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Carlo Flaminio Raiberti to Antonio Greppi on a *scrittura* for Mozart in Turin (26 Jan 1771)

Dexter Edge

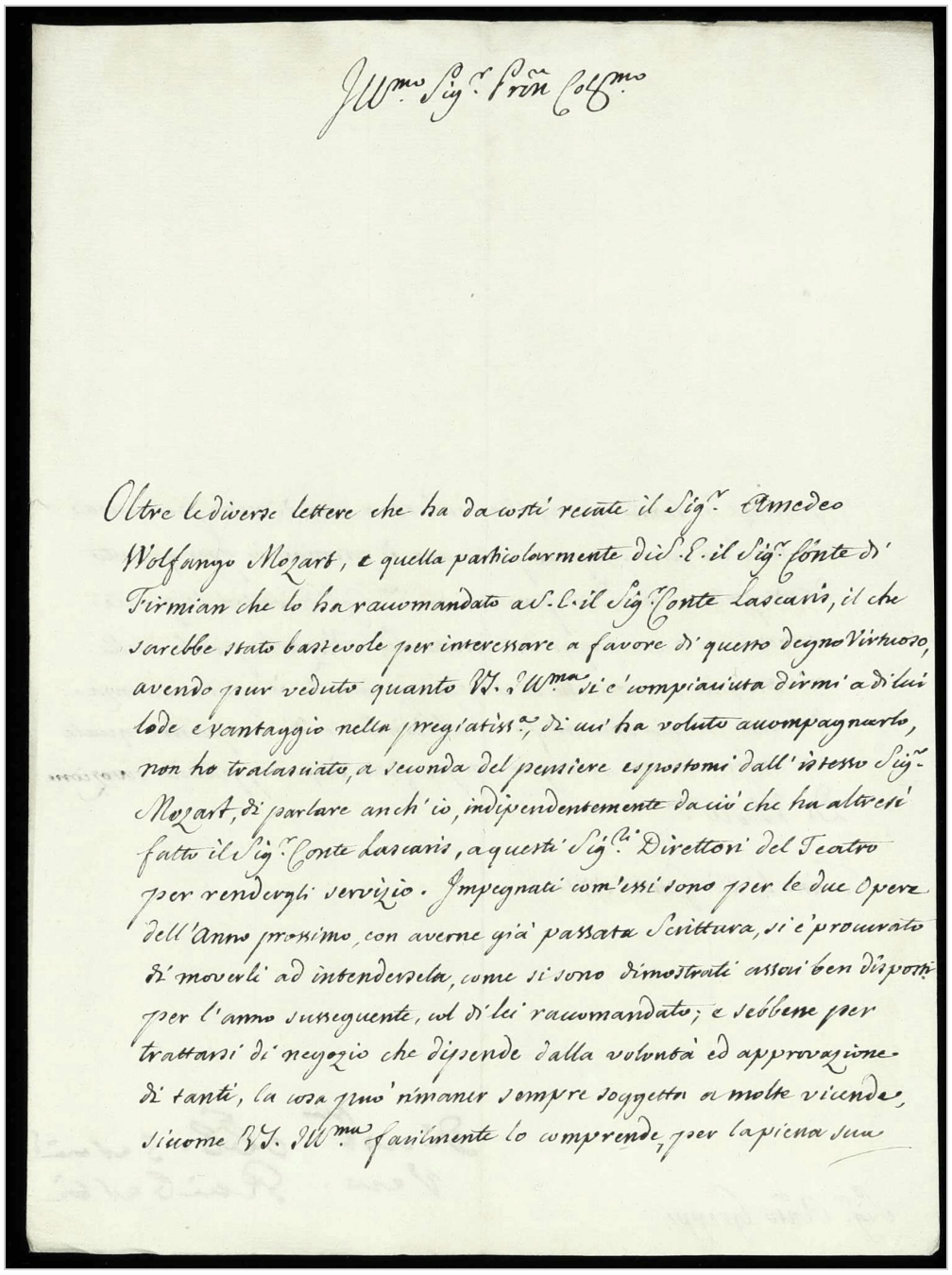
Milan, Archivio di Stato, Greppi, cart. 69, 26 Jan 1771

