

## 6 Stage Directions and Set Design in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*

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In this essay I will examine the mise-en-scène of the 1791 Prague production of *La clemenza di Tito*. Beginning with an examination of the sets and their importance for understanding Mozart's score and his use of the stage, I will then apply the results to a broader discussion of aesthetic dimensions within the opera.<sup>1</sup>

### The Stage Sets and their Importance in Prague 1791

It has long been known that the main set designer for the Prague production of *La clemenza di Tito* was the Milanese Pietro Travaglia, a pupil of the famous Galliari brothers, Bernardino and Fabrizio (see Chapter 1, II Document 7). The most important source documenting Travaglia's work is the so-called 'Travaglia sketchbook', preserved today in the National Széchényi Library in Budapest. The book, which had been in private possession before it arrived at the Budapest library in the 1950s, includes a number of scenographic sketches at different stages of completion and many miscellaneous notes.<sup>2</sup> It was a main source for Horányi Mátyás in his book devoted to the theatrical productions of the court of Esterháza.<sup>3</sup> Travaglia, like Joseph Haydn, spent most of his professional life at Esterháza, until the death of Prince Nikolaus I in 1790, when the musical activities at the court were scaled down or discontinued altogether:<sup>4</sup> circumstances which

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apparently allowed Travaglia to accept a commission for the 1791 Prague production.<sup>5</sup>

The last two of the twelve sketches in part one of Travaglia's sketchbook can be attributed to the production of *La clemenza di Tito*. Horányi published only one of the two, while the second, which is the one more obviously related to Mozart's opera, remained unpublished until 1994. Travaglia's handwritten caption beneath the sketch reads: 'Sala ter[r]ena destinata per le pubbliche udienze' ('A ground-floor hall intended for public hearings'), which mirrors the caption in the libretto of *La clemenza di Tito* (Act II, scene 5): 'Gran sala destinata alle pubbliche udienze. Trono, sedia, e tavolino' ('A grand hall intended for public hearings. A throne, a chair and a table').<sup>6</sup> This is particularly significant since the libretto caption is not taken from Pietro Metastasio's original: it is unique to the Prague production.<sup>7</sup> Caterino Mazzola's decision (and/or conceivably Mozart's) to introduce a choral piece at this point, the aria with chorus 11. 'Ah grazie si rendano', called for a change of Metastasio's scenic layout, with its 'closed chamber'. Travaglia's caption marks a contrast between the restricted, private space of Metastasio's original and the grander ceremonial space that will host a crowd scene.

