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A benefit concert in Vienna for Constanze Mozart (23 Dec 1791)

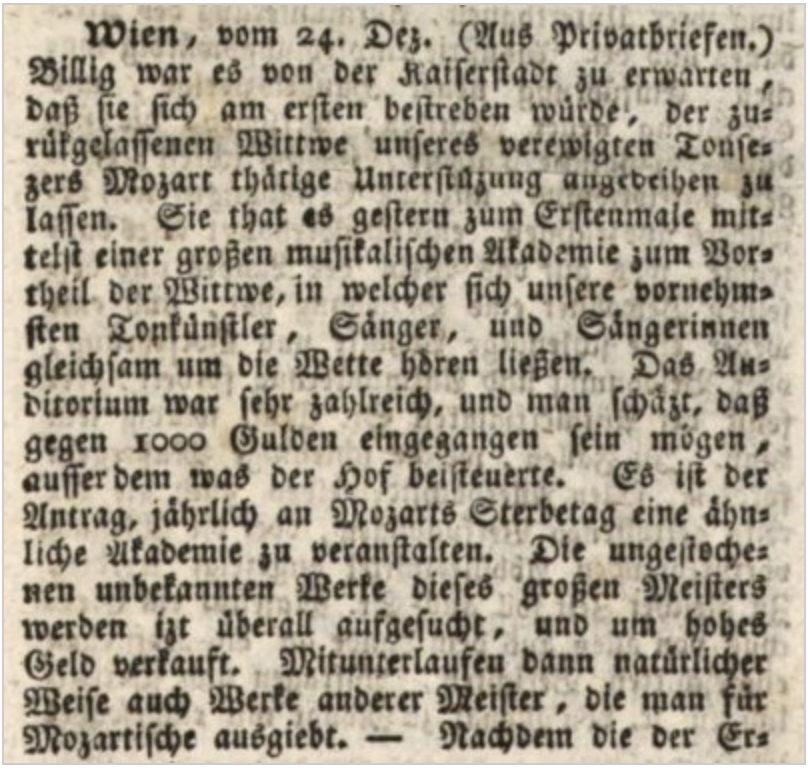
David Black

Münchner Zeitung, no. 205, Thu, 29 Dec 1791, 1082

[1082]

Wien, vom 24. Dez. (Aus Privatbriefen.)
Billig war es von der Kaiserstadt zu erwarten,
daß sie sich am ersten bestreben würde, der zu=
rükgelassenen Wittwe unseres verewigten Tonse=
zers Mozart thätige Unterstüzung angedeihen zu
lassen. Sie that es gestern zum Erstenmale mit=
telst einer großen musikalischen Akademie zum Vor=
theil der Wittwe, in welcher sich unsere vornehm=
sten Tonkünstler, Sänger, und Sängerinnen
gleichsam um die Wette hören ließen. Das Au=
ditorium war sehr zahlreich, und man schäzt, daß
gegen 1000 Gulden eingegangen sein mögen,
ausser dem was der Hof beisteuerte. Es ist der
Antrag, jährlich an Mozarts Sterbetag eine ähn=
liche Akademie zu veranstalten. Die ungestoche=
nen unbekannten Werke dieses großen Meisters
werden izt überall aufgesucht, und um hohes
Geld verkauft. Mitunterlaufen dann natürlicher
Weise auch Werke anderer Meister, die man für
Mozartische ausgiebt. — *[...]*

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Wien, vom 24. Dez. (Aus Privatbriefen.) Billig war es von der Kaiſerſtadt zu erwarten, daß ſie ſich am erſten beſtreben würde, der zurükgelaſſenen Wittwe unſeres verewigten Tonſezzers Mozart thätige Unterſtüzung angedeihen zu laſſen. Sie that es geſtern zum Erſtenmale mittelſt einer großen muſikaliſchen Akademie zum Vortheil der Wittwe, in welcher ſich unſere vornehmſten Tonkünſtler, Sänger, und Sängerinnen gleichſam um die Wette hören ließen. Das Auditorium war ſehr zahlreich, und man ſchäzt, daß gegen 1000 Gulden eingegangen ſein mögen, auſſer dem was der Hof beiſteuerte. Es iſt der Antrag, jährlich an Mozarts Sterbetag eine ähnliche Akademie zu veranſtalten. Die ungeſtochenen unbekannten Werke dieſes großen Meiſters werden izt überall aufgeſucht, und um hohes Geld verkauft. Mitunterlaufen dann natürlicher Weiſe auch Werke anderer Meiſter, die man für Mozartiſche ausgiebt. — Nachdem die der Er-

