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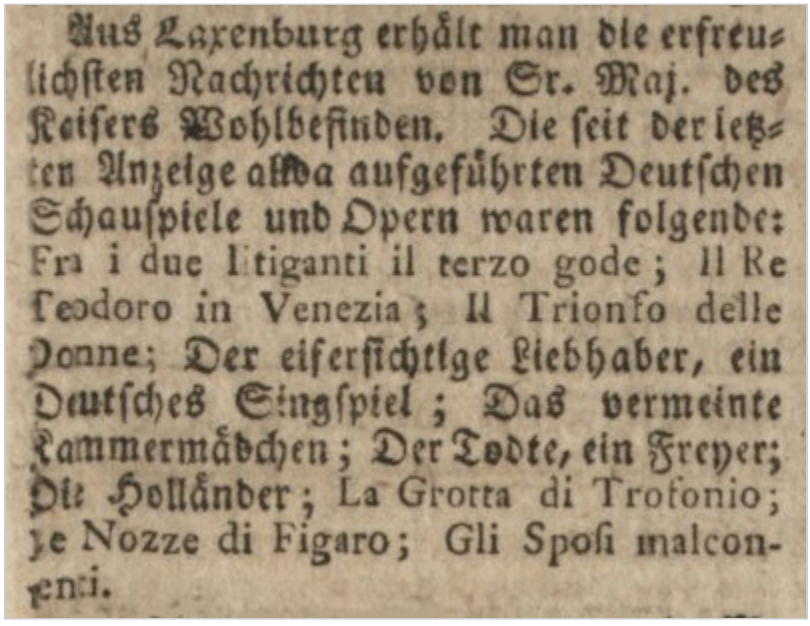
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Le nozze di Figaro at Laxenburg (3 Jun 1786)

Dexter Edge

***Wiener Zeitung*, no. 45, Wed, 7 Jun 1786, 1358**

Aus Laxenburg erhält man die erfreu=
lichsten Nachrichten von Sr. Maj. des
Kaisers Wohlbefinden. Die seit der letz=
ten Anzeige allda aufgeführten Deutschen
Schauspiele und Opern waren folgende:
Fra i due litiganti il terzo gode; *Il Re*
Teodoro in Venezia; *Il Trionfo delle*
Donne; Der eifersichtige [*sic*] Liebhaber, ein
Deutsches Singspiel; Das vermeinte
Kammermädchen; Der Todte, ein Freyer;
Die Holländer; *La Grotta di Trofonio*;
Le Nozze di Figaro; *Gli Sposi malcon-*
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tenti.

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[translation:]

From Laxenburg comes the most gratifying news of His Majesty the Emperor's well-being. Since the last report, the German plays and the operas performed there were as follows: *Fra i due litiganti il terzo gode*; *Il re Teodoro in Venezia*; *Il trionfo delle donne*; *Der eifersüchtige Liebhaber*, a German singspiel; *Das vermeinte Kammermädchen*; *Der Todte, ein Freyer*; *Die Holländer*; *La grotta di Trofonio*; *Le nozze di Figaro*; *Gli sposi malcontenti.*

Commentary

The town of Laxenburg in Lower Austria is just a few kilometers south of the modern southern boundary of Vienna. It is home to palaces and a large park that formerly belonged to the Habsburg monarchs, and it was a favorite summer retreat of the Habsburg court in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Like the Habsburg palace at Schönbrunn, the "new palace" at Laxenburg (the "Neues Schloss," also called the "blaue Hof") included a small theater for the entertainment of the court and its aristocratic entourage when they were in residence. The palace and theater fell into serious disrepair after the dissolution of the Habsburg empire at the end of World War I (for the history of the Laxenburg palace theater and photos of its condition in the early 1970s, see Friedl 1975). In recent decades, however, the palace and theater have been renovated as a conference center, and some of the original interior of the theater has been retained, including the balcony and the imperial box. In its original form, the theater was quite small, suited to intimate performances for the court and a relatively small number of invited aristocratic guests.



Laxenburg palace (Wikimedia Commons)

In 1786, Emperor Joseph II spent nearly a month at Laxenburg, from mid May to mid June (see Link 2012, 355–59). A report from Vienna dated 1 May 1786, printed in the *Bayreuther Zeitung* on 8 May, lists the members of the high nobility whom Joseph invited to Laxenburg that year:

> *[...]* Schon am 29sten sind die Ca=
> valiers und Damen, welche Se. Majestät nach
> Laxenburg begleiten, ernannt worden.
> *) Nach einem öffentlichen Blatt wird folgender
> hoher Adel des Kaisers Majestät nach Laxenburg
> begleiten: Der Fürst und die Fürstin von Schwar=
> zenberg, Obristkämmerer Graf von Rosenberg, Hof=
> marschall Graf Wrbna, Fürst Carl Lichtenstein und
> seine Gemahlin, die Fürsten Paar und Lobkowitz,
> Fürstin Franz Lichtenstein, Graf und Gräfin Hatz=
> feld, Feldmarschall Graf Lascy, Graf und Gräfin
> Colloredo, Graf Zinzendorf, Graf und Gräfin St.
> Julien, Graf und Gräfin Ernst Kaunitz, Graf und
> Gräfin Thun und Tochter, Graf und Gräfin Cho=
> tek, Graf Kobenzl (Vicekanzler), Graf Kobenzl
> (Bothschafter), Fürst und Fürstin Stahrenberg,
> Graf Franz Colloredo und Gemahlin, die Grafen
> Carl Palfy, Bronne, Pelegrini, Joseph Colloredo,
> Nostiz, Clairfait, Keglewitsch, Lamberry und *Ms.*
> *de Rollin*, die beyden letztern Generaladjutanten des
> Erzherzogs Franz. —