[1]

Ill.^{mo} Sig.^{r} P[adrone] Col[endissi]mo

Oltre le diverse lettere che ha da costì recate il Sig.^{r} Amedeo Wolfango Mozart, e quella particolarmente di S. E. il Sig.^{r} Conte di Firmian che lo ha raccomandato a S. E. il Sig.^{r} Conte Lascaris, il che sarebbe stato bastevole per interessare a favore di questo degno Virtuoso, avendo pur veduto quanto VS. Ill.^{ma} si è compiaciuta dirmi a di lui lode e vantaggio nella pregiatiss.^{a}, di cui ha voluto accompagnarlo, non ho tralasciato, a seconda del pensiere espostomi dall’istesso Sig.^{r} Mozart, di parlare anch’io, indipendentemente da ciò che ha altresì fatto il Sig.^{r} Conte Lascaris, a questi Sig.^{ri} Direttori del Teatro per rendergli servizio. Impegnati com’essi sono per le due Opere dell’Anno prossimo, con averne già passata Scrittura, si è procurato di moverli ad intendersela, come si sono dimostrati assai ben disposti per l’anno susseguente, col di lei raccomandato; e sebbene per trattarsi di negozio che dipende dalla volontà ed approvazione di tanti, la cosa può rimaner sempre soggetta a molte vicende, siccome VS. Ill^{ma} facilmente lo comprende, per la piena sua

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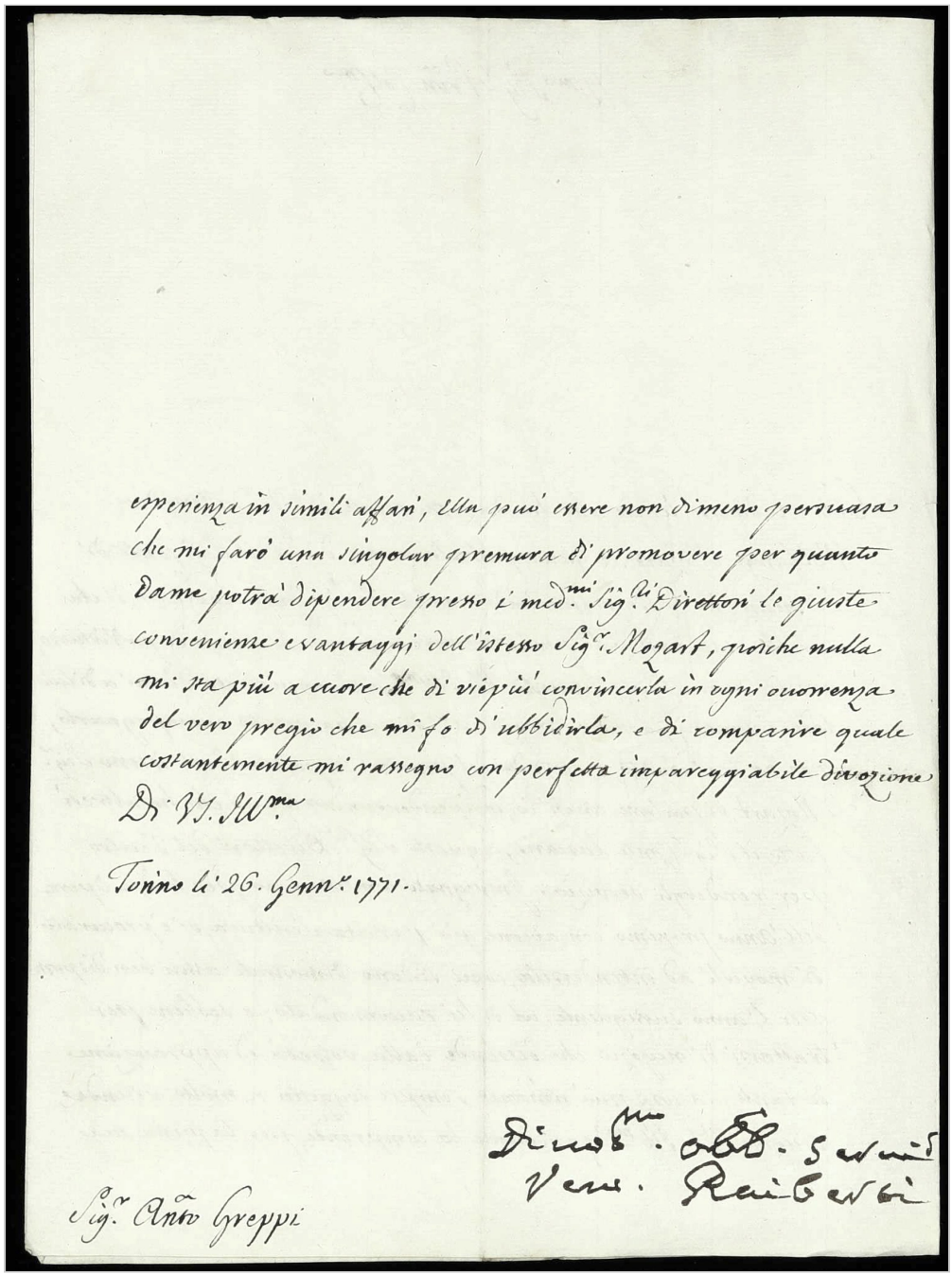
[2]