[translation:]

Vienna, 24 Dec. (From private letters.)
It was reasonable to expect of the imperial city, that it would be the first to strive to grant active support to the forsaken widow of our immortal composer Mozart. It did so yesterday for the first time with a grand musical academy for the benefit of the widow, in which our most prominent musicians, and male and female singers competed, as it were, to be heard. The audience was very numerous, and it was estimated that around 1000 gulden may have been taken in, in addition to what the court contributed. It has been proposed to hold a similar academy every year on the date of Mozart's death. The unengraved and unknown works of this great master are now sought everywhere, and sell for high prices. Mingled

among these naturally are works by other masters
that are passed off as Mozart's.— *[...]*

Commentary

Mozart's death on 5 Dec 1791 left his widow Constanze in a plight: in addition to caring for a four-month-old baby and a seven-year-old child, she had to assist in the settlement of Mozart's estate and seek an income that could provide for the family's future. Fortunately, the quick dissemination of the news of Mozart's death and reports of the family's perilous financial circumstances (*Dokumente* 371, 373; *Neue Folge*, 74) meant that there was assistance from a number of quarters; *Der Heimliche Botschafter* reported on 16 Dec that: "Alles wetteifert um Mozarts hinterlassene Wittwe, ihren Verlust einigermassen zu ersetzen, und sie zu trösten" ("Everyone is competing to compensate Mozart's widow in some way for her loss and to console her"; *Dokumente*, 374). It appears that Baron van Swieten and perhaps Countess Thun took responsibility for the children (*Dokumente* 371, 374–75), Schikaneder organized a performance of *Die Zauberflöte* for Constanze's benefit (*Dokumente*, 374), and on 18 Dec, Archduke Maximilian Franz gave Constanze 24 ducats (108 fl) before his departure from Vienna (see 18 Dec 1791). Constanze also appealed to the Emperor (see below

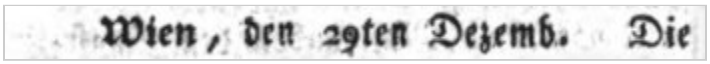
In addition to direct financial support, there were musical events to commemorate Mozart: the exequies for Mozart held on 10 Dec at St. Michael (*Neue Folge*, 74–75), and in Prague on 14 Dec at St. Nicholas (*Dokumente*, 374–76; *Addenda*, 75; *Neue Folge*, 78). But there were soon efforts in Vienna to mount what was evidently a major benefit concert for the widow and her children. One report on this concert has long been known through its publication in *Dokumente*, but the commentary is unsatisfactory and the concert has not received the attention it deserves in the literature. With the discovery of a number of other supporting sources, there is now no reason to doubt the concert took place.

The newly uncovered report above is part of a complex of related reports on the benefit concert that appeared in at least six newspapers in late Dec 1791 and early Jan 1792. In order of publication, these are:

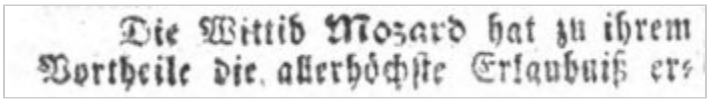
> (a) A report in the *Brünner Zeitung* on 28 Dec 1791 (with a dateline of 24 Dec), first noted by Brauneis (1991, 167; *Neue Folge*, 78). This report was reprinted in the *Auszug* on 31 Dec 1791.
>
> (b) The report transcribed above, in the *Münchner Zeitung* on 29 Dec 1791 (also with a dateline of 24 Dec). Compared to (a), there are minor variants of wording and spelling, and the report omits the value of the court's contribution (150 ducats) and the (erroneous) claim that the Emperor Leopold II granted Constanze the full value of Mozart's salary as a pension. However, the passage on the popularity of Mozart's music (beginning "Die ungestochenen unbekannten Werke") is found in no other source.

(c) A report in the *Pressburger Zeitung* on 31 Dec 1791 with a dateline five days later than (a) and (b) (*Dokumente*, 379; differences from the transcription in *Dokumente* are given in red):

Wien, den 29ten Dezemb. *[...]*


Wien, den 29ten Dezemb. Die

Die Wittid *[sic]* Mozard hat zu ihrem
Vortheile die allerhöchste Erlaubniß er=


Die Wittid Mozard hat zu ihrem
Vortheile die allerhöchste Erlaubniß er=

halten, vergangenen Freytag eine musi=
kalische Akademie im Nationaltheater
geben zu dörfen, bey welcher nicht
nur allein der gesammte Hof sondern
auch eine zahlreiche Menge von Publi=
kum sich einfanden; vom Hofe aus hat
sie 150 Dukaten erhalten, und in allem
belief sich ihre Einnahme auf 1500
Gulden.

