Citation:

Printed: Thu, 19 Nov 2026

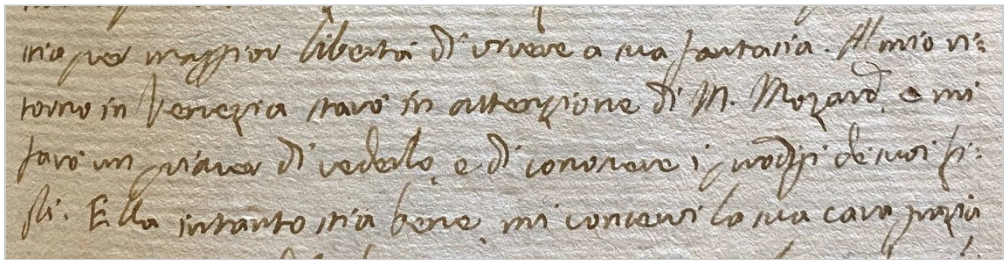
Edge, Dexter. 2023. "Ortes to Hasse on the Mozarts (28 Oct 1769)." In: *Mozart: New Documents*, edited by Dexter Edge and David Black. First published 9 Mar 2023; updated 13 Jul 2023. [direct link]

Ortes to Hasse on the Mozarts (28 Oct 1769)

Dexter Edge

Letter from Giammaria Ortes in Venice to Johann Adolph Hasse in Vienna
Venice, Museo Civico Correr

[...] Al mio ritorno a Venezia starò in attenzione di M. Mozard, e mi farò piacer di vederlo, e di conoscer i prodigi de' suoi figli. *[...]*



[translation:]

[...] Upon my return to Venice I will be awaiting M. Mozart, and it will give me pleasure to see him and to become acquainted with the prodigious talents of his children. *[...]*

Commentary

Composer Johann Adolph Hasse (1699–1783) was a close friend of the writer and political economist Abate Giammaria Ortes (Giovanni Maria, 1713–1790), and the two maintained a regular correspondence between 1760 and 1777. Four references to the Mozarts in that correspondence have been known since the early 20th century. In 1902, Hermann Kretschmar published passages referring to the Mozarts from Hasse's letters to Ortes of 30 Sep 1769 and 23 Mar 1771 (Kretschmar 1902, 263–65). Four years later, Carl Mennicke, in his book *Hasse und die Brüder Graun als Symphoniker*, published these same two passages, along with Hasse's letter of recommendation for the Mozarts, dated 4 Oct 1769, and a portion of Ortes's letter to Hasse dated 2 Mar 1771, reporting his encounters with the Mozarts (Mennicke 1906, 431–32). These four passages were taken over into Deutsch, and those from Hasse's letters were apparently retranscribed from photographs with the help of Luigi Tagliavini (*Dokumente* 84–85, 119, 120–21).

Mozart: New Documents by Dexter Edge & David Black
is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

The complete correspondence between Hasse and Ortes was published in 1998 in a splendid scholarly edition by Livia Pancino. This edition contains the complete texts of all four of these letters in new and corrected transcriptions based on the original sources in the Museo Civico Correr in Venice. Pancino's edition also contains a letter referring to the Mozarts that was overlooked by Mennicke and Deutsch. The relevant passage, in a letter from Ortes to Hasse dated 28 Oct 1769, is transcribed at the top of this page. Pancino's edition also shows that Mennicke (and hence Deutsch) omitted several sentences relevant to the Mozarts in Ortes's letter of 2 Mar 1771; we give the full corrected passage with commentary in our entry for that letter.

