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# A report on the Viennese premiere of *La villanella rapita* (28 Nov 1785)

## Dexter Edge

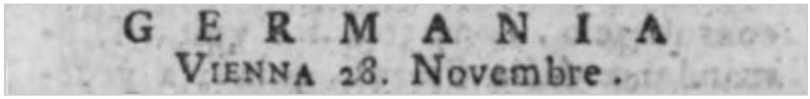
**_Gazzetta universale_, [vol. 12], no. 99, Sat, 10 Dec 1785**

*[787]*

GERMANIA

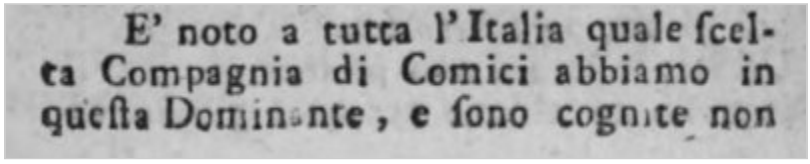
VIENNA 28. Novembre.

*[...]*


GERMANIA
VIENNA 28. Novembre.

*[788]*

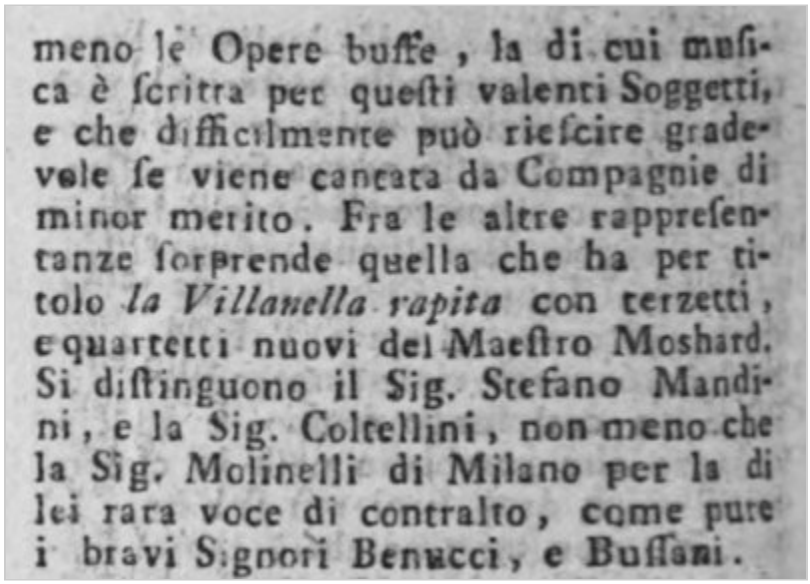
E’ noto a tutta l’Italia quale scel-
ta Compagnia di Comici abbiamo in
questa Domin*[a]*nte, e sono cogn*[i]*te non


E’ noto a tutta l’Italia quale ſcel-
ta Compagnia di Comici abbiamo in
queſta Dominante, e ſono cognite non

meno le Opere buffe, la di cui musi-
ca è scritta per questi valenti Soggetti,
e che difficilmente può riescire grade-
vole se viene cantata da Compagnie di
minor merito. Fra le altre rappresen-
tanze sorprende quella che ha per ti-
tolo *la Villanella rapita* con terzetti,
e quartetti nuovi del Maestro Moshard.
Si distinguono il Sig. Stefano Mandi-
ni, e la Sig. Coltellini, non meno che
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meno le Opere buffe, la di cui musica è ſcritta per queſti valenti Soggetti, e che difficilmente può rieſcire gradevole ſe viene cantata da Compagnie di minor merito. Fra le altre rappreſentanze ſorprende quella che ha per titolo *la Villanella rapita* con terzetti, e quartetti nuovi del Maeſtro Moshard. Si diſtinguono il Sig. Stefano Mandini, e la Sig. Coltellini, non meno che la Sig. Molinelli di Milano per la di lei rara voce di contralto, come pure i bravi Signori Benucci, e Buſſani.

*[translation:]*

GERMANY
VIENNA 28 November.

*[...]*
All of Italy knows what a distinguished comic company we have in this capital *[Vienna]*, and just as well known are the *opere buffe*, the music of which is written for these talented actors, and which is unlikely to succeed when sung by lesser companies. Among the operas, the one entitled *La villanella rapita*, with new trios and quartets by Maestro Mozart, is remarkable. Signor Stefano Mandini and Signora Coltellini stand out, as does Signora Molinelli of Milan for her rare alto voice, and likewise the good Signori Benucci and Bussani.

