

2 Operatic Culture at the Court of Leopold II and Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*

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On 5 October 1789 a mob, consisting mostly of women, marched from Paris to Versailles, attacked the palace, and forced King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette to return with them to Paris. Later, Marie Antoinette, putting the best face she could on the unspeakable outrage that had just occurred, expressed royal magnanimity to the judges who came to take her deposition against the mob: 'J'ai tout vu, j'ai tout su, et j'ai tout oublié' (I have seen everything, I have known everything, and I have forgotten everything).¹ Her words echoed those of Emperor Augustus at the end of Pierre Corneille's *Cinna ou la Clémence d'Auguste* (1643): 'Auguste a tout appris & veut tout oublier' ('Augustus has learned everything and will forget everything').² She came even closer to Pietro Metastasio's libretto *La clemenza di Tito*—a libretto written for her grandfather, Emperor Charles VI—and the final words of Tito's final monologue: 'Sia noto a Roma / Ch'io son l'istesso; e ch'io / Tutto so, tutti assolvo, e tutto obbligo' (Let it be known in Rome that I am the same, and that I know everything, absolve everyone, and forget everything).³

The queen's patently theatrical gesture—we might call it 'La clemenza di Maria Antonietta'—reminds us that Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* was a product of a time in European history dominated by a single event: the French Revolution. Marie Antoinette's words also remind us of the pervasiveness of theatre in the everyday life of eighteenth-century Europe. For both the queen and her subjects, the

How to cite this book chapter:

Rice, J. A. 2018. Operatic Culture at the Court of Leopold II and Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*. In: Tessing Schneider, M. and Tatlow, R. (eds.) *Mozart's La clemenza di Tito: A Reappraisal*. Pp. 33–55. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16993/ban.b>. License: CC-BY NC-ND 4.0

theatre helped to shape their understanding of themselves, of their place in society, and of contemporary events; those events in turn helped to shape theatre, including opera. This was as true in Vienna as it was in Paris, and it helps to explain why so much thought, money, and energy was put into opera during a period of such momentous political change. A little less than two years after the queen paraphrased Tito's declaration of clemency, while the Revolution continued to unfold, Mozart was to conduct the first performance of his setting of *La clemenza di Tito* for the coronation of Leopold II, Marie Antoinette's brother, as king of Bohemia, on 6 September 1791.

Five months after the death of Emperor Joseph II on 20 February 1790, an anonymous critic, writing for a German journal, evaluated musical life in Vienna during his reign. Turning to Joseph's successor, Leopold, he continued:

The present king has not been in the theatre, nor has he had his music in private, nor has he shown any other sign of being a music-lover. *Malum signum*, cry our pseudo-prophets. But I believe that once the enormous burdens of statesmanship that lie on his shoulders are reduced to minor difficulties, once he has bestowed golden peace on his dominions, then too will we have a new Golden Age of music.⁴

The writer's hopes were not fulfilled. Emperor Leopold II died in March 1792 after a reign of only two years, and it can hardly be called a golden age of music. Yet his reign deserves study as a period of intense musical activity and change—much of it initiated by Leopold himself as part of a reorganisation of the court theatres' personnel and repertory that he oversaw in 1791. That reorganisation is an important part of the context of Mozart's last two operas, *Die Zauberflöte* and *La clemenza di Tito*.⁵

Leopold's reign fell between two periods of relative stability in the evolution of Viennese musical life. The 1780s, when Joseph II ruled alone after the death in 1780 of Maria Theresa, were shaped by his artistic direction, which favoured the hegemony of a particularly

complex and sophisticated kind of *opera buffa*, the virtual absence of *opera seria* and ballet, a turning-away from church music by the best composers, and the cultivation of a rich and highly developed language of instrumental music. The years following Leopold's reign present a very different picture. The brilliant comic operas of Mozart were absent from the court theatres for most of the 1790s, replaced by Italian works of a simpler kind. Comic opera, instead of dominating the stage, shared it with other genres, such as Italian serious opera and ballet, which enjoyed the prestige it had won during the days of Gasparo Angiolini and Jean-Georges Noverre. Outside the theatre, church music regained its former attraction to composers.

In short, Viennese musical life was transformed, and much of the transformation took place during Leopold's reign. The departure from Vienna in early 1791 of Lorenzo Da Ponte signalled the end of an era in Viennese comic opera; Mozart's death later that year removed from the scene the author of the greatest musical achievements of the Josephinian decade. The debuts of Leopold's Italian ballet and *opera seria* troupes less than a month before Mozart's death reintroduced the Viennese to genres with which they had grown unfamiliar. A decree promulgated by Leopold in March 1791 sanctioning the performance of orchestrally accompanied music in churches contributed to a revival of church music, of which Mozart's Requiem, commissioned a few months later, was but one product. 1792, the year of Leopold's death, saw the arrival in Vienna of two musicians who would do more to shape Viennese music during the next decade than any others: Joseph Haydn, still to write his late masses and oratorios, returning from his first trip to London, and Ludwig van Beethoven arriving from Bonn.

Emperor Leopold II, fully aware of the theatre's symbolic power, used it skilfully. During the first year of his reign he pointedly ignored the theatre, successfully projecting the image of a sovereign too busy with the affairs of government to dabble in such trivial matters. Then,

in 1791, he initiated and supervised a theatrical reorganisation the lavishness of which Vienna had not experienced since the days of Maria Theresa—a reorganisation that featured the return to Vienna of genres for which it had once been famous; one of those genres being *opera seria*.