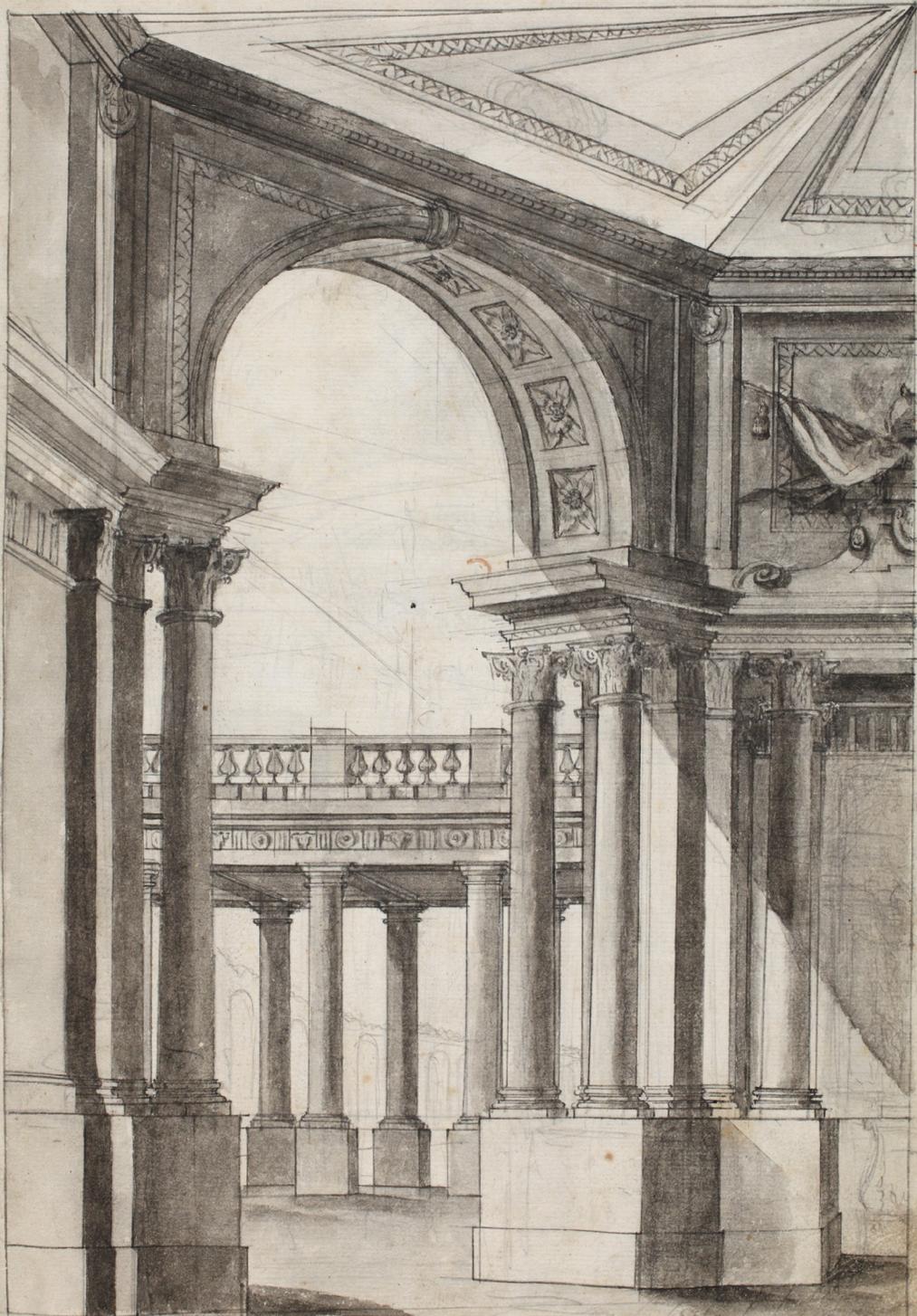
It is necessary to understand the function of such stage designs here. According to the renowned historian of scenography, Mercedes Viale Ferrero, the stage designs in Travaglia's sketchbook are 'disegni esecutivi', i.e. designs made for the scene painters, who would have used them as guidelines when creating the sets, consisting of the *quinte* (flat wings), the *principali* (backdrops), and the *carri* ('carriages', solid set pieces on which it was possible to walk when needed), which together created the illusion of a three-dimensional space. Therefore, Travaglia's images should not be regarded as reproductions documenting the appearance of the actual sets, but rather as directions for the painters. A degree of imagination is required to guess what the scene painting might have actually looked like, because many details are only alluded

to, and because modifications would have been made as the production evolved. Many details of the designs are lightly sketched, responsibility for their definition being left to the painters, who usually worked under the supervision of the set designer. While the designs give us a fairly good idea of the intended architectural style, leaning away from the decorative Baroque towards the clarity of neoclassicism, they hold important implications and suggestions about the use of the stage by the actor-singers, and especially by the chorus. Image 6.1 shows Travaglia's sketch for the 'great hall for public hearings' in Act II.

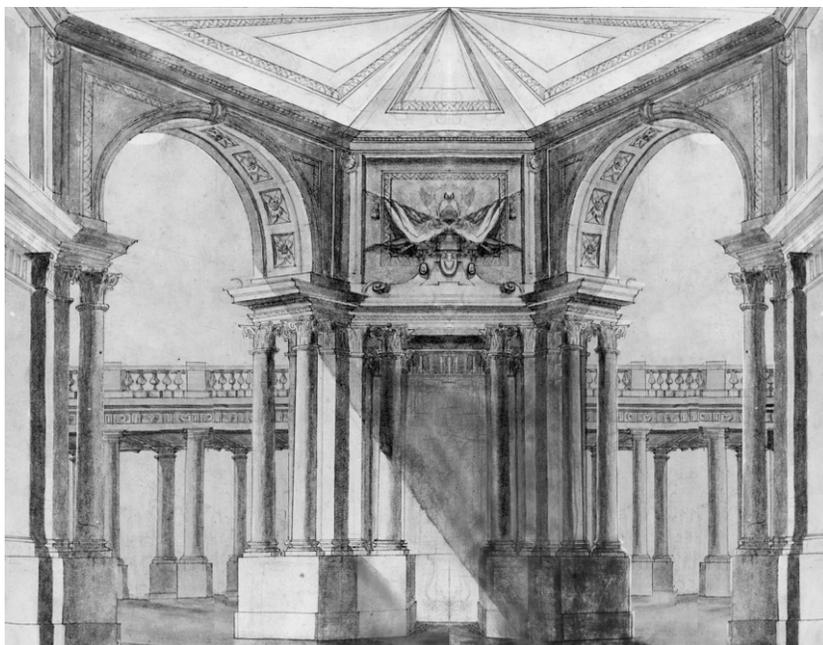
The sketch represents only the left half of a symmetric set. It would not have made sense for Travaglia to duplicate the right side of his design: though easily accomplished today by a computer, it would have been a laborious operation at the time. The complete set would have looked more or less like the reconstruction in Image 6.2, with the appropriate correction of the shadows, which were themselves usually painted on the backdrops.