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## *Commentary*

The Viennese production of *La villanella rapita* was a pasticcio based on an opera by Francesco Bianchi, with several inserted numbers by local composers. The production premiered on Fri, 25 Nov 1785. Mozart contributed two ensembles: the first-act trio "Mandina amabile," K. 480,

and the second-act quartet "Dite almeno, in che mancai," K. 479. The singers in the trio were soprano Celeste Coltellini (as Mandina), tenor Vincenzo Calvesi (as the Count), and baritone Stefano Mandini (as Biagio, Mandina's father); the quartet was sung by these three, plus the bass Francesco Bussani (as Pippo, Mandina's betrothed). "Molinelli" was Rosalinda Marconi-Molinelli, who sang the role of Giannina, a character not in either of Mozart's ensembles. Just a few months later, Stefano Mandini created the role of Count Almaviva in the premiere of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, on 1 May 1786. Bussani was Mozart's first Bartolo and Antonio in *Figaro*; he also sang the roles of the Commendatore and Masetto in the Viennese premiere of *Don Giovanni* on 7 May 1788 and created the role of Don Alfonso in the premiere of *Così fan tutte* on 26 Jan 1790. Calvesi was Mozart's first Ferrando in *Così*. Contrary to the report transcribed above, Francesco Benucci (Mozart's first Figaro) did not sing in *La villanella rapita*; the error is corrected in a second report in *Gazzetta universale* a few weeks later (see our entry for 12 Jan 1786).

Count Zinzendorf, who attended the second performance of *La villanella rapita* in Vienna on 30 Nov, wrote in his diary:

> *[...]* Au Spectacle. La villanella rapita. Le spectacle est gai, la musique contient quelquesmorceaux de Moshart, les paroles beaucoup d'equivoques. Le souflet répeté. *[...]*
> [Link 1998, 258; also *Dokumente*, 225]

> *[...]* To the theater. *La villanella rapita*. The piece is cheerful, the music contains somepieces by Mozart, the text much innuendo. The slap was repeated. *[...]*

The "slap" came at the end of scene 18 in the first act, the culmination of an argument between Mandina (Coltellini) and her betrothed Pippo (Bussani). The slap had similarly delighted the audience at the premiere, where the scene likewise had to be repeated, as reported in the *Bayreuther Zeitung*:

> Schreiben aus Wien, vom 28 Nov. *[...]*
> Als neulich
> unsere beliebte Sängerin **Cottellini** *[sic]* in dem
> Stück ihrem Liebhaber eine Ohrfeige zu geben
> hatte; so war das Publikum so wohl mit ihrer
> Austheilung zufrieden, daß sie sowohl Gesang
> als Actus wiederholden muste; so sehr auch der
> Sänger mit den lächerlichen Stellungen da=
> gegen protestirte; so muste der appetitus squ=
> *[sic]*rius der Zuschauer befriediget werden.
> [*Bayreuther Zeitung*, no. 146, Tue, 6 Dec, 1125]

> Letter from Vienna, 28 Nov. *[...]*
> When recently our
> beloved singer **Coltellini** during a performance
> had to give her lover a slap, the public was so happy
> with its administration that she had to repeat

the song as well as the act; and as much as
the [male] singer protested with ridiculous
contortions, even so the *appetitus spurius* [morbid appetite]
of the spectators had to be satisfied.

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*Notes* ( ⇧ )

The *Gazzeta universal*e was published in Florence, which as capital of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, ruled at that time by the emperor's brother Leopold, retained strong links to Vienna.

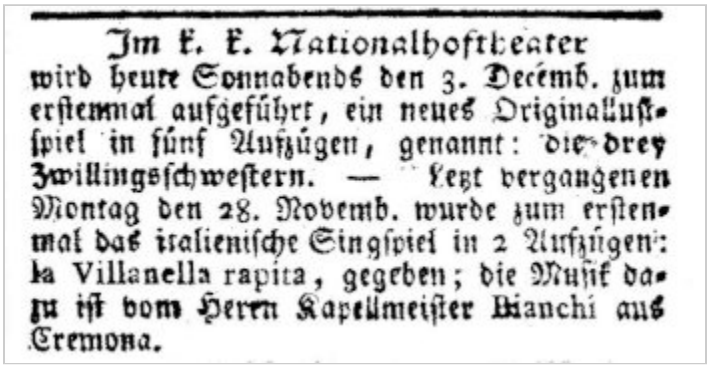
Michtner (1970, 195) lists "Francesco Marchesi" in the role of Biaggio in the Viennese production of *La villanella rapita*. The Viennese performing score of the opera (ÖNB, Musiksammlung, KT 467), which includes cast names written on the inside front cover, also lists "Marchesi" in the role role of Biaggio (Link 1998, 258, note 106; Link gives the singer's first name as Antonio). However, Mozart, in his *Verzeichnüß*, names Mandini as one of the intended singers in both of his ensembles (K. 479 and 480), and the report in *Gazzetta universale* confirms that it was Stefano Mandini (who had a major role in the opera), not his brother Paolo (who seems to have taken the secondary role of Paolino).