Coming to the throne of the Habsburg monarchy at a time of crisis, Leopold faced threats both external (the French Revolution, and war with Turkey) and internal (rebellion in the Austrian Netherlands, the nobility of Bohemia and Hungary pushing back against Joseph's reforms). With a mixture of concessions and firmness he divided and weakened opposing groups. At the same time, he began an ideological offensive against the French Revolution and its sympathisers within the Habsburg monarchy.

Leopold consolidated power slowly—a process manifested in a series of coronations and other similar ceremonies. The first of these ceremonies was the oath of allegiance (*Huldigung*) to Leopold as archduke of Austria, on 6 April 1790; this ritual and its surrounding festivities is particularly well documented in a series of coloured prints by Hieronymus Löschenkohl.⁶ The *Huldigung* was celebrated with a procession through the Graben to St. Stephen's Cathedral, a specially constructed 'Freuden-Gerüst' (stage of joy), and an orchestra accompanied Te Deum in the Court Chapel (Hofkapelle). Then followed the coronations: in October 1790 Leopold was crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in Frankfurt, a month later (in November 1790) king of Hungary in Bratislava, and in September 1791 king of Bohemia. The *Huldigung* and the coronations that followed were opportunities to affirm, through the powerful symbolism of ancient rituals, the strength and resilience of enlightened absolutism. Leopold basked in the warmth of pomp and applause, celebrating and renewing the traditions of the political system that kept him in power. His subjects not only applauded their new ruler but displayed their own traditions, demonstrating that they consented freely

to be ruled by Leopold but that such consent came in exchange for his recognition of their rights and privileges.

Like most eighteenth-century coronations, Leopold's were patently theatrical. They were dramas whose casts included the Habsburg monarchy's richest and most powerful actors, the sovereign himself playing the leading role. In keeping with that theatrical quality, the production of plays and operas was an essential part of most of the festivities surrounding Leopold's coronations. The *Huldigung* of April 1790 took place while the theatres were still closed in mourning for Joseph II, so opera could not be a part of that celebration. In Frankfurt, though, performances included several operas and plays, and in Prague, at least three operas were performed in the days before and after Leopold's coronation as king of Bohemia. But the main theatrical event in Prague was the premiere of a new serious opera on the evening of the coronation day: Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, a setting of Metastasio's libretto heavily revised by Caterino Mazzola.

The opera had been conceived and executed in great haste, in a process well documented by Sergio Durante.⁷ In this paper I will focus on the genre of Mozart's opera, a choice made by the Bohemian noblemen who commissioned the opera in consultation with the impresario Domenico Guardasoni, considering their choice within the context of contemporary theatrical practices, Leopold's theatrical reorganisation in Vienna, and precedents set by previous coronations.

Although *opera seria* was, along with *tragédie lyrique*, the most prestigious and expensive of eighteenth-century operatic genres, it was not necessarily the automatic choice for a coronation in Central Europe in the early 1790s. Vienna, the city that Metastasio made his home and that honoured him with the title of Court Poet, rejected the kind of opera that he had played so crucial a role in shaping. *Opera seria* maintained its fascination for Italian composers and audiences through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. It enjoyed favour in some of the musical centres of northern Europe

as well, including London and Berlin. But in Vienna, where many of Metastasio's dramas were first performed, *opera seria* was largely absent during the 1770s and 1780s.

This was partly a matter of the taste of Emperor Joseph II. In preparation for the visit of the Grand Duke and Duchess of Russia in 1781, Prince Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, as minister of state, urged Joseph to arrange for the performance of *opera seria* and ballet. This, according to Kaunitz, would be an effective means of impressing the Russian visitors with the 'power of this monarchy'.⁸ But Joseph rejected the idea of an *opera seria*, and in doing so he made his opinion of the genre clear: 'In regard to *opera seria* from Italy it is too late to arrange something good; and anyway, it is such a boring spectacle that I do not think I will ever use it.'⁹ During the 1780s *opera buffa* and *Singspiel* flourished in Vienna. (I use the term *opera buffa* here loosely to refer to the wide spectrum of operas with comic situations and characters, many ensembles, including finales, which make use of singers who specialised in comic opera, but which also incorporate music and dramatic situations characteristic of *opera seria*.)

The dominance of *opera buffa* in Vienna's Burgtheater was reflected in its use in celebrating important dynastic events—not only in Vienna, but also in Prague, whose operatic repertory imitated that of Vienna. When the emperor's niece, Leopold's daughter Archduchess Maria Theresa, married a prince of Saxony in 1787, the bride's journey to Dresden was marked by operas. Her arrival in Vienna was celebrated by the premiere of Vicente Martín y Soler's *L'arbore di Diana*. Mozart intended the premiere of *Don Giovanni* to celebrate the archduchess's visit to Prague in October 1787; a delay in the production of that opera, however, meant that it had to be replaced by a gala performance of *Le nozze di Figaro*. But the most important dynastic event of the 1780s was the marriage in Vienna in January 1788 of Joseph's nephew, Leopold's son Archduke Francis, to Elisabeth of Württemberg. To celebrate that event, the Viennese *opera buffa* troupe

presented the first performance of Antonio Salieri's *Axur re d'Ormus*, a *dramma tragicomico* that became Emperor Joseph's favourite opera. All these operas have librettos by Lorenzo Da Ponte, whose success in Vienna was a direct result of Joseph's operatic tastes and policies.