esperienza in simili affari, Ella può essere non di meno persuasa
che mi farò una singolar premura di promovere per quanto
da me potrà dipendere presso i med.[mi] Sig.[ri] Direttori le giuste
convenienze e vantaggi dell'istesso Sig.[r] Mozart, poiche nulla
mi sta più a cuore che di viepiù convincerla in ogni occorrenza
del vero pregio che mi fo di ubbidirla, e di comparire quale
costantemente mi rassegno con perfetta impareggiabile divozione

Di VS. Ill.ma
Torino li 26. Genn.o 1771.

Divot.mo obb. Servi[tore]
Ven. Raiberti

Sig.r An[tonio] Greppi



esperienza in simili affari, Ella può essere non di meno persuasa che mi farò una singolar premura di promovere per quanto da me potrà dipendere presso i med.mi Sig.ri Direttori le giuste convenienze e vantaggi dell'istesso Sig.r Mozart, poiche nulla mi sta più a cuore che di viepiù convincerla in ogni occorrenza del vero pregio che mi fo d'ubbidirla, e di comparire quale costantemente mi rassegno con perfetta impareggiabile divozione

Di VS. Ill.ma

Torino li 26. Genn.r 1771.

Sig.r Ant.o Greppi

Divot.mo obb.mo Servit.re
Ven.o Raiberti

[translation:]

Most Esteemed Lord, Most Highly Respected

In addition to the various letters brought here by Sig. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and particularly the one from His Excellency Count Firmian (who has recommended him to His Excellency Count Lascaris), which in itself would have been enough to arouse interest in favor of this worthy virtuoso (having also seen how much Your Eminence was pleased to tell me in praise of him and his abilities in the most esteemed [letter] that you sent with him), I did not neglect to speak personally to these directors of the theater, independently of what Count Lascaris had already done, according to the thoughts expressed to me by said Sig. Mozart, as a favor to him. Committed as they are, however, for the two operas of the forthcoming year, with the contracts having already been assigned, an attempt was made to induce them to come to an agreement with the person you recommended, as they seemed very well disposed to do, for the following year. And, although in handling negotiations that depend on the good will and approval of many, the issue may always be subject to numerous other considerations, as Your Eminence easily understands, thanks to your extensive experience in similar affairs. I hope you will nevertheless be convinced that I will make a special effort to promote the benefits and advantages of the said Sig. Mozart to said directors, at least as much as I am able. For nothing weighs more deeply on my heart than to convince you ever more at every opportunity of the true delight it gives me to obey you, and to demonstrate the extent of my devotion to you, with perfect incomparable devotion

Your Eminence's
Turin, 26 January 1771

Most Devoted Servant,
Venerable Raiberti

Sig. Antonio Greppi

Commentary

The letter transcribed here, from Carlo Flaminio Raiberti in Turin to Antonio Greppi in Milan, is one of two discovered by Harrison James Wignall (Harrison Gradwell Slater) and published in *Mozart Studien* in 1997. (The second is a letter of recommendation for the Mozarts from Count Firmian in Milan to Count Lascaris di Castellar in Turin; see our entry for 9 Jan 1771.) These

letters shed light on Leopold and Wolfgang's trip to Turin from 14 to 31 Jan 1771, the purpose of which had previously been obscure. As Raiberti's letter shows, one goal was to investigate the possibility of securing for Wolfgang a contract (*scrittura*) to write a carnival opera for Turin's Teatro Regio (royal theater).

