in similar circumstances, might well have been chosen because of the novel and unusual voice-like sound of the *armonica* and young Cecilia's closely matching voice. (For a link to a recording of this cantata, see our entry "Joachim Perinet and 'Mozarts Fortepiano'.")

The Davies sisters are mentioned several times in the correspondence between Hasse and Ortes, and after visiting Venice, both Marianne and Cecilia continued to correspond with Ortes. Hasse first refers to them in a letter from Vienna on 3 Nov 1770, saying that an "English" family will be leaving for Venice as soon as the weather is better (Pancino 1998, 219). On 5 Dec, Hasse writes to

Ortes that he will be giving the Davies family a letter of introduction to Ortes, and the letter of introduction itself is dated 13 Dec 1770 (Pancino 1998, 220–22). In his letter to Hasse of 5 Jan 1771, Ortes states that the family arrived on St. Stephen's Day (26 Dec); he expresses concern over their prospects in Italy given their poor Italian (Pancino 1998, 222–23). Three weeks later, on 26 Jan 1771, Ortes writes to Hasse:

> La Signora Davis non s'è ancor fatta sentire col suo istromento per li geloni alle mani di che s'è riempita in quest'aria di Venezia, incomodo non mai prima da lei provato, e che le riesce fastidioso. Per questo motivo non â ancora visitato nessuno, ed è qui ancora incognita insieme colla sorella. Io le vedo qualche volta con mio piacere, e parliamo bene spesso di loro costì in Vienna. *[...]* [Pancino 1998, 226]

> Signora Davies has not yet performed on her instrument because of the chilblains on her hands, of which she has many in this Venetian air, an inconvenience she has never previously suffered, and which she finds annoying. For this reason she has not yet visited anyone, and is still unknown here along with her sister. I see them sometimes with pleasure, and we speak quite often of them there in Vienna. *[...]*

Ortes's next letter to Hasse, dated 2 Mar 1771, is the one that includes the passage transcribed at the top of this page. After describing Leopold Mozart's apparent frustration with their reception in Venice so far, Ortes continues:

> Le Sig.re Davis si son già fatte sentire dal Sig.r Ambasciatore Durazzo, che â mostrato gradirle. Io credo che con un poco di flemma incontreranno qui maggior fortuna di esso Mozard. *[...]*

> The Misses Davies have already been heard at Ambassador Durazzo's, who showed his satisfaction. I believe that with a little effort they will have better luck here than Mozart.

The Davies sisters had arrived in Venice over two months previously. They had been prevented by Marianne's chilblains from performing and becoming known, but they had been patient and had (one presumes recently) finally been received by Count Giacomo Durazzo (1717–1794), the Habsburg ambassador to Venice, to whom they had a letter of introduction (see the image of a page from "Letters" in Thomsen-Fürst 2006, 206). At the time of Ortes's letter, the Mozarts had been in Venice only 19 days. Ortes is implying that the Davies family may well have better luck in Venice in the long run than the impatient Leopold Mozart has had so far.

Nevertheless things seemed to have picked up for the Mozarts at precisely this time. On Fri, 1 Mar, the day before Ortes's letter, Leopold Mozart wrote to his wife:

> Am kommenden dienstage werden wir eine grosse Academie haben. am Sonntage vorhero werden wir beym Kayserl: Gesandten seyn. am Montage bey S: E: Mafetti *[...]* [*Briefe*, i: 421–22]

> On this coming Tuesday we will have a large academy. On the Sunday before we will be at the imperial ambassador's, on Monday at His Excellency Maffetti's *[...]*

The "imperial ambassador" was Durazzo, and Sunday was 3 Mar, the day after Ortes's letter. (On the identity of Maffetti, see our entry for 24 Feb 1771.)