The use of *opera buffa* on occasions of state set a precedent that survived Joseph. 19 September 1790 was the day of the triple marriage that Leopold had arranged with his sister, Queen Maria Carolina of Naples: Archduke Francis, whose wife Elisabeth had died earlier in the year, was to marry Princess Maria Theresa of Naples, while two of Francis's younger siblings were to marry two of Maria Theresa's younger siblings. The whole Neapolitan royal family came to Vienna to witness the ceremony, and they stayed in Vienna for several months, enjoying with Leopold and his family a splendid succession of theatrical performances, concerts, banquets, and balls.¹⁰

The arrival of the Neapolitans was celebrated by the premiere of Joseph Weigl's *La caffettiera bizzarra* (libretto by Da Ponte) on 15 September. Looking back from a time when operatic aesthetics differed greatly from those of the Josephinian decade, Weigl later blamed the failure of *La caffettiera bizzarra* on its belonging to the wrong genre for the occasion:

In the meantime I wrote another comic opera, *La caffettiera*, which takes place in the Prater. Because no other score was available, it was chosen for performance on the arrival of His Majesty the king of Naples, and it was a complete flop. How could a Prater story be of interest in the presence of such distinguished guests? I must openly admit that neither the book nor the music deserved a better fate, and I still cannot understand how a beginner (which I truly still was) could have been permitted to present such a plot on such a festive occasion.¹¹

Salieri's *Axur*, revived five days later, was evidently deemed more appropriate for this kind of celebration (*Feyerlichkeit*), probably at least in part on account of its having originally served to celebrate Francis's first wedding in 1788. Count Karl von Zinzendorf, the Austrian

bureaucrat whose diary serves as a crucial source of information about Viennese opera, had dismissed *La caffettiera bizzarra* as ‘un tres sot opera’.¹² But at the performance of *Axur* his attention was drawn less to the opera itself than to the very first appearance in the Burgtheater of Joseph’s successor, Leopold, writing ‘To the theatre. *Axur re d’Ormus*. The entire Neapolitan royal family. Our king arrived when Axur is on his throne and was strongly applauded.’¹³ (Leopold here was ‘our king’ rather than ‘our emperor’ because he had not yet been crowned emperor). Salieri’s *Axur* is wicked, and at the end of the opera he prefers to commit suicide to being deposed. Leopold had no wish to be likened to *Axur*. But in one important respect they were the same: they were both kings. That was presumably enough for Zinzendorf to feel the appropriateness of Leopold’s arrival in the royal box while *Axur* (probably portrayed by the great *buffo* Francesco Benucci, who had created the role in 1788) sat in royal splendour on the stage.

Emperor Joseph’s operatic tastes and policies also influenced the choice of operas performed at the election and coronation in Frankfurt—an extremely Vienna-centric repertory that included Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf’s *Der Apotheker und der Doktor*, Salieri’s *Axur*, and Paul Wranitzky’s *Oberon*.¹⁴

Viennese opera of the 1780s was still dominating the repertory of the court theatres in early 1791, a year after Joseph’s death. On a festive day in February on which Leopold evidently pulled out all the stops to impress the king and queen of Naples, the opera clearly represented Josephinian values. The *Gazzetta universale* printed a report from Vienna dated 10 February:

Yesterday, in honour of Their Sicilian Majesties, the court gave a magnificent sleigh ride to Schönbrunn, where there was a splendid dinner attended by many members of the high nobility. On their return, the same procession passed through the principal streets and squares of this city, after which they attended the opera *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Italian Theatre; then they went to the Redoutensaal, where the quality of the assembled guests made this one of the most beautiful spectacles ever seen.¹⁵

Yet seven months later, for the coronation opera in Prague, the Bohemian nobility that commissioned *La clemenza di Tito* conspicuously turned away from the precedent established by Joseph II, with his preference for *opera buffa* and *Singspiel*, specifying instead a genre that Joseph had said he would never use.

In turning to *opera seria*, the Bohemian nobility probably took account of earlier Habsburg coronations in Prague. In 1723, for example, the coronation of Charles VI as king of Bohemia had been celebrated with the splendid production of Johann Joseph Fux's *Costanza e fortezza* on an outdoor stage erected for the occasion just outside Prague Castle. Twenty years later, in May 1743, a setting of Metastasio's libretto *Semiramide* was performed as part of the festivities at the coronation of Maria Theresa as queen of Bohemia. The libretto printed for the occasion mentions no composer; it was probably a *pasticcio*.¹⁶ As an *opera seria*, Leopold's coronation opera represented the continuation of a tradition to which both his grandfather and his mother had contributed.

The Bohemian nobility had yet another reason to celebrate Leopold's coronation with an *opera seria*. Before succeeding his brother in 1790, Leopold had spent twenty-five years in Florence as grand duke of Tuscany. When he and his wife Maria Luisa came to Vienna, they brought with them operatic tastes very different from those of Joseph II. *Opera seria* was an essential part of the theatrical repertory in Florence, as in the rest of Italy: an average of just under four *opere serie* were performed each year in Florence during the 1780s. So it is not really surprising that the transformation of the Viennese theatrical personnel and repertory launched by Leopold in early 1791 was shaped by his Italianate tastes and experience, and included the formation of an *opera seria* troupe. Leopold engaged two of Italy's leading *opera seria* singers, the soprano Cecilia Giuliani and the tenor Vincenzo Maffoli, and he chose the operas in which they were to make their Viennese debuts.¹⁷ A review of the careers of Giuliani and Maffoli shows that they had reached the pinnacle

of Italy's operatic hierarchy, and suggests that Leopold himself was familiar with their singing from their performances in Florence and (in the case of Maffoli) other Tuscan cities.