This image contains the directions for two successive sets, one using approximately half of the stage space towards the proscenium, while the other is a 'long set', occupying the whole stage. The 'long' set would have been used for the second finale, discussed in greater detail below, and therefore, only the front part of the image corresponds to the 'great hall', which uses only half of the stage space. Of course, our imaginations should add a throne in the middle, and, probably laterally, a writing table. The two arches must have been used for the entries and exits of the actors from different sides. While the 'great hall for public hearings' was seen, the rear section of the set must have been curtained off or hidden from view by means of an intermediate backdrop.

**Image 6.1.** P. Travaglia, *Sala ter[r]ena destinata per le pubbliche udienze*, Pietro Travaglia's Sketchbook, f. 11. Published with permission from the copyright owner/holder, the Collection of Theatre History at the Hungarian National Széchényi Library, Budapest. Access. Nr. 1955/9645. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.



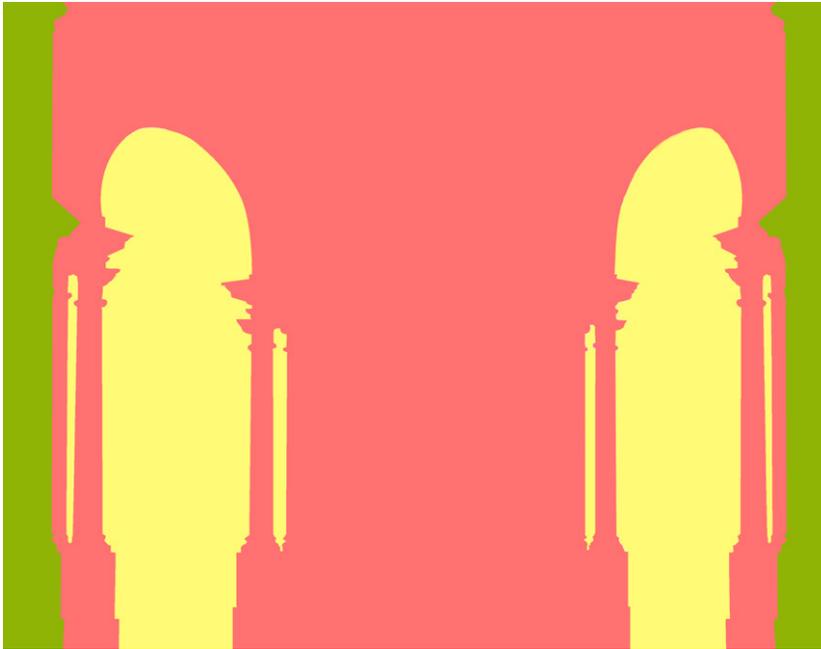
Sala Terrena Destinata per le Pubbliche Lezioni Pietro Tacchini



**Image 6.2.** Symmetrical duplication of the design in Image 1 (with corrected shadows). Designed by Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Reproduced with permission from the copyright owners/holders, Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.

According to scenography historian Maria Ida Biggi, the technical realisation of the great hall might have included two wings and a single pierced backdrop (*principale traforato*) with *trompe l'oeil* effect, as outlined in Image 6.3.