Hasse's letter to Ortes of 23 Mar 1771 is known to Mozart scholars because of Hasse's response to Ortes's comments about Leopold (*Dokumente*, 120–21; Pancino 1998, 229). In the lines immediately preceding the passage on the Mozarts (not in *Dokumente*), Hasse responds to Ortes's report on the Davies family:

> Le nostre inglesi si son dunque fatte sentire. Io auguro loro buona sorte. La novità dello stromento farà probabilmente qualche impressione; ma per trattarlo bene, e per lavorar di fantasia, bisognerebbe che la suonatrice avesse un poco più di musica in testa. La piccola non dovrebbe dispiacere col suo canto, mentre la natura l'ha dotata di bella voce, e di grande abilità, se pure si ricorderà di quanto qui si è studiato con tanto stento; ma se vorrà poi cantare col proprio capriccio, non potrò far altro che lavarmene le mani, mentre ho procurato di darle il metodo più sodo che conosco. [Pancino 1998, 229]
>
> So our English girls have been heard. I wish them good luck. The novelty of the instrument will probably make some impression; but to handle it well and to work out improvisations, it would require the player to have a bit more music in her head. The younger one cannot displease with her singing, for nature has endowed her with a beautiful voice and great ability, if only she will remember all she has studied here with such effort; but if she wants then to sing with the proper caprice, I shall do nothing more than wash my hands of it, for I have taken care to give her the soundest technique I know.

In his letter to Ortes on 5 Dec 1770, Hasse had stated that he had been teaching Cecilia for more than a year, but felt that she was still unfinished and that the family was taking her to Italy prematurely (see Thomsen-Fürst 2003, 358). His frustration on this point is still evident in his letter of 23 Mar 1771. Even so, according to "Letters," the Davies family left Vienna with three letters of recommendation from Hasse (including the one to Ortes), as well as three from the empress (Thomsen-Fürst 2003, 359). They also had letters of recommendation from Countess Questenberg (presumably Maria Antonia, *née* Kaunitz) to Durazzo in Venice and Count Firmian in Milan (these entries are visible in the image in Thomsen-Fürst 2003, 360).

Given that the Davies family seems to have been in Venice during the entire period of the Mozarts' visit, and that both families socialized with Ortes, it is odd that there is no evidence that the two families encountered each other there. No Davies is mentioned in Leopold's correspondence from Venice and their names are not in his travel notes for the city. The first reference to the Davies family in the correspondence of the Mozarts is found in Leopold's letter to his wife from Milan dated 21 Sep 1771, one month after Leopold and Wolfgang had arrived for the preparation and production of *Ascanio in Alba*, as part of the elaborate festivities

surrounding the wedding of Archduke Ferdinand and Princess Beatrice d'Este (see our entry for 17 Oct 1771):

> Vor einigen Tägen ist die Miß Devis hier angelangt: sie fuhr auf der Post bey unserer wohnung vorbey. ich erkannte sie und sie erkannte uns, dann wir stunden eben auf dem Balcon. ich gieng ein paar stunde darauf zu den *3 Königen*, sie zu besuchen, dann ich bildete mir ein daß sie dort absteigen wird; weil es das ansehnlichste Wirtshaus und nicht ferne von uns ist. Sie, ihre schwester, Vatter und Mutter hatten ein unaussprechliche freude: ich zeigte ihrem Bediente des H: Haße wohnung an, und gleich kam H: Haßes Tochter mit einer solchen freude, die nicht auszusprechen, denn sie sind von Wienn aus Herzensfreunde. alle haben sich alsogleich um euch erkundiget, sie empfehlen sich. die [du] wirst dich wohl erinnern, wer die Miß Devis ist, mit der Glaß=orgl? — — — [*Briefe*, i:438]
>
> A few days ago Miss Davies arrived here: she rode by our apartment in the post coach. I recognized her and she recognized us, for we were just then standing on the balcony. A couple of hours later I went to the *3 Kings* to visit her, for I imagined that she would disembark there, because it is the most respectable inn and is not far from us. She, her sister, father, and mother were indescribably happy: I showed their servant the apartment of Herr Hasse, and Herr Hasse's daughter came immediately with such happiness that it cannot be described, for they are intimate friends from Vienna. Everyone straight away asked after you, and sends their greetings. You will probably remember who Miss Davis is, with the glass organ? — — —

It is evident from Leopold's letter that the Mozarts already knew the Davies family, and yet this is the first reference to them in the Mozart family's correspondence. It is variously claimed as fact in the Mozart literature that the families first met in London or in Vienna during the Mozarts' sojourn there in 1767 and 1768, but there is no direct evidence for either. No Davies is named in Leopold's travel notes from London, and there is no mention of them in Leopold's correspondence from that time. As we have seen, the Davies family was in London for only a brief time during the Mozarts' stay there; we know for certain only that the Davies family was in London in Jul and Aug 1764. Because of the uncertainty over the date of their arrival in Vienna a few years later, we do not know whether they overlapped with the Mozarts in that city, although they may have; Leopold, at least, was aware of the Davies family's close connection with the Hasses. In either case, the families had clearly met before both were in Venice, making it all the odder that Leopold does not mention them there.