Carlo Adalberto Flaminio Raiberti (1708–1771) was a career official in the government of the Kingdom of Sardinia, ruled at that time by the head of the House of Savoy (on Raiberti, see Rizzuti & Mortarotti 2006). Raiberti was appointed secretary of state in 1732, and from 1745 he was "Primo Ufficiale agli Esteri" (First Official for Foreigners). From the end of 1766 until 5 Dec 1770 he was acting first secretary of state for foreign affairs; he was replaced in that position by Count Lascaris di Castellar (the addressee of Firmian's letter), who had just returned to Turin after more than two decades as a Sardinian ambassador, most recently to the court in Naples (see our entry for 9 Jan 1771). Raiberti's letter responds to one from Greppi that the Mozarts probably brought with them from Milan and delivered personally (Greppi's letter has not yet been found). The response is dated 26 Jan 1771, the day before Wolfgang's fifteenth birthday; the Mozarts were still in Turin, and probably took Raiberti's response back to Milan with them. The letter is written in the hand of a secretary, but signed personally by Raiberti in a noticeably shaky hand. He died on 2 Mar 1771, just 35 days later.

Antonio Greppi (1722–1799) was the son of a successful wool and textile merchant, and he became widely known for his success in the family's business. He was brought to Milan in 1750 to head the *Ferma*, a scheme instituted under Count Gian Luca Pallavicini, governor of Austrian Lombardy, to systematize the collection of tax revenues from monopolies (such as those in salt and tobacco) in order to help pay down the debt incurred during the War of the Austrian Succession (on Greppi, see principally Puccinelli 2002 and Basso & Salvadeo 2006). When the unpopular *Ferma* was abolished in 1770, Greppi voluntarily stepped down from his position, but on 28 Dec 1770 he was appointed to the *Camera dei conti*, the new administrative council in Milan. Greppi was extremely wealthy; his residence in Milan, the Palazzo Greppi, still stands in the Via Sant'Antonio. It contains three ceiling frescos by Count Firmian's protégé, painter Martin Knoller (Baumgartl 2004, 238–40; on Firmian and Knoller, see our entry for 4 Apr 1770).

Greppi was also a manager of the Teatro Regio Ducale in Milan (see Donà 1974, 272ff), which at the time of Leopold and Wolfgang's trip to Turin was in the middle of the successful premiere run of Mozart's *Mitridate* (on the opera's reception, see our entry for 16 Jan 1771). Greppi was therefore able to write to Raiberti in his capacity both as a newly minted member of the Milanese administrative council and as a manager of the theater in which Wolfgang's opera was currently enjoying notable success. The Mozarts had already met Greppi during their first sojourn in Milan (23 Jan–15 Mar 1770); his name appears in Leopold's travel notes together with that of Federico Castiglione, the theater's impresario:

> *Milano [...]*
>
> Sgr: Grappi *[sic]*, e Castiglione. *[...]* [*Briefe*, i:322]

At present the content of Greppi's letter can only be inferred from Raiberti's response. Greppi had apparently asked whether the Teatro Regio in Turin might be interested in commissioning a carnival opera from Mozart. The theater in Turin, like the one in Milan, mounted two *opere serie* each carnival season (26 Dec to Shrove Tuesday, the day before the beginning of Lent). All aspects of the operation of the Teatro Regio in Turin, including the commissioning of operas, were handled by the Nobile Società dei Cavalieri (see Butler 2000, 23ff). Raiberti seems not \himself to have been a member of the Società, but he was at least occasionally a conduit for foreign correspondence to it (see, for example, the reference to Raiberti in the Società's *Ordinati* for 14 Jan 1762, quoted in Butler 2000, 36, and Butler 2001, 21n62).