The entourage also included Archduke Franz. The *Wiener Zeitung* reported that Joseph and Franz left Vienna for Laxenburg following the opera in the Burgtheater on the evening of Mon, 15 May (the opera that evening was the Viennese premiere of Anfossi's *Il trionfo delle donne*, subsequently performed twice at Laxenburg during the emperor's stay.) Joseph and his retinue left Laxenburg in the middle of the following month: the *Wiener Zeitung* reported on Wed, 14 Jun that Joseph and Franz had returned to Vienna the previous evening.

It has long been known that Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* was performed at Laxenburg during Joseph's sojourn there in 1786 (the opera's premiere had just recently taken place on 1 May 1786). *Dokumente* (242) notes that *Figaro* was performed at Laxenburg "im Juni" ("in June") 1786, citing Teuber's *Die Theater Wiens* (1903). Of the Laxenburg repertoire in 1786, Teuber writes:

> ...als während des kaiserlichen Mai-Aufenthalts im Laxenburger Schlosstheater abwechselnd deutsche Schauspiele und italienische Opern gegeben wurden, wählte man für das Opernrepertoire wohl jene Novität von Anfossi [*Il trionfo delle donne*], dann Cimarosas »Italiana in Londra«, Martins »Il burbero di buon cuore« und (deutsch) Glucks »Pilgrime von Mekka«; erst im Juni aber kam in Laxenburg nach vier Italienern Mozarts »Figaro« auch auf den kaiserlichen Spielplan.
> [Teuber 1903, 79]

> ...since German plays and Italian operas were performed alternately in the palace theater in Laxenburg during the imperial sojourn in May, the selected opera repertoire probably included that novelty by Anfossi [*Il trionfo delle donne*], Cimarosa's *Italiana in Londra*, Martin's *Il burbero di buon cuore*, and (in German), Gluck's *Die Pilgrimme von Mekka*; only in June, after four Italian operas, did Mozart's *Figaro* also appear on the imperial program.

(This extract occurs in the context of a passage on Joseph's alleged lack of interest in Mozart's music.) Teuber cites no source for the titles he lists, and his "probably" ("wohl") may suggest he did not have a direct source; be that as it may C. F. Pohl had already noted in 1882 in his biography of Joseph Haydn that the *Wiener Zeitung* had reported on the theatrical repertoire at Laxenburg in 1786. However, Pohl did not transcribe the reports, give their dates, or name the works performed.

The report transcribed above, from the *Wiener Zeitung* of 7 Jun 1786 (first transcribed in Link 1998, 83–84), names *Figaro* among the operas and plays performed at Laxenburg. This passage is not transcribed or mentioned in *Dokumente*, *Addenda*, or *Neue Folge*. It is, in fact, the second of three reports in the *Wiener Zeitung* on the repertoire of the Laxenburg theater in 1786. The first, published on Sat, 27 May 1786 (likewise transcribed in Link 1998, 83), names the plays and operas performed during the first two weeks of the court's sojourn in Laxenburg:

> Wien.
> Während dem Aufenthalte Sr. Ma=
> jestät des Kaisers, in Gesellschaft

des hohen Adels auf dem Lustschlosse zu
Laxenburg, werden allda verschiedene
Jagden und andere Lustbarkeiten ange=
stellt, auch abwechselnd Deutsche Schau=
spiele und Italiän. Opern auf dem Schloß=
theater gegeben. In der ersten Woche
gaben die Nazionalschauspieler: Victo=
rine, die schlaflosen Nächte, den Eil=
fertigen, und den eisenen [*sic*] Mann; in
der zweyten Woche: den Vetter in Lis=
sabon, den doppelten Liebhaber, und
das Findelkind. Zwischen diesen deut=
schen Schauspielen wurden die Italiäni=
schen Opern: *L'Italiana in Londra*, *il
Trionfo delle Donne*, und *il urbero* [*sic*] *di
buon cuore*, nebst dem Deutschen Sing=
spiele: die Pilgrime von Mekka =
gennant, von den Hofoperisten aufge=
führet.