The many similarities between the two families have received little attention from scholars. Both families had two children who were musical prodigies, one several years older than the other, with the younger, who was very close to Mozart's age, eventually achieving more fame. Both families made more than one tour within continental Europe to show off the children, visiting several of the same cultural centers, sometimes at the same time (London, Venice, Milan, and possibly Vienna). For both families, the careers of the children became the central family project.

The Davies family ended up remaining in Venice for several months after the Mozarts' departure, probably into the summer of 1771. In his letter to Hasse of 13 Apr 1771, Ortes writes that the

family is thinking of going to Parma, but that they are now in such demand in Venice that he suspects they will not leave until at least Ascension (9 May that year; Pancino 1998, 230). According to Thomsen-Fürst (2003, 361), they finally left Venice for Bologna at the end of Jun 1771, then went on to Milan in September, presumably for the marriage festivities the following month. According to a letter from Count Cajetan von Rogendorf to Count Pio Fedele von Wolkenstein on 9 Nov 1771 (see our entry for that date), the Davies sisters performed at a concert in Milan on 8 Nov organized by Archduke Ferdinand.

By the end of 1771 the Davies family had reached Naples, where in January 1772 Cecilia appeared as Bradamante, the prima donna role in Hasse's *Il Ruggiero*, an opera that in Milan had been outshone by Mozart's *Ascanio in Alba*, but appears to have been a success in Naples (on the reception of *Il Ruggiero* and *Ascanio in Alba* in Milan, see our entry for 17 Oct 1771). It was, so far as we know, Cecilia's first appearance on the operatic stage. Thomsen-Fürst argues persuasively (if perhaps not conclusively) that Hasse may have advocated for Cecilia to be given the role, after the celebrated Anna De Amicis withdrew because of pregnancy (Thomsen-Fürst 2003, 362).

Leopold Mozart seems to have been under the impression that Cecilia's appearance in Naples was a disaster. In his very long letter to Wolfgang in Mannheim dated 12 Feb 1778, in which Leopold tries to persuade Wolfgang of the folly of his plan to travel with Aloysia Weber to Italy, Leopold writes:

> so ist es lächerlich, daß du für ihre Acktion gut stehen willst. da gehört was mehrers dazu, und die alt=kindisch, auch aus lauter guter Meinung und freundschaftlichen Menschenliebe unternohmene Bemühung des alten Haße hat die miß Devis auf ewig von der welschen Schaubühne verbannt, da sie die erste Seria ausgezischet und ihre parte der de Amicis übergeben wurde. [*Briefe*, ii:276]
>
> So it is ridiculous that you want to vouch for her acting. There is more to it than that, and the childish effort undertaken by old Hasse, even if completely well-intentioned and out of friendly human kindness, has forever banned Miss Davies from the Italian stage, because she was hissed off at the first opera seria, and her part was given to De Amicis.

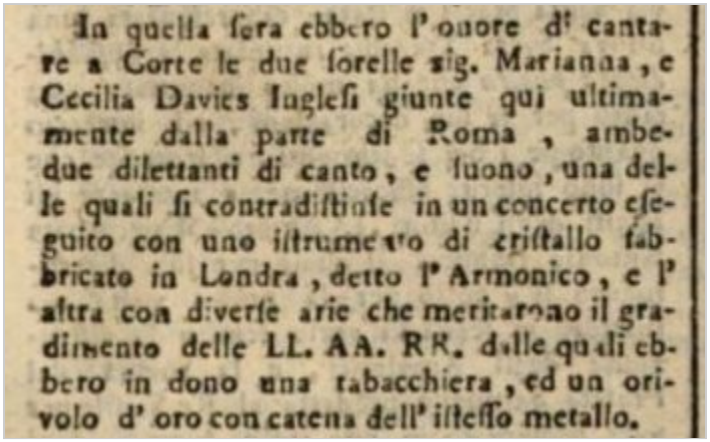
As best we can tell, Cecilia actually ended up making a good impression in Naples, in spite of initial cabals. As we have seen, Marianne Davies copied out an Italian sonnet written in Cecilia's honor at the time of the production, and in a letter to Ortes dated 12 Dec 1772, Marianne wrote (in English):