According to Raiberti, Greppi's letter praised Wolfgang highly, and Greppi had evidently asked Raiberti to approach the Società about a possible opera commission for the young composer. Raiberti wrote to Greppi that he had done this, and that Count Lascaris di Castellar had also spoken to the Società. He notes, however, that contracts for the next carnival season (that is, the season beginning 26 Dec 1771) had already been assigned—and this was almost certainly true: Butler writes that the Società generally met once a year on 1 Dec to make decisions regarding the operas to be produced in the season beginning the following December, since budgets and the hiring of singers needed to be planned long in advance (Butler 2000, 26; Butler 2001, 15). Thus the Società would have met on 1 Dec 1770, several weeks before the Mozarts arrived in Turin, to choose operas for the carnival season 1771–1772. Those operas were to be *Andromeda*, with music by Giuseppe Colla, and *Tamas Koulikan*, with music by Gaetano Pugnani, both with libretti by the principal poet of the Teatro Regio, Vittorio Amedeo Cigna-Santi (1728–1799), the librettist of *Mitridate*. However, Raiberti suggested to Greppi (albeit noncommittally) that Wolfgang might have good prospects in Turin for a contract in the following season, that is, 1772–1773.

In the event, Mozart never wrote an opera for Turin, and at present we have no evidence that either he or Leopold pursued the matter further. By the end of 1771, Wolfgang had accumulated contracts for four other major vocal works: an oratorio for Padua (*Betulia liberata*); a serenata for the festivities at the marriage of Archduke Ferdinand and Princess Maria Beatrice d'Este in Milan in Oct 1771 (*Ascanio in Alba*); the first carnival opera for Milan in the season 1772–1773 (*Lucio Silla*); and a carnival opera for Venice in the season 1772–1773, although this last was never written. Thus Mozart already had one opera booked for 1772–1773 and was unable to compose a second one for Venice, so he would almost certainly not have tried to procure a contract for Turin in the season 1772–1773.

The political and bureaucratic situations had changed considerably by the end of 1772, when planning would have been underway for the carnival season 1773–1774. Raiberti, one of the Mozarts' contacts in Turin, had died on 2 Mar 1771. The Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Count Sigismund Christoph von Schrattenbach, died on 16 Dec 1771, the day following the Mozarts' return from the premiere of *Ascanio in Alba* in Milan. Schrattenbach had been generally quite supportive of the Mozarts and patient regarding their many long absences. His successor, Count Hieronymus von Colloredo, was considerably less patient and became increasingly irritated by

their absences. The king in Turin at the time of the Mozarts' visit, Carlo Emanuele III of Savoy, died on 20 Feb 1773. His son and successor Vittorio Amedeo III dismissed all of his father's ministers, including Castellar. Thus the Mozarts had lost both of their known contacts to the Turin court. For all of these reasons, another attempt to secure a contract for Wolfgang in Turin was simply not in the cards.

Count Firmian was Mozart's most important advocate in Milan, and one of his most important patrons in his early career, so it is not surprising to find that he wrote a letter of recommendation to Castellar (on Firmian, see our entry for 4 Apr 1770). But Raiberti's letter shows that Mozart had another powerful advocate in Milan, Antonio Greppi. Raiberti refers to the "diverse lettere" ("various letters") that the Mozarts had brought with them from Milan, implying that there were others in addition to those addressed to Castellar and Raiberti. No other letters have yet been found, but would be worth searching for.

Notes (⇧)

Raiberti's letter was discovered by Wignall, and first transcribed in his Brandeis dissertation (Wignall 1995, Appendix A, 524; discussion 99ff); it was then published in Wignall 1997 together with the subsequently discovered letter from Firmian to Castellar.

Little has been written about Raiberti. Although not immediately relevant here, it is worth noting that he is mentioned several times in the memoirs of Giacomo Casanova, from the latter's sojourns Turin in 1761, 1762, and 1769 (Casanova 2018).

We are grateful to the Archivio di Stato in Milan for providing the image of Raiberti's letter. Stefano Frega provided essential help with the research. We would also like to thank Anne-Louise Luccarini, Janet Page, and Bruce Brown for their comments on drafts of the commentary and the translation, and Margaret Butler for her responses to queries.

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