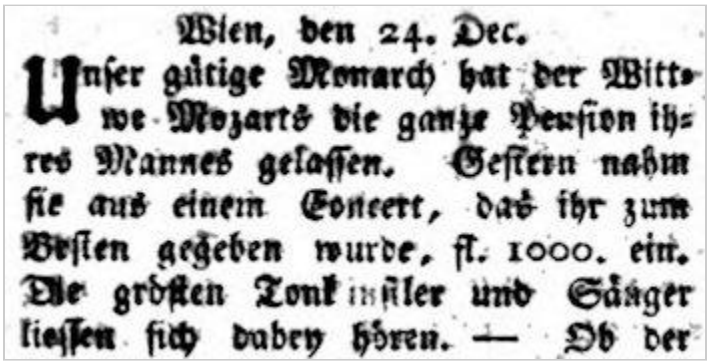

halten, vergangenen Freytag eine muſi-
kaliſche Akademie im Nationaltheater
geben zu dörfen, bey welcher nicht
nur allein der geſammte Hof ſondern
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kum ſich einfanden; vom Hofe aus hat
ſie 150 Dukaten erhalten, und in allem
belief ſich ihre Einnahme auf 1500
Gulden.

This abbreviated report uniquely gives the location of the concert: the Nationaltheater (that is, the Burgtheater). Compared to the other reports, it also gives a different account of Constanze's income from the concert (see below).

(d) An abbreviated report in the *Augspurgische Ordinari Postzeitung* on 31 Dec 1791 (with a dateline of 24 Dec):

Wien, den 24. Dec.
Unser gütige Monarch hat der Witt=
we Mozarts die ganze Pension ih=
res Mannes gelassen. Gestern nahm
sie aus einem Concert, das ihr zum
Besten gegeben wurde, fl. 1000. ein.

Die grösten Tonkünstler und Sänger
liessen sich dabey hören. *[...]*



Wien, den 24. Dec.
Unser gütige Monarch hat der Witwe Mozarts die ganze Pension ihres Mannes gelassen. Gestern nahm sie aus einem Concert, das ihr zum Besten gegeben wurde, fl. 1000. ein. Die grösten Tonkünstler und Sänger liessen sich dabey hören. — Ob der

Like (a), this report makes the claim - probably incorrect - that Leopold II had granted Constanze a pension (see below).

(e) A report in Lorenz Hübner's Salzburg journal *Oberdeutsche Staatszeitung* on 3 Jan 1792, first noted in Neumayr (2011, 189).

This version is close but not identical to the wording of (a). The report also adds an account of the Latin inscription supposedly found on Mozart's tomb, slightly truncated from the version printed in the *Wiener Zeitung* (*Dokumente*, 379).

(f) A reference to the concert in the Weimar *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*, Apr 1792, 192; first noted in Link 1998, 182.

In the list of "Aufgeführte Stücke auf den beyden Kaiserl. Königl. Hof=Theatern", the "National=Theater" has "am 23. eine große musikalische Akademie, zum Benefiz der Wittwe Mozart." As Link notes, the list for the "Kärntner=Thor=Theater" also has an identical entry on 23 Dec (195). While (a), (b) and (d) are silent on the location of the concert, (c) states it took place in the "Nationaltheater," so the presence of the concert in the *Journal*'s listings for the Kärntnertortheater is probably a mistake.

The concert appears to have been mounted at the suggestion of the Emperor Leopold II, who is said to have held an audience with Constanze soon after Mozart's death. According to Niemetschek, Constanze had decided to request a pension, and in response to rumors that Mozart had left excessive debts, she told the Emperor that 3000 fl would be sufficient to clear them:

"Wenn es so ist", sagte der Monarch, "da ist wohl noch Rath
zu schaffen. Geben Sie ein Konzert von seinen hinterlassenen Werken,
und ich will es unterstützen."