> You have heard no doubt how much our worthy friend Mr. Hasse's opera which he composed in Milan was liked at Naples last carnaval, and of the great success my sister had thank God, notwithstanding the strong parties made against both, even before she arrived: although it was their majesties desire to hear that charming opera; and that Cecilia should be sent for to perform in it as first woman: which she did I must own, to the astonishment of all Naples, with regard to her action as well as manner of singing. As to the music, in spite of malice such a divine composition could not fail pleasing. [Pancino 1998, 400–401]

Nor was Cecilia “banned” from Italian stages. She sang in Florence later in 1772 and in Siena during Carnival 1773 (Thomsen-Fürst 2003, 363–64), then in the years 1779 to 1784 in various Italian cities, including Venice, Florence, Genoa, and Livorno (see Sartori 1994, 228). From 1773 until 1777, she had a brief but spectacular career on the London stage; Burney in his *General History* gives a vivid description of her singing and impact on audiences (Burney 1789, 499–500).

At present, Marianne is known to have performed with Cecilia only once more in Italy: at the Grand-Ducal court in Florence on Sun, 2 Aug 1772:

> In quella sera [2 Aug] ebbero l’ onore di cantare a Corte le due sorelle sig. Marianna, e Cecilia Davies Inglesi giunte qui ultimamente dalla parte di Roma, ambedue dilettanti di canto, e suono, una delle quali si contradistinte in un concerto eseguito con uno istrumento di cristallo fabbricato in Londra, detto l’ Armonico, e l’ altra con diverse arie che meritarono il gradimento delle LL. AA. RR. dalle quali ebbero in dono una tabacchiera, ed uno orivolo d’ oro con catena dell’ istesso metallo. [*Gazzetta toscana*, no. 32, Sat, 8 Aug 1772, [1]]


In quella ſera ebbero l’ onore di cantare a Corte le due ſorelle sig. Marianna, e Cecilia Davies Ingleſi giunte qui ultimamente dalla parte di Roma, ambedue dilettanti di canto, e ſuono, una delle quali ſi contradiſtinſe in un concerto eſeguito con uno iſtrumento di criſtallo fabbricato in Londra, detto l’ Armonico, e l’ altra con diverſe arie che meritarono il gradimento delle LL. AA. RR. dalle quali ebbero in dono una tabacchiera, ed un orivolo d’ oro con catena dell’ iſteſſo metallo.

> That evening [2 Aug] two English sisters, Marianne and Cecilia Davies, lately arrived here from Rome, had the honor to sing at court. Both are amateurs of singing and playing; one of them distinguished herself in a concerto executed on an instrument of crystal made in London called the “Armonico,” and the other with various arias that merited the approval of Their Royal Highnesses, by whom they were given a snuffbox and a gold watch with a chain of the same metal.

The family soon after returned to London, where Cecilia was engaged as prima donna by the Italian Opera at the King's Theatre. Cecilia reported in a letter from London to Ortes dated 29 Oct 1773 that Marianne had been suffering ill health while they were still in Florence, and that these problems had only worsened after their return to London (Pancino 1998, 403). Their father Richard Davies, whose health had perhaps also suffered from the trip, died in December of that year. Cecilia wrote again to Ortes on 19 Mar 1776 of Marianne's "gran malatie" since their return, and in a letter to him dated 18 Apr 1777, she mentions having turned down an engagement in Moscow because of her sister's illness (Pancino 1998, 405, 407). We have found no primary evidence that Marianne ever performed in public again.