Cecilia Giuliani trained and began her career at the Ospedale dei Mendicanti in Venice. After singing Latin oratorios for almost a decade in Venice, she entered the secular world of *opera seria* in Florence in 1785, in Angelo Tarchi's *Virginia*. Also in Florence, Giuliani achieved one of her biggest early successes as Semiramide in Alessio Prati's *La vendetta di Nino*, a *melodramma tragico* in which she is struck dead by her son in one of the horrifying final scenes. During the next few years her engagements brought her to the theatres of Venice, Milan, and London, as well as Florence, where she made a triumphant return during Carnival 1791 in Sebastiano Nasolini's *Teseo a Stige* and a revival of *La vendetta di Nino*.

Vincenzo Maffoli had achieved equal fame by the time Leopold engaged him to sing in Vienna. He made his debut in Rome in 1781 and remained a favourite there, returning in 1787 and 1790. But he was also known in Florence and elsewhere in Tuscany; he sang in Florence 1788 and 1791, and in Livorno, Pisa, and Siena. His appearance in Pietro Guglielmi's *Debora e Sisara* in Florence during Lent 1791 was praised in the *Gazzetta toscana*.¹⁸

Maffoli was to sing the role of Sisara once more at least. In the audience in Florence was Emperor Leopold, in Tuscany to supervise the installation of his son Ferdinand as grand duke. Leopold must have been pleased with what he heard in *Debora e Sisara*. Maffoli entered imperial service in Vienna on 1 June 1791. He portrayed Sisara when Guglielmi's *dramma sacro* was presented in Vienna during Lent 1792, the last production before Leopold's death on 1 March of that year.

The third crucial member of Leopold's *opera seria* troupe was Angelo Testori, a *musico* (the most common contemporary term for castrato) who differed from Giuliani and Maffoli in having enjoyed only a short career before singing in Vienna. Evidently he was very

young, and unable to command the huge salaries demanded by leading *musici* such as Luigi Marchesi and Gasparo Pacchierotti. Testori did not join the troupe until October 1791, suggesting that Leopold had trouble finding a first-rate *musico* who was both affordable and willing to move to Vienna.

Leopold's *opera seria* singers made their Viennese debut in the two operas in which Giuliani had starred just a few months earlier in Florence. They celebrated the birthday of Empress Maria Luisa, on 24 November 1791, with a performance of Nasolini's *Teseo a Stige*, followed a few weeks later with Prati's *La vendetta di Nino*.

Although these performances did not take place until more than two months after the coronation in Prague, the preparations for the re-establishment of *opera seria* had begun much earlier in the year. The Bohemian nobility, many of whom had residences in Vienna, and Guardasoni must have been aware of them.

After hiring Giuliani, Maffoli, and Testori, Leopold filled out his *opera seria* troupe with singers from the *opera buffa* troupe already established in the court theatres. Guardasoni did exactly the same in preparation for *La clemenza di Tito*. His contract (carefully analysed by Durante) required him to engage a first rate *musico* and *prima donna* (see Chapter 1, II Document 2). Honouring this stipulation, he brought to Prague the *musico* Domenico Bedini (who portrayed Sesto), and Maria Marchetti Fantozzi (who portrayed Vitellia). But for the rest of the cast the contract allowed him to use singers from his own troupe (including the tenor Antonio Baglioni, who portrayed Tito). Although those singers were most experienced in *opera buffa*—a repertory similar to that of the court theatres in Vienna—they did have some experience with *opera seria*. During the years 1789–91 they were resident in Warsaw, where the repertory included several serious operas.¹⁹

La clemenza di Tito was not the first musical event to take account of and pay tribute to the Italianate tastes of Leopold and his family.

Concerts given in Vienna in April 1791 included excerpts from an *opera seria*. And a celebration that occurred a month before the coronation in Prague also included a staged cantata. Both the concerts in April and the cantata in August anticipated the inauguration of Leopold's *opera seria* troupe; in doing so, they also anticipated certain aspects of Mozart's coronation opera.

On 16 and 17 April 1791 Vienna's Tonkünstler-Societät (Society of Musicians) presented excerpts from Giovanni Paisiello's *Fedra* as part of the regular concerts given near the end of Advent and Lent for the benefit of musicians' widows and orphans. Paisiello wrote *Fedra* for Naples, where it was first performed in 1788. It is based on the same story—the Greek tragedy of Phaedra as recast by Jean Racine—as Nasolini's *Teseo a Stige*, the opera with which Leopold's *opera seria* troupe was to make its debut later in 1791.

The playbill for the Lenten concerts lists three soloists and mentions that one of the arias to be sung was by Mozart:

An excerpt from the opera *Fedra*.

The singers will be:

In the role of Aricia Mad. Lange. [Aloisia Lange]

In the role of Ippolito Herr Kalvesi. [Vincenzo Calvesi]

In the role of Teseo Herr Nenzini. [Santi Nencini]

Chorus

The music is by Johann Paisiello, with the exception of the aria sung by Mad. Lange, which is by Mozart.²⁰

A manuscript collection of music from *Fedra* preserved in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde probably represents the opera as it was performed in the Burgtheater in April 1791: the one aria for Aricia in this collection is Mozart's 'No, che non sei capace', K. 419, written in 1783 for Aloisia Lange to sing in Pasquale Anfossi's *Il curioso indiscreto*.²¹

Surprisingly the poster does not mention the title role of *Fedra*, and the collection of excerpts that includes 'No, che non sei capace' does

not include any of Fedra's music. This suggests the possibility that whoever came up with the idea of performing extracts from *Fedra* originally intended for Cecilia Giuliani to sing the role that she had sung in Nasolini's opera in Florence a few months earlier. She started receiving a salary from the Burgtheater on 1 March 1791, so it would have been reasonable to expect her to be available to sing in Vienna a month and a half later. But perhaps she arrived in Vienna later than expected. Her earliest known performance in imperial employ was in a concert at Laxenburg on 23 June 1791. With Adriana Ferrarese's departure from Vienna at the end of the previous theatrical season, there may have been no singer available in April 1791 who could perform the role of Fedra with the virtuosity and dramatic power that it must have required.