The next set would have been revealed by raising the main backdrop, and the intermediate element that obscures the view of the rear stage. This corresponds to the final scene change in the opera: Act II, scene 14. Clearly intending a *coup de théâtre*, Mozart devised a musical transition for this, from the end of Vitellia's rondo 23. 'Non più di fiori' into the magnificent chorus 24. 'Che del ciel, che degli Dei'. The caption in the libretto introducing the scene reads:

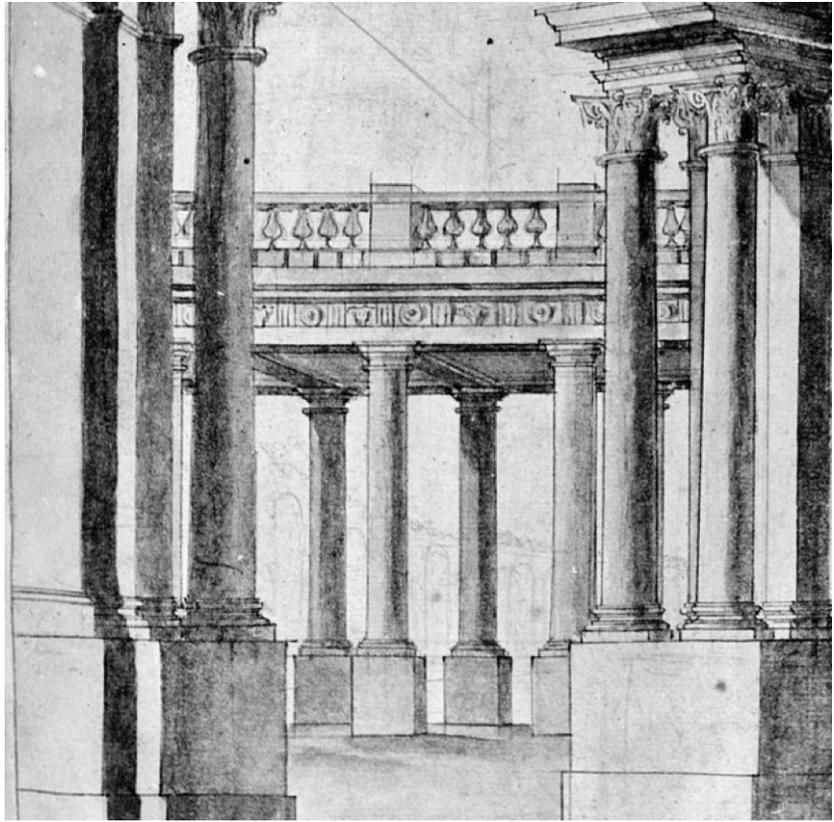


**Image 6.3.** Hypothetical realisation of the scenographic elements. Designed by Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Reproduced with permission from the copyright owners/holders, Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.

Luogo magnifico, che introduce a vasto anfiteatro, da cui per diversi archi scuopresi la parte interna. Si vedranno già nell'arena i complici della congiura condannati alle fiere.<sup>8</sup>

(A magnificent site leading into a vast amphitheatre the interior of which can be seen through a number of arches. The conspiratorial accomplices, condemned to the beasts, are already seen standing in the arena.)

Image 6.4 magnifies the rear section of the sketch, revealing the 'magnificent site' and the amphitheatre, which are only lightly defined in the design.



**Image 6.4.** Detail of the set design, showing the rear of the stage. Designed by Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Reproduced with permission from the copyright owners/holders Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.

The amphitheatre in particular is only faintly suggested, meant to be completed by the painters. This scene might have been realised with two wings in the front (possibly keeping those from the previous set), a pierced backdrop in the middle (through which the conspirators may be seen), and a *trompe l'oeil* backdrop in the back. Image 6.5 suggests how this may have been designed.<sup>9</sup>



**Image 6.5.** Hypothetical realisation of the long set. Designed by Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Reproduced with permission from the copyright owners/holders, Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.

This conjectural reconstruction is not without its problems. There is a clear imbalance between the lower space of the set and the empty upper space. Moreover, the illusionistic scenography had to accommodate the actual proportions of the human bodies on stage. It is conceivable therefore that the actual sets were larger in proportion. It is also possible that the upper space was re-balanced through the introduction of decorative elements. Interestingly, Travaglia's solution recalls that of his teachers, Bernardino and Fabrizio Galliari, for *Enea nel Lazio*, which had been produced in Turin thirty years earlier in 1760.<sup>10</sup>