[...] Die Akade=
mie ward unternommen, und der unsterbliche Monarch erfüllte so groß=
müthig sein Versprechen, daß die Wittwe dadurch in den Stand ge=

> setzt wurde, die Schulden ihres Mannes zu tilgen.
> [Niemetschek 1798, 40]

> "If it really is as you say,"' said the Monarch, "then there is still time to do something for you. Let a concert be given of the works he left, and I will support it."
>
> *[...]* The concert was given, the immortal Monarch fulfilled his generous promise, and the widow was thereby enabled to pay off her husband's debts.
> [trans. from Niemetschek 1956, 49]

No other independent source for the audience with the Emperor is known, but a petition to Leopold II survives dated 11 Dec 1791 in which Constanze asked for a pension for herself and the children (*Dokumente*, 371–72; see Eibl 1966). A small pension was eventually granted by the new Emperor Franz II in Mar 1792 (*Dokumente*, 391).

In preparing for the concert, Constanze could take advantage of an unexpected opportunity. It was unusual for the Burgtheater to be available on 23 Dec for a private benefit concert, for on 22 and 23 Dec each year the theater was normally reserved for the Advent fundraising academies of the Tonkünstler-Societät (TKS). The TKS planned their Advent 1791 concerts to feature the soprano Cecilia Giuliani (fl. 1778–92), whom Emperor Leopold II had hired as part of his attempt to establish an opera seria troupe in Vienna (see Rice 1987; Wuchner 2017, 432 mistakenly has Catarina Cavalieri as the planned singer). Giuliani had made her Viennese operatic debut in Nasolini's *Teseo a Stige* on 24 Nov, but the next day she was laid low with "a real illness of the throat, very dangerous to her voice" (as she described it in a notice in the *Wiener Zeitung* on 17 Dec explaining her absence), and she had to withdraw from following performances (Giuliani's notice is quoted in Rice 2017, 38).


Opera
Seria.

Heute Freytag den 25ten November 1791 wird in beyden k. k. Hoftheatern aufgeführet werden:

Im Nazionaltheater

(zum zweytenmal)

TESEO A STIGE.

Theseus am Styx.

Eine Opera Seria in zwey Akten.

Die Musik ist ganz neu vom Hrn. Sebastiano Nasolini, einem Venezianer.

Die Bücher sind bloß italiänisch beym Logenmeister für 17 kr. zu haben.

Der Anfan

Im Theater nächst dem Kärntnerthor

Matilde,

Wegen Krankheit der Mlle. Giuliani kann die bereits angekündigte Opera Seria nicht gegeben werden; statt derselben wird aufgeführt:

IL TRIONFO D' AMORE.

Der Triumph der Liebe.

Ein komisches Singspiel in zwey Aufzügen.

Februar

Playbill for the planned performance of *Teseo a Stige* on 25 Nov 1791, with additional notice announcing the substitution of Dutillieu's *Il trionfo d'amore* due to Giuliani's illness (Vienna, Theatermuseum; photo: Michael Lorenz)

It appears that the TKS decided to cancel its concerts due to Giuliani's illness; strangely, the minutes that presumably recorded this decision do not survive, but it is known from a list of reasons the TKS gave when it applied to give two substitute concerts in Apr 1792 (according to the copy in Vienna, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Haydn-Verein A 2/1, 7 Nov 1792; we are grateful to Michael Lorenz for this information and transcription):

> 2tns daß selbst der Gesellschaft schon ein namhafter Schaden erwachsen ist; indem sie erst im verflossenen Advent das Unglük hatte, wegen unvermutheter Krankheit einer Sängerin (der Mlle: Giugliani) eben diese zur Subsistenz ihres Fonds höchst nothwendige Akademien zu unterlassen.
>
> 2nd: that the Society itself has already suffered considerable damage, for it was only in the past Advent that it had the misfortune to refrain from [holding] these academies, which are most necessary for the maintenance of its fund, due to the unexpected illness of a singer, Mlle Giuliani.

The minutes do not mention what music the TKS had been planning to perform during Advent 1791, but it may have been Weigl's "cantata" *Venere e Adone*. Giuliani had created the role of Venere in this work when it was performed at Esterháza on 3 Aug 1791, and the TKS eventually performed it (without Giuliani's involvement) on 22 Dec 1792.

Giuliani's misfortune was Constanze Mozart's gain, for Constanze was able to secure a concert that was strikingly similar in nature to the TKS concert usually held on 23 Dec: like the TKS event, this concert was charitable in function, intended to support a widow and her children, and supported by both public and court patronage. It is not clear how the Viennese were informed of the concert: no newspaper notices advertising the concert are known, and if a poster was printed, no copies survive. But Constanze could rely on the memories of the music-loving public, who expected a TKS academy at the Burgtheater on 23 Dec, and the understandable sympathy for her in the wake of Mozart's unexpected and untimely death. Constanze was ineligible for any pension from the TKS itself as her husband had never completed the application process (*Dokumente*, 385).