As for the *primo uomo* role of Ippolito, the assignment to Vincenzo Calvesi of this role followed what seems to have been a common practice—where *opera seria* was performed but where *musici*, for one reason or another, were not employed—of entrusting *primo uomo* roles to tenors. Leopold's late engagement of Testori meant that a tenor had to take the role that Paisiello had written for the young, but soon to be famous *musico*, Girolamo Crescentini.

We do not know how or why it was decided to perform excerpts from *Fedra* as part of the Tonkünstler-Societät a few months before *Teseo a Stige* came to the stage of the Burgtheater, but the performances may have served as a kind of trial. Two important questions needed to be answered in view of Leopold's intentions of reintroducing *opera seria* to Vienna. First, how would the Viennese public react to a genre with which it had become unfamiliar? If *Fedra* pleased, *Teseo* was likely to please as well. Second, to which extent was the current opera troupe, basically a comic troupe, capable of performing *opera seria*? Were the voices of Lange, Calvesi, and Nencini big enough, and was their stage presence strong enough to bring them success in *opera seria*? Preliminary answers to these questions

might have been provided by the concerts of April 1791, well before Cecilia Giuliani, Vincenzo Maffoli, and Angelo Testori made their Viennese debuts.

The contract that Guardasoni signed on 8 July 1791 (see Chapter 1, II Document 2) required that he find 'a famous composer' to write the opera to celebrate Leopold's coronation in Prague. Travelling quickly to Vienna, he first offered the commission to the Hofkapellmeister Salieri, but he turned it down. It was evidently only after Salieri declined the commission that Guardasoni turned to Mozart.²²

Salieri later explained, in a letter to Prince Anton Esterházy (see Chapter 1, II Document 3), that he was exceptionally busy during the summer of 1791 attending to the day-to-day affairs of the court theatres, because his protégé Joseph Weigl, who normally attended to such matters, was occupied in the composition of a cantata for the prince. It was Salieri's activities in the court theatres that forced him to refuse to compose the coronation opera for Prague. The only reason that Prince Esterházy commissioned Weigl to write a cantata was that the prince's Kapellmeister, Haydn, was in London. Haydn's absence was thus indirectly responsible for Mozart's receiving the commission for *La clemenza di Tito*.

The cantata that Weigl wrote for Prince Esterházy, *Venere e Adone*, was performed on 3 August 1791, as part of a three-day series of festivities celebrating the installation of Anton Esterházy as the new prince—the successor to Prince Nicholas, who had died the previous year. This installation was the princely equivalent to a coronation, and the festivities surrounding it analogous to those surrounding a coronation.²³ Such festivities demanded opera, which put the new prince in a difficult position, since he had dismissed his father's opera troupe soon after Nicholas's death. He turned, in response, to the Viennese court opera—not only for a composer, but also for singers.

The libretto booklet printed for the occasion emphasised the presence of the imperial court in the full title: *Venere e Adone, cantata*

da rappresentarsi alla presenza dell'imperial corte. Furthermore, it names not only Weigl as composer, and Giovanni Battista Casti as librettist, but also Pietro Travaglia as stage designer. Although Weigl, in describing the occasion, mentioned Archduke Francis, Emperor Leopold's oldest son, as the only member of the imperial family to be invited, other accounts make it clear that Prince Esterházy had hoped to entertain the entire imperial family, but that the emperor himself had declined the invitation. Yet Weigl must have welcomed this opportunity to redeem himself before the court after the failure of *La caffettiera bizzarra* less than twelve months earlier:

Francis, at that time crown prince, was invited to a great celebration given at Esterháza by Prince Anton Esterházy. I had received a commission from the prince to write the grand cantata *Venere ed Adone* and to supervise the entire production, since Kapellmeister Haydn was at that time in London. I took care of everything—the singers, the chorus, the ballet troupe—and the cantata was performed at Esterháza with great splendour and to the satisfaction of the members of the imperial family; and we were all generously rewarded by the prince.²⁴

From a report in the *Wiener Zeitung* we learn that all four soloists belonged to the court theatre in Vienna. So did the three singers who participated in the performance of extracts from Paisiello's *Fedra* a few months earlier, as did Cecilia Giuliani, who instead of being conspicuously absent, was now part of the cast:

Regarding the recent celebration at Esterháza, all accounts agree that in the series of amusements that distinguished themselves in organisation, taste, and beauty and competed with one another to delight those attending, the cantata performed on this occasion, *Venus and Adonis* (*Venere e Adone*), won first prize. The libretto is by Herr Abate Casti, the music by Herr Joseph Weigl, in the service of the National Court Theatre—music honoured by Their Highnesses the archdukes as well as by the high nobility and other guests with the loudest applause, which it also received from connoisseurs of music. The cast consisted of four members of the Viennese court theatre: Demoiselle [Cecilia]

Giuliani, Madame [Dorothea] Bussani, and Herrn [Vincenzo] Calvesi and [Valentin] Adamberger.²⁵

Note that the cast (like that of *Fedra* in Vienna) did not include a *musico*. The two male characters in *Venere e Adone* are Adone (Venere's young lover) and Marte (Venere's older husband). Calvesi presumably created the *primo uomo* role of Adone (taking the place of the *musico* for whom this role seems appropriate); the older singer Adamberger presumably sang the *secondo uomo* role of Marte. That a tenor took the role designed for a castrated singer reflects the continued absence of a *musico* from the Viennese troupe.