After the close of the London opera season in 1777, the sisters returned to the continent. On 2 Feb 1778, Cecilia sang at the Concerts spirituels in Paris (*Journal de Paris*, 31 Jan and 2 Feb 1778; *Annonces et Affiches*, 2 Feb 1778). When Mount-Edgcumbe visited the sisters in Florence in 1784, he found Cecilia "unengaged, and poor"; he wrote that the "English there subscribed for a private concert, at which both sisters performed" (Edgcumbe 1827, 17). They then returned to England, where Cecilia sang in the Professional Concerts in 1787 and in oratorios in 1791 (McVeigh 2014), but had no further operatic engagements. She is not known to have sung in public after 1791. If she was born 1756, her career ended when she was just around 35.

Marianne is variously said to have died around 1816 or 1819. Thomsen-Fürst (2003, 350), citing no source, writes that she was buried on 5 Jan 1819. Cecilia died in poverty on 3 Jul 1836 (Highfill et al. 1975, 200).

***

Wolfgang and Leopold Mozart departed Venice on 12 Mar 1771. In a letter to his wife from Vicenza on 14 Mar, Leopold writes:

> den 12ten segelten wir demnach ab; ich nahm ein eigenes Borcello, und H: Wider, seine Frau, die 2 töchter Catharina und Rosa, und der Sgr: Abbate fuhren mit uns nach Padua. *[...]* den 14ten fuhr ich nach Vicenza, und sie nach Venedig zurück.
> [*Briefe*, i:424–25]

> On the 12th we then sailed away; I took a private *burchiello*, and Herr Wider, his wife, the two daughters Catharina and Rosa, and the Signor Abate traveled with us to Padua. *[...]* On the 14th I traveled to Vicenza and they returned to Venice.

The reference is to the family of Johannes Wider. The "Signor Abate" was probably Ortes.

Notes (⇧)

Cattelan (2000, 69–70) transcribes most of the passage given at the top of this page, citing the original source, rather than Pancino's edition. He omits the first sentence ("Ora vuol ella una nuova?") and the final

two sentences contrasting Mozart's reception with that of the Davies sisters. There are many small differences between Cattelan's transcription and Pancino's; these are mainly not substantive, and we will not detail them here, but Cattelan omits several words. Basso (2006, 87) quotes the entire passage given above, citing Pancino, and matches her readings precisely, apart from "à mostrato" instead of Pancino's "â mostrato."

The state of biographical work on the Davies sisters is poor, with many incorrect or unsubstantiated claims repeated frequently in the secondary literature as fact. The biography of Cecilia Davies in Highfill et al. (1975) is unreliable, particularly for the period before the family's return to London in 1773. We have endeavoured here to base our discussion as much as possible directly on the scant primary sources.

On the Davies sisters' sojourn in Vienna in 1769, see also Beesly (2023). Beesly repeats the incorrect date of 27 Jun 1769 for the performance of *L'Armonica* at Schönbrunn (Beesly 2023, 165).

Hyatt King (1946, 107, citing Sonneck) quotes a report from the *Bristol Journal* on 12 Jan 1762 stating that "Miss Davies" was to appear in London in January on the "glassy-chord"; we have found no announcement in the London press for a January performance, and it seems likely that Marianne's concert on 8 Feb 1762 was actually her first public performance on the *armonica*. It is claimed in some secondary sources that Cecilia sang in public during the family's sojourn in Dublin in 1763–64. We do not currently have access to Dublin newspapers from the time and have been unable to verify these claims.

The chapter in Sommer-Mathis (1994) on the marriage of Archduchess Maria Amalia and Duke Ferdinand does not discuss the final schedule of events in Vienna, and thus does not engage with the question of the actual date of the performance of *L'armonica*. It is not clear whether anyone has investigated the court archives in Vienna for references to the Davies sisters or the cantata.

We are grateful to Claudio Serena, librarian of the Biblioteca del museo Correr, Venice, for the photo of the letter from Ortes to Hasse, and to Stefano Frega for his help in acquiring it. We would also like to thank Janet Page and Bruce Brown for their comments; Catherine Sprague for her identification of Leopold Mozart's "Borcello" as a *burchiello*; and Julia Karin Lawson for her advice on points of German translation.

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