The reports give no details about what music was performed at the concert, although of course it is likely that Mozart's works featured prominently. Niemetschek (1798, 38–39) mentions a public concert mounted by Constanze in Vienna that featured "die merkwürdige Seelenmesse"; this probably refers to the performance of the Requiem K. 626 on 2 Jan 1793 (*Dokumente*, 409). However, given that some form of the work had already been performed at St. Michael on 10 Dec 1791, it cannot be ruled out that the Requiem was heard again on 23 Dec.

The reports likewise provide no specific information about the performers, beyond the statement that "our most prominent musicians, and male and female singers raced, as it were, to be heard." Likely candidates are the singers of the court opera and perhaps the other theaters, the musicians of the *Hofkapelle*, and members of the TKS. The forces could have been under the direction of Salieri, who often directed the TKS concerts, or perhaps Weigl, who was appointed Kapellmeister of the court opera the following week. In the week of 24-30 December 1791, the Burgtheater administration paid the piano maker Anton Walter 18fl for the rent of a piano, which could conceivably have been associated with Constanze's concert (Steblin 2015, 327).

The reports are not entirely consistent about the income from the concert. Reports (a), (b) and (e) rather hedge their bets, saying "it was estimated that around 1000 gulden may have been taken in," while (d) is unequivocal on that amount. Three reports, however, state that the court also contributed, with (a) and (e) giving its contribution as 150 ducats (675 fl). In total, then, these reports indicate a gross income of about 1700 fl. Report (c) takes a different tack, stating the gross was 1500 fl, *including* 150 ducats from the court. 150 ducats is a very large gift, comparing favorably to the 50 ducats the former Emperor Joseph II usually gave for each pair of TKS concerts (Pohl 1871, 28); it may represent contributions by multiple noble donors, not just the "support" promised by Leopold II. In terms of ticket sales exclusive of gifts from the court (about 1000 fl according to the majority of reports, or 800 fl according to (c)), the figures imply a very well-attended concert. The largest receipts of any TKS concert during this period were for the premiere of Kozeluch's oratorio *Moisè in Egitto* on 22 Dec 1787, which realized 800 fl 22 kr with an attendance of perhaps 925 (Edge 1996, 80n45).

Whatever the precise amount, the income from this concert, plus Maximilian Franz's gift and the benefit performance of *Die Zauberflöte* (from which Constanze received perhaps around 400 fl;

see our discussion for 5 Oct 1791) would have netted a substantial sum. There was more to come: on 28 Dec, Constanze wrote to offer Maximilian Franz scores of *Die Zauberflöte* and *La Clemenza di Tito* for 100 ducats (450 fl) each, to which the Archduke may have responded positively (see 18 Dec 1791). The same day, another successful benefit concert for Constanze was held in Prague at the Nationaltheater, with a "considerable" income (Niemetschek 1798, 38). There is some confusion in *Dokumente* (377) about the location and chronology of the Vienna and Prague benefit concerts, which has been carried over into more recent literature (see Finke 2013, 321, which wrongly gives Prague as the location of the concert on 23 Dec, and Abert/Eisen 2007, 1312n34 which wrongly associates (c) with a later Prague concert of 7 Feb 1794). The report also mentions a proposal to hold a similar academy annually on the date of Mozart's death. This did not eventuate, but there were a variety of commemorative concerts for Mozart in Austria, Bohemia, and Germany over the next few years (see Brauneis 1992, and our entries for 31 Jan 1792, 19 Feb 1792, and 18 Mar 1792).

The report concludes with an interesting observation about the popularity of Mozart's music, the high prices now demanded for it, and attempts to pass off music by others as Mozart's. The account is entirely plausible: then, as now, the death of an artist often leads to a surge in the popularity of their work. But it is hard to verify on the meager evidence we have. The earliest known posthumous Viennese advertisements for Mozart's music were for competing editions of numbers from *Die Zauberflöte* from Artaria and Kozeluch on 7 and 17 Dec, with Artaria demanding slightly higher prices for the same music (*Dokumente*, 369, 374). This was followed on 28 Dec by Artaria's first edition of the Quartets K. 575, 589, and 590 (376). Artaria charged 3 fl for the three quartets, which is comparable with the unusually high 6 fl 30 kr it charged for the six "Haydn" quartets in 1785 (221).

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