Another report, in the *Gazzetta universale* of Florence, contains more information about the staging of *Venere e Adone*, its reception, and the rewards received by some of the participants. We learn that this was Giuliani's debut 'on these stages', presumably meaning theatres in and near Vienna. The *Gazzetta universale* also emphasises the importance of Travaglia's scenery: this cantata was obviously no mere concert piece (and in this regard greatly differed from the performance of excerpts from *Fedra* earlier in the year):

It is worth reporting the contents of a letter from Esterháza in Hungary, dated 8 August, which mentions the splendid festivities given by Prince Esterházy [starting] on 2 August to celebrate the sacred memory of the favours granted by Leopold II. Although His Majesty, due to his pressing occupations, was unable to attend, the festivities were attended by the whole royal family, accompanied by one hundred members of the Viennese nobility, as well as by 600 members of the Hungarian nobility, who enjoyed three days of continuous entertainment. On the first day, shortly after the arrival of the court, a cantata entitled *Venere e Adone* was given in the theatre. The poetry by Signor Abate Casti and the wonderful music by the young Signor Giuseppe Weigl, presently in the service of the theatre of His Imperial Majesty, earned unanimous applause. Signora Giuliani, appearing for the first time on these stages, met the expectations with which she had been justifiably acclaimed. She lacked none of those things that one expects in a great singer. After the first performance, she was immediately rewarded with a gorgeous

diamond ring and 500 zecchini, and all the others who contributed to the success of the festivity received equal recompense. The scenery, the costumes, and the machines all worked together, because everything was under the excellent direction of Signora Giuliani's brother. In the final scene, several of these machines lowered various clouds, which the characters enter; rising again in view of the audience, the clouds reveal the stage, transformed into a ballroom. The royal court and the other spectators applauded this transformation, whose inventor received as a gift a snuffbox with 200 zecchini.²⁶

Although this account names Giuliani's brother Francesco as having supervised the entire production, the 'inventor' of the stunning scene change at the end of *Venere e Adone* was, according to the libretto booklet, Travaglia. He must have left Esterháza shortly after pocketing this reward as a month later he was supervising the scenery for *La clemenza di Tito* in Prague.

Venere e Adone is a large-scale, elaborately staged music drama in two parts that might take ninety minutes in performance. It differs from an *opera seria* only in being slightly shorter than a typical late eighteenth-century *dramma per musica*, in having a cast of four, instead of the six or seven soloists demanded by most *drammi per musica*, and in lacking a part for a *musico*. With an audience made up of members of the imperial family and the Viennese and Hungarian aristocracy, its performance near Vienna must have been understood as a response to Leopold's ongoing preparations for the restoration of *opera seria* to the Viennese court theatres. It was a kind of preview of the performances that the imperial troupe would begin later in 1791. *La clemenza di Tito* could have been interpreted along the same lines.

Since the first performances of *Venere e Adone* and *La clemenza di Tito* took place only a little more than a month apart, it is not too surprising that only a single person—Travaglia—contributed to both productions. But that should not prevent us from thinking of both of these works as responses to Leopold's reorganisation of the court theatres, and in particular of his reintroduction of *opera seria* to Vienna.

Thinking of them in this way suggests the possibility that Weigl and Mozart as composers, Casti and Mazzolà as librettists, and Travaglia as stage designer shared some of the same motivations in contributing to these works. All of them stood to benefit from demonstrating to Leopold their abilities to contribute effectively to his *opera seria* troupe.

Let us conclude by returning to where we started, Paris, and with yet another operatic performance in 1791—a performance that reminds us once again of the political context in which *La clemenza di Tito* was conceived and performed, and that can give us insights into the thoughts and feelings with which its first audience perceived it. About two and a half months before Mozart's opera was first performed on Leopold's coronation day, King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette had fled Paris, but had been stopped at Varennes and returned to virtual imprisonment in the Tuileries Palace. On 20 September, two weeks after Leopold and his family attended *La clemenza di Tito* in Prague, Louis and Marie Antoinette attended a performance of Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*, heavily revised by Pierre-Joseph Candeille, to mark the proclamation of the new French Constitution. According to a royalist newspaper, 'The king was deeply moved by the welcome given him by the people, previously depicted to him as a mass of savages and regicides'.²⁷ An Englishman in the audience noted: 'One verse, *Régnez sur un peuple fidèle* [Reign over a faithful people], was encored, and amazingly clapped'.²⁸

Fire plays as important a role in *Castor et Pollux* as in *La clemenza di Tito*. Madame de Staël wrote of that evening in her *Considérations sur la Révolution française*: 'When the furies were dancing and shaking their torches, and the brilliance of the fire illuminated the whole auditorium, I saw the face of the king and queen in the dim glow of this imitation of the inferno, and I was seized by melancholy forebodings of the future'.²⁹ This was the last time the royal family attended the Opéra. A year later the National Assembly abolished the constitutional monarchy and ordered the king to be arrested. Found guilty

of high treason, he was executed in January 1793. Nine months later, Marie Antoinette followed him to the guillotine.