Vienna.
During the sojourn of His
Majesty the Emperor, in company
with the high nobility at the summer
palace in Laxenburg, various hunts
and other entertainments have been
held there, and alternating German
plays and Italian operas given in the
palace theater. In the first week the
actors of the Nationaltheater gave:
Viktorine, *Die schlaflosen Nächte*,
Der Eilfertige, and *Der eiserne Mann*;
in the second week: *Der Vetter in
Lissabon*, *Der doppelte Liebhaber*, and
Das Findelkind. Between these German
plays Italian operas were performed by
the court opera company: *L'Italiana in
Londra*, *Il trionfo delle donne*, and *Il
burbero di buon cuore*, along with the
German singspiel *Die Pilgrimme von
Mekka.*

And on Sat, 17 Jun 1786, four days after the emperor's return to Vienna, the *Wiener Zeitung* reported the titles of the plays and operas that had been performed during the remainder of the court's sojourn in Laxenburg:

[1434]

> Noch haben wir, die Laxenburger
> Hoflustbarkeit betreffend, anzuzeigen, daß

[1435]

> in der letzten Woche von den Nazional=
> hofschauspielern aufgeführt wurde: Die
> unmögliche Sache; Der Strich durch
> die Rechnung; Wahrheit ist gut Ding;
> und daß mit folgenden vier Opern der gänz=
> liche Beschluß gemacht worden ist: *L'Ita-*
> *liana in Londra*; *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*;
> *La Scuola de Gelosi*; *La Grotta di Tro-*
> *fonio.*
> [*WZ*, Sat, 17 Jun 1786, 1434–35; not in Link]

> Regarding the court's entertainments
> at Laxenburg, we have still to report that
> in the final week, the actors of the
> court's National Theater performed:
> *Die unmögliche Sache*; *Der Strich durch*
> *die Rechnung*; *Wahrheit ist gut Ding*;
> and that the finale of the whole consisted
> of the following four operas: *L'italiana in*
> *Londra*; *Il barbiere di Siviglia*;
> *La scuola de' gelosi*; *La grotta di*
> *Trofonio*.

Although the reports in the *Wiener Zeitung* give no specific dates for the performances, the schedule can be reconstructed with reasonable certainty based on a variety of evidence (including the diary of Count Zinzendorf and the order in which the items are listed in the reports in the *Wiener Zeitung*), together with the schedule of the court theaters that same evening. (If an Italian opera was given in the Burgtheater, for example, it is highly unlikely that one was also given in Laxenburg that same evening, as the company did not have sufficient depth of personnel to manage this.) Link has reconstructed the schedule at Laxenburg on this basis, and her reconstruction is almost certainly correct (Link 1998, 83–86, and 2012, 357). According to her reconstruction, Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* was performed at Laxenburg on 3 Jun 1786. Perhaps significantly, *Figaro* also seems to be the only theatrical performance at Laxenburg in May and Jun 1786 that Count Zinzendorf did not attend (see the record of his attendance in Link 1998, 83–86).

The reconstructed schedule shows that the first report in the *Wiener Zeitung* on 27 May covers the Laxenburg performances from 16–25 May, the second report on 7 Jun covers those from 26 May to 5 Jun, and the third on 17 Jun covers those from 6–12 Jun. The order in which titles are listed in the reports matches the reconstructed schedule in every case but one: the report on 7 Jun lists Sarti's *Fra i due litiganti* before Paisiello's *Il re Teodoro*, but the reconstructed schedule places Paisiello's opera on 26 May and Sarti's on 27 May.

The works mentioned in the report of 7 Jun 1786, and their probable dates of performance are are:

Date	Work	Notes
26 May	*Il re Teodoro in Venezia*	Italian opera by Paisiello
27 May	*Fra i due Litiganti il terzo gode*	Italian opera by Giuseppe Sarti
28 May	*Il trionfo delle donne*	Italian opera by Anfossi
29 May	*Der eifersüchtige Liebhaber*	Singspiel with music by Grétry
30 May	*Das vermeinte Kammermädchen*	Play by Marivaux (trans. Stephanie d. J.)
31 May	*Der Todte, ein Freyer*	Play by Sedaine (trans. Pauersbach)
1 Jun	*Die Holländer*	Play by Bock (after Goldoni)
2 Jun	*La grotta di Trofonio*	Italian opera by Salieri
3 Jun	*Le nozze di Figaro*	Italian opera by Mozart
4 Jun	Sarti, *Miserere*	For Pentecost (not listed in the *WZ*)
5 Jun	*Gli sposi malcontenti*	Italian opera by Stephen Storace

Le nozze di Figaro was performed in the restored theater at Laxenburg on 18 Feb 2016.

Notes (⇧)

The report from the *Wiener Zeitung* on 7 Jun 1786 that lists *Figaro* among the titles performed in Laxenburg was reprinted in the *Provinzialnachrichten* on 10 Jun 1786, and again in the *Münchner Zeitung* on 13 Jun 1786.

The reports on the Laxenburg theater in the *Wiener Zeitung* on 27 May and 7 Jun 1786 were first transcribed in Link (1998, 83–84). Her transcriptions match ours except for the following minor points: Link does not distinguish typographically between the roman type used for the titles of Italian operas and the Fraktur used for the rest of the text; and she has silently corrected the errors "den eisenen" (in the report of 27 May, *recte* "den eisernen") and "eifersichtige" (in the report of 7 Jun, *recte* "eifersüchtige"). There is also one trivial difference in capitalization.

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Credit: Dorothea Link (transcription and commentary here by DE)

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