The poster for the premiere of *La villanella rapita* in Vienna is dated 25 Nov 1785. However, Deutsch (*Dokumente*, 225) points to a report in the *Wiener Zeitung* (not transcribed in *Dokumente*) that gives the date of the premiere as 28 Nov.

Im k. k. Nationalhoftheater

*[...]*

— Letzt vergangenen
Montag den 28. Novemb. wurde zum ersten=
mal das italienische Singspiel in 2 Aufzügen:
*la Villanella rapita*, gegeben; die Musik da=
zu ist vom Herrn Kapellmeister *Bianchi* aus
Cremona.
[*WZ*, no. 97, Sat, 3 Dec 1785, 2793]


Im k. k. Nationalhoftheater
wird heute Sonnabends den 3. Decemb. zum
erstenmal aufgeführt, ein neues Originallust-
spiel in fünf Aufzügen, genannt: die drey
Zwillingsschwestern. — Letzt vergangenen
Montag den 28. Novemb. wurde zum ersten-
mal das italienische Singspiel in 2 Aufzügen:
la Villanella rapita, gegeben; die Musik da-
zu ist vom Herrn Kapellmeister Bianchi aus
Cremona.

In the k. k. National Court Theater

*[...]*
— This past Monday
the 28 November, the 2-act Italian
opera *La villanella rapita* was given for
the first time; its music is by the Herr
Kapellmeister *Bianchi* from Cremona.

(The report itself is not in *Dokumente* or its supplements.) The most recent Monday preceding the report was indeed 28 Nov, and Deutsch concluded that the report implied that the premiere must have been deferred from 25 Nov. However, the court theater was almost certainly closed on 28 and 29 Nov in commemoration of the death of Empress Maria Theresia, who died on 29 Nov 1780; the Viennese court theaters were closed on those two dates in all others years from Maria Theresia's death up to and including 1791 (see the "Täglicher Spielplan" in Hadamowsky). That the theaters were indeed also closed on these two days in 1785 is confirmed by a later passage in the report from Vienna published in the *Bayreuther Zeitung* under the date 28 Nov:

*[...]*
Heute und morgen bleiben die Schauspiel=
häußer wegen der Feyer des Sterbetags unse=
rer unvergeßlichen großen **Maria Theresia**
geschlossen, und wir empfinden noch tief im
Herzen Ihren Verlust
[*Bayreuther Zeitung*, no. 146, Tue, 6 Dec 1785, 1125]

*[...]*
Today and tomorrow the playhouses will
remain closed on account of the observance
of the anniversary of the death of the our
unforgettable great **Maria Theresia**, and
we still feel her loss deeply in our hearts.

Thus the date on the poster is correct, and the date in the *Wiener Zeitung* is wrong: *La villanella rapita* was certainly premiered in Vienna on Fri, 25 Nov 1785.

Both Google Books and the Hathi Trust have scans of two different copies of this volume of *Gazzetta universale*, one from the University of Michigan, and one from Princeton University. The top of the scan of the relevant page from the Michigan copy is cut off. The OCR of the two copies differs: for the Princeton copy, the OCR correctly reads the composer's name as "Moshard"; the OCR for the Michigan copy gives "Mcshard". The document was found by a search on "villanella," which is correct in the OCR for both copies.

We are grateful to Matteo Magarotto for his translation of the item from *Gazzetta universale*, and to Ian Allan for his advice on the translation of the item in the *Bayreuther Zeitung*.

*Bibliography* ( ⇧ )

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*Credit*: DE

*Author*: Dexter Edge

*Link(s)*: Google Books (University of Michigan); Google Books (Princeton); Hathi (University of Michigan); Hathi (Princeton)

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