Notes

1. Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 3 vols. (Paris: H. Fournier, 1835–7) I, 194.
2. [Pierre] Corneille, *Cinna ou la Clémence d'Auguste, tragédie* (Paris: Toussaint Quinet, 1643), Act V, scene 3.
3. Pietro Metastasio, *La clemenza di Tito, dramma per musica, da rappresentarsi nella cesarea corte* (Vienna: Gio. Pietro Van Ghelen, 1734), Act III, scene 13.
4. 'Der jetzige König war noch nicht im Theater, hatte noch keine Musik bei sich, noch sonst ein Merkmal von Liebhaberei zur Musik gezeigt. Malum signum schreien unsere Afterpropheten. Allein ich denke, wenn einmal die Riesengebürge von Staatsgeschäften, die auf seinen Schultern liegen, werden zu Sandhügeln abgeebnet seyn, wenn er seinen Staaten den goldnen Frieden wird wieder geschenkt haben, daß alsdann auch das goldene Zeitalter für die Musik eine neue Periode bei uns haben wird' ('Auszug eines Schreibens aus Wien vom 5ten Jul. 1790', *Musikalische Korrespondenz der teutschen filharmonischen Gesellschaft*, 28 July 1790, cols. 27–31; reprinted in Rudolph Angermüller, *Antonio Salieri: Sein Leben und seine Welt unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner großen Opern*, 3 vols. (Munich: Katzbichler, 1971–74), III, 55.
5. See John A. Rice, 'Emperor and Impresario: Leopold II and the Transformation of Viennese Theater, 1790–1792', PhD dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, 1987).
6. Hieronymus Löschenkohl, *Beschreibung der Huldigungsfeyerlichkeiten seiner königlichen apostolischen Majestät Leopolds II. Königs von Ungarn und Böhmeim, Erzherzogs von Österreich, welche von den Nieder-Oesterreichischen Landständen zu Wien am 6ten April 1790 gehalten wurden* (Vienna: Löschenkohl, 1790).
7. Sergio Durante, 'The Chronology of Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* Reconsidered', *Music and Letters*, LXXX (1999), 560–94. On the

genesis of the opera, see also Chapter 1, II Documents 1–3, 6, 17, 19, 21, 22 and 24.

8. '[...] la puissance de cette monarchie'. (Kaunitz to Joseph, Mariahilf, 22 July 1781, in Adolf Beer, ed., *Joseph II., Leopold II. und Kaunitz: Ihr Briefwechsel* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1873), 91).

9. 'À l'égard de l'Opera serieux d'Italie c'est trop tard de se procurer quelque chose de bon et c'est d'ailleurs un spectacle si ennuyant que je ne crois pas jamais en faire usage'. (Joseph to Kaunitz, Versailles, 31 July 1781, in *ibid.*, 101).

10. Dexter Edge, 'Mozart's Reception in Vienna, 1787–1791', in *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Essays on His Life and His Music*, ed. Stanley Sadie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 66–117, esp. 88–93.

11. 'Ich schrieb indessen eine andere comische Oper *La Caffettiera*, welche im Pratter spielte. Sie wurde, weil sonst keine andere Partitur vorhanden war, bey Ankunft S. M. des Königs von Neapel zur Aufführung bestimmt und fiel allgemein durch. Wie konnte auch eine Pratter Geschichte bey Anwesenheit so hoher Gäste interessieren. Ich muß offenherzig gestehen, sowohl Buch als Musick hat kein besseres Schicksal verdient und ich kann noch nicht begreifen, wie man hat gestatten können, eine solche Handlung von einem Anfänger (denn das war ich noch im strengsten Verstande) zu so einer Feyerlichkeit aufzuführen'. (Rudolph Angermüller, 'Zwei Selbstbiographien von Joseph Weigl (1766–1846)', in *Deutsches Jahrbuch der Musikwissenschaft* 16 (1971), 46–85, esp. 55).

12. Dorothea Link, *The National Court Theatre in Mozart's Vienna: Sources and Documents, 1783–1792* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 362.

13. 'Au Spectacle. *Axur, Re d'Ormus*. Toute la famille royale et Napolitaine. Notre roi y arriva quand Axur est sur son trone, et fut fortemment applaudi'. *Ibid.*, 363.

14. [Heinrich August Ottokar] Reichard, *Theater-Kalender auf das Jahr 1790* (Gotha: Carl Wilhelm Ettinger, [1789]), 276.

15. 'Jeri in contemplazione delle LL. MM. Siciliane la Corte dette una superba corsa di Slitte fino a Schombrun, ove fu gran pranzo con molti

altri Personaggi di questa primaria Nobilità. Nel ritorno passarono tutti col medesimo treno per le principali strade, e piazze di questa Città, dopo di che si trasferirono all'Opera in Musica le *Nozze di Figarò* al Teatro Italiano; quindi intervennero alla Sala del Ridotto, ove per la scelta delle persone concorse, lo Spettacolo riescì dei più belli, che si potessero mai vedere' (*Gazzetta univernale* XVIII/16 (22 February 1791), published with commentary in Dexter Edge, 'The Habsburg Court and Guests Attend *Le nozze di Figaro*', in *Mozart: New Documents*, ed. Dexter Edge and David Black, first published 12 June 2014, accessed 16 June 2014. <https://sites.google.com/site/mozartdocuments/>

16. Milada Jonášová, 'Semiramide riconosciuta—opera k pražské korunovaci Marie Terezie 1743', *Barokní Praha – barokní Čechie 1620–1740: Sborník příspěvků z vědecké konference o fenoménu baroka v Čechách, Praha, Anežský klášter a Clam-Gallasův palác, 24.-27. září 2001* (Prague: Scriptorium, 2004), 19–68.

17. Rice, 'Emperor and Impresario' (1987), 254–304.

18. *Gazzetta toscana* XXVI/16 (1791), 63. Article dated 16 April.

