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Count Firmian to Count Sporck on Mozart's serenata (9 Mar 1771)

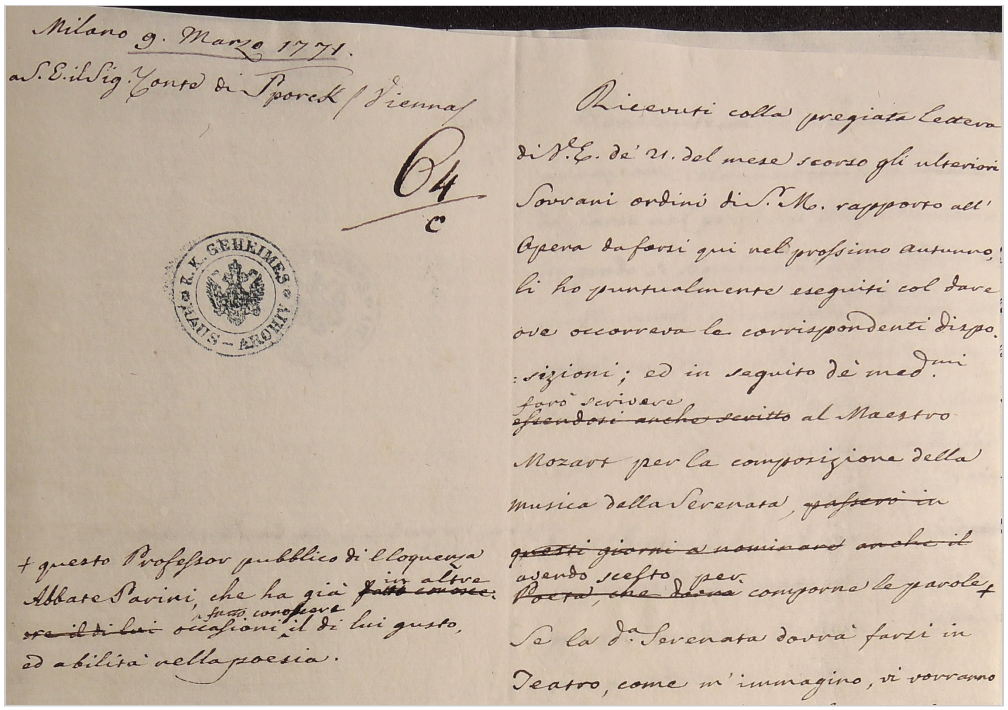
Dexter Edge

Count Firmian to Count Sporck, 9 Mar 1771 (draft), HHStA, Ält. ZA, Kart. 84, 7r

[upper left:]
Milano 9. Marzo 1771.
a S. E. il Sig. Conte di Sporck /Vienna/

[right-hand column]
Ricevuti colla pregiata lettera
di V. E. de' 21. del mese scorso gli ulteriori
Sovrani ordini di S. M. rapporto all'
Opera da farsi qui nel prossimo autunno,
li ho puntualmente eseguiti col dare
ove occorreva le corrispondenti dispo=
=sizioni; ed in seguito de' med.mi
farò scrivere
~~essendosi anche scritto~~ al Maestro
Mozart per la composizione della
musica della Serenata, ~~passerò in~~
~~questi giorni a nominare anche il~~
avendo scelto per
~~Poeta, che dovrà~~ comporne le parole
[+ questo Professor pubblico di eloquenza
in altre
Abbate Parini, che ha già ~~fatto conosc=~~
fatto conoscere
~~ere il di lui~~ occasioni^ il di lui gusto,
ed abilità nella poesia.] *[...]*

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[reconstructed final version:]

Ricevuti colla pregiata lettera di V[ostra] E[ccellenza] de’ 21. del mese scorso gli ulteriori Sovrani ordini di S[ua] M[aestà] rapporto all’ Opera da farsi qui nel prossimo autunno, li ho puntualmente eseguiti col dare ove occorreva le corrispondenti disposizioni; ed in seguito dè med[esimi] farò scrivere al Maestro Mozart per la composizione della musica della Serenata, avendo scelto per comporne le parole Abbate Parini, che ha già in altre occasioni fatto conoscere il di lui gusto ed abilità nella poesia. *[...]*

[translation:]

Having received with Your Excellency’s esteemed letter of the 21st of last month Her Majesty’s latest orders regarding the opera to be given here next autumn, I have carried them out punctually, giving when needed the corresponding instructions; and pursuant to the same, I will have Maestro Mozart engaged for the composition of the music of the serenata, as I have selected to compose its text the public professor of rhetoric Abbate Parini, who has already on other occasions made known his taste and ability in poetry. *[...]*

Commentary

This draft letter from Count Carlo di Firmian to Count Johann Wenzel Sporck is part of a longer exchange regarding preparations for the festivities surrounding the wedding of Archduke Ferdinand and Princess Maria Beatrice d’Este that coming autumn. On 9 Feb 1771, Firmian had informed Sporck that Empress Maria Theresia had left to Firmian the choice of composer and poet for a serenata that was to be commissioned for the festivities. In that letter, Firmian

suggested Mozart as the composer. On 21 Feb, Sporck had responded that he had reported Firmian's recommendations to the empress, and she had replied that she trusted Firmian's judgment. On 7 Mar, Firmian had written to Count Lorenzo Salazar, *direttore* of the Regio Ducal Teatro in Milan, instructing him to write to Mozart in Verona (where he would arrive on 17 Mar) informing him of the commission for the serenata; this is the commission that became *Ascanio in Alba*. In the passage transcribed above from Firmian's letter to Sporck two days later, Firmian writes that Mozart has now been informed, and Firmian has chosen the poet Giuseppe Parini to write the libretto. This seems to be the earliest reference to Parini in any known document relating to the imperial wedding in Milan in 1771.

Notes (⇧)

Firmian's letter to Sporck on 9 Mar 1771 was first mentioned by Andrea Sommer (later Sommer-Mathis) in 1981 in her Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Vienna (Sommer 1981, 492). She does not transcribe any portion of the letter, and does not mention the reference to Mozart, which so far as we know is reported here for the first time. Sommer-Mathis also refers to Firmian's letter in the book derived from her dissertation (Sommer-Mathis 1994, 207).

We are grateful to Michael Lorenz for his photographs of the documents in Vienna, HHStA, Ältere Zeremonialakten, Karton 84, and to Bruce Brown and Janet Page for their comments.

Bibliography (⇧)

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Sommer-Mathis, Andrea. 1994. *Tu felix Austria nube. Hochzeitsfeste der Habsburger im 18. Jahrhundert.* dramma per musica, vol. 4. Vienna: Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag.

Credit: Andrea Sommer-Mathis

Author: Dexter Edge

Link(s): NA

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