The passage transcribed above comes from Ortes's response to Hasse's letter of 30 Sep 1769, in which the composer first mentions the Mozarts (Pancino 1998, 197–98; *Dokumente*, 84–85). At that point, Hasse, who had evidently received a letter from Leopold Mozart, writes that the Mozarts intend to embark for Italy on 24 Oct, and Hasse implies that the entire family will be traveling; that is why Ortes writes that he will be looking forward to meeting "suoi figli," "his [Leopold's] children." Hasse's letter was sent to Venice at a time when Ortes was actually in Bologna, and the letter consequently had to be forwarded to him there, accounting for the delay of nearly a month in Ortes's reply. In the event, Leopold and Wolfgang (without mother and Nannerl) did not depart Salzburg until 13 Dec 1769, and (perhaps because of Wolfgang's successes in Milan), they did not finally have the opportunity to visit Venice until the end of their first Italian journey, arriving there on 11 Feb 1771. With them they still had Hasse's letter of recommendation to Ortes, dated 4 Oct 1769 (Pancino 1998, 198–99; *Dokumente*, 85). Ortes's letter of 2 Mar 1771 is his report to Hasse on finally meeting the Mozarts.

Ortes is a fascinating figure in his own right, whose status as a leading Venetian intellectual of the time has been largely ignored by Mozart scholars (on Ortes, see Ponzo 2006 and Del Negro 2013). Born in Venice in 1713, Ortes entered a Camaldolese monastery in 1727, studying philosophy and, in Pisa, mathematics with Guido Grandi, about whom Ortes later wrote a biography. Returning to Venice in 1738, Ortes began to doubt his vocation, and in 1743, he became a secular priest (abate). He pursued additional studies in astronomy, experimental physics, and chemistry in Bologna, and in Venice he became part of an intellectual circle that included, among others, Francesco Algarotti, well known to music historians for his influential *Saggio sopra L'opera in musica* (1755). Ortes himself published his own *Riflessioni sopra i drammi per musica* (1757), and wrote several unpublished libretti. He is best known today, however, for his work on political economy, especially *Dell'economia nazionale* (1774), an early attempt to describe economies in terms of natural laws (and also an early argument for free trade), and his *Riflessioni sulla popolazione delle nazione per rapporto all'economia nazionale* (1790; 1804 edition), which prefigures Malthus.

Notes (⇧)

To the best of our knowledge, this passage from Ortes's letter of 28 Oct 1769 was first cited and reproduced in the Mozart literature by Giacomo Fornari (2010, 174n9).

There are many discrepancies between Pancino's and Deutsch's transcriptions of Hasse's letters of 30 Sep 1769, 4 Oct 1769, and 23 Mar 1771, but we are not detailing them here.

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 also wish to thank Janet Page and Bruce Brown for their comments on this entry.

Bibliography (⇧)

Basso, Alberto. 2006. *I Mozart in Italia. Cronistoria dei viaggi, documenti, lettere, dizionario dei luoghi e delle persone*. [Rome:] Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

Del Negro, Piero. 2013. "Ortes, Giovanni Maria." *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (on *Treccani*).

Fornari, Giacomo. 2010. "Cronaca di una festa musicale «rovinata». Alcuni riflessioni intorno al rapporto tra W. A. Mozart e Hasse ai tempi di «Ascanio in Alba» KV 111." *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 56: 171–84.

Kretschmar, Hermann. 1902. "Hasse über Mozart." *Zeitschrift der internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 3/7 (April 1902): 263–65.

Mennicke, Carl. 1906. *Hasse und die Brüder Graun als Symphoniker*. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.

Pancino, Livia, ed. 1998. *Johann Adolf Hasse e Giammaria Ortes. Lettere (1760–1783).* Speculum Musicae, 4. Turnhout: Brepols.

Ponzo, Diego. 2006. "Ortes, Gian Maria." In: Basso 2006, 624–25.

Credit: Livia Pancino / Giacomo Fornari

Author: Dexter Edge

Link(s): NA

Search Term: NA

Source Library: Venice, Museo Civico Correr

Categories: Biography, Corrigenda

First Published: Thu, 9 Mar 2023

Updated: Thu, 13 Jul 2023

Citation:

> Edge, Dexter. 2023. “Ortes to Hasse on the Mozarts (28 Oct 1769).” In: *Mozart: New Documents*, edited by Dexter Edge and David Black. First published 9 Mar 2023; updated 13 Jul 2023. [direct link]