19. See Ian Woodfield, *Performing Operas for Mozart: Impresarios, Singers and Troupes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), which places the Guardasoni troupe's performances of Mozart's operas within the context of a migratory existence through which it contributed to the operatic life of Leipzig and Warsaw as well as Prague; and John A. Rice, 'Antonio Baglioni, Mozart's First Don Ottavio and Tito, in Italy and Prague', in *Böhmische Aspekte des Lebens und des Werkes von W. A. Mozart*, ed. Milada Jonášová and Tomislav Volek (Prague: Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, 2012), 295–321. Anna Ryszka-Komarnicka, 'From Venice to Warsaw: *Zenobia e di Palmira* by Sertor and Anfossi Performed by Guardasoni's Troupe (1791)', in *Mozart in Prague: Essays on Performance, Patronage, Sources and Receptions*, ed. Kathryn L. Libin (Prague: Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, 2016), 295–310.

20. The playbill is illustrated in the article 'Vienna' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, Macmillan, London, 1980.

21. Ludwig Köchel, *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amadé Mozarts*, 6th edition (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1964), 419.

22. John A. Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 505–7.

23. For an account of the entire series of festivities, see *Wiener Zeitung*, 64 (10 August 1791), 2069–70.

24. ‘Der damahlige Kronprinz Erzherzog Franz war zu einem grossen Feste nach Esterhaz zu dem Fürsten Anton Esterhazy eingeladen. Ich hatte von dem Fürsten den Auftrag, eine grosse Cantate *Venere ed Adone* zu schreiben und ganz für die Aufführung alles zu besorgen, da Kapellmeister Haydn zu dieser Zeit in London war. Ich besorgte alles, die Sänger, Chor, Baletgesellschaft, und die Cantate wurde in Esterhaz mit aller Pracht und zur Friedenheit der anwesenden allerhöchsten Herrschaften gegeben und wir alle von dem Fürsten reichlich belohnt’. Angermüller, ‘Zwei Selbstbiographien’ (1971), 55.

25. ‘In Ansehung der zu Esterhaz jüngst gewesenen Freudenfeste stimmen alle darüber eingegangenen Berichte überein, daß, unter der Reihe von abwechselnden Ergötzlichkeiten, welche durch Ordnung, Geschmack und Schönheit sich so vorzüglich auszeichneten, und gleichsam um die Zufriedenheit der Anwesenden wetteiferten, die bey dieser Gelegenheit aufgeführte Cantate: Venus und Adonis, den Preis errungen habe. Die Poesie derselben ist vom Hrn. Abbate Casti, die Musik aber von dem Hrn. Joseph Weigl, in Diensten des Nationalhoftheaters, welche von der Erzherzoge KK. HH. sowohl, als von dem anwesenden hohen Adel und den übrigen Gästen dieses Festes mit dem lautesten Beyfall den sie von Kennern der Tonkunst auch ganz vorzüglich erhielt, beehrt ward. Das spielende Personale bestand aus 4 Mitgliedern des Wiener Hoftheaters, der Demoiselle Giuliani, der Madame Bussani, und den Herren Calvesi und Adamberger’. *Wiener Zeitung*, 65 (13 August 1791), 2102–3.

26. ‘Merita di esser riportata una lettera pervenutaci da Esztherazy in Ungheria in data del dì 8. del corrente, in cui si fa menzione delle grandiose feste date da quel Principe Regnante Esztherazy nel dì 2. per solennizzare la fausta memoria delle beneficenze compartite da Leopoldo II. Non potendo intervenirvi la M. S. per le grandi occupazioni vennero esse onorate da tutta la R. Famiglia col seguito di cento Nobili Viennesi, oltre i mille 600. Nobili Ungaresi, i quali passarono tre giorni in continovi divertimenti. Nel primo appena che fu arrivata la Corte, si dette lo

spettacolo al Teatro, ove si rappresentò una Cantata col titolo di *Venere, e Adone*. La poesia del Sig. Abate Casti, e la superba musica del giovine Sig. Giuseppe Weigel all'attual servizio del Teatro di S. M. Cesarea ottenne un generale incontro. La Sig. Giuliani per la prima volta, che si è fatta sentire sopra questi Teatri corrispose a quella aspettazione, colla quale viene giustamente decantata, non mancandole cos' alcuna delle molte, che si richiedono in una abilissima Cantatrice. Terminata la prima recita, ebbe subito in dono da quel Principe un superbo anello di brillanti, e 500. zecchini, e tutti gli altri Soggetti, che cooperarono al buon' esito della festa vennero egualmente ricompensati. Le decorazioni, il vestiario, e le macchine erano tutte analoghe, e ben' intese, poichè la direzione del fratello della Sig. Giuliani fu ottima e sorprendente. Nell' ultima scena varie di dette macchine si videro calare involte in diverse nubi, che riempiendosi dei personaggi, e rimontando in aria a vista del pubblico, rapportarono il palco scenico, e fecero comparire una sala da ballo. La R. Corte, e gli spettatori applaudirono questa trasformazione, e l'inventore ebbe in regalo una tabacchiera d'oro con 200. zecchini'. *Gazzetta universale* XVIII/71 (3 September 1791), 566; article dated Vienna, 22 August.

27. 'Le roi a été pénétré de l'accueil que le peuple, qu'on lui avoit présenté comme un composé d'hommes féroces et de régicides, lui a fait'. *Chronique de Paris* IV/265 (23 September 1791), 1072.

28. Sir Samuel Romilly, *Memoirs*, 2nd edition, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1840), I, 436.

29. 'Au moment où les Furies dansaient en secouant leurs flambeaux, et où cet éclat d'incendie se répandait dans toutes la salle, je vis le visage du roi et de la reine à la pâle lueur de cette imitation des enfers, et des pressentiments funestes sur l'avenir me saisirent'. Madame de Staël, *Considération sur la Révolution Française*, 2 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, 1862), I, 337–8.