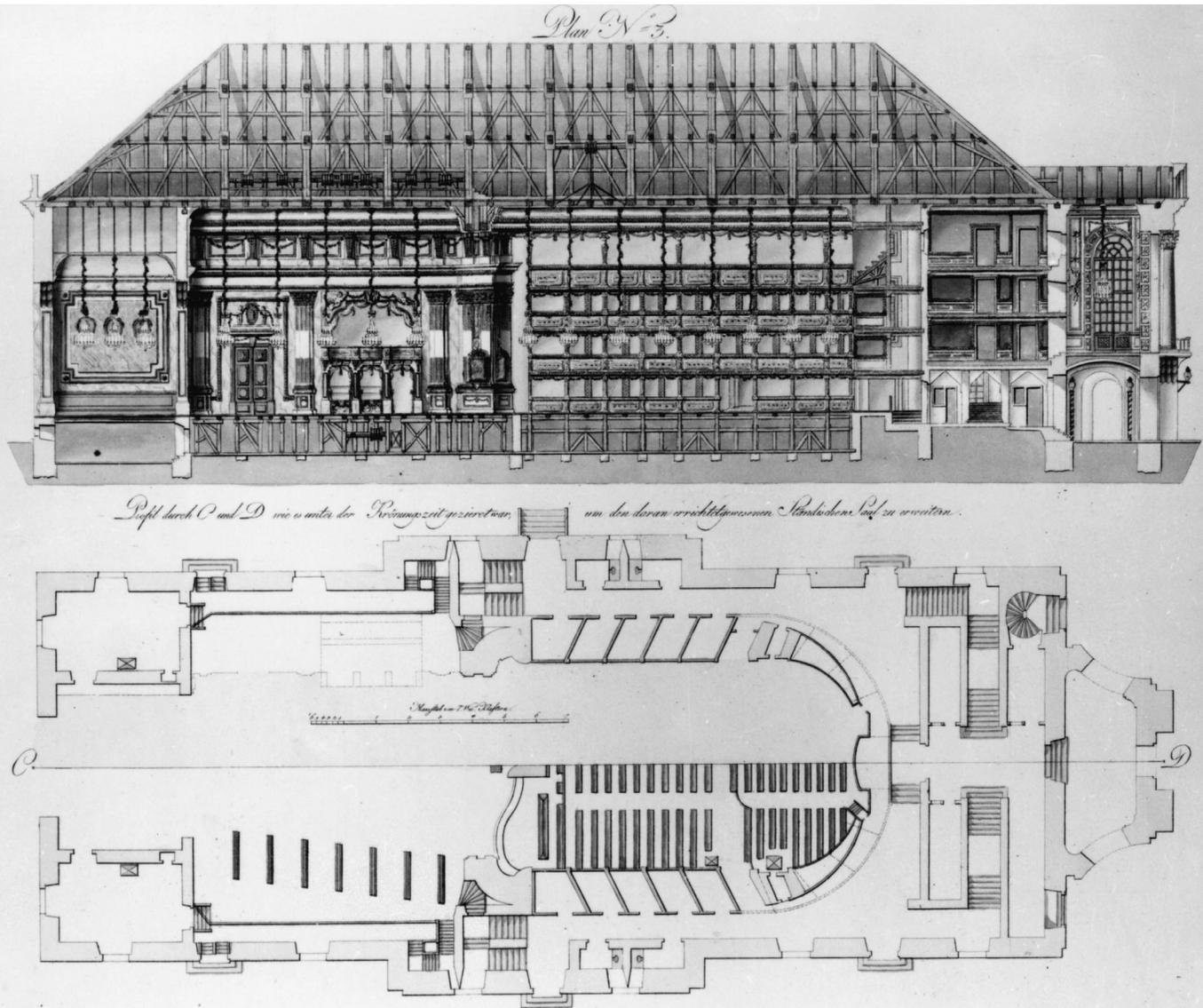
We can never be certain how the stage really looked, but the evidence shows that there was a direct functional relationship between the organisation of the stage and the character of the music. The change of sets between the more restricted half-stage of the 'hall for public hearings' and the full stage of the 'magnificent site leading into a vast amphitheatre', for example, perfectly matches the uninterrupted transition from Vitellia's exit solo, rondo 23., to chorus 24. That is, from the stylised depiction of individualised self-awareness and repentance, to the collective celebration of the Handelian-style chorus, which takes place within a monumental public space. The libretto prescribes what was to happen on stage regarding the movement of soloists, choristers and extras, in words that are almost exactly similar to the ones in the original Metastasio:

Nel tempo, che si canta il coro, preceduto da' littori, circondato da' senatori, e patrizi romani, e seguito da' pretoriani esce Tito, e dopo Annio, e Servilia da diverse parti.<sup>11</sup>

(While the chorus is sung, Titus enters, preceded by the lictors, surrounded by senators and Roman patricians, and followed by praetorians; later, Annius and Servilia enter from different sides.)

Clearly, in this crucial passage the *coup de théâtre* relies as much on the 'sublimity' of the music as on the visual apparatus.

The conditions of the venue of the original production have a bearing on the next scene. Since 1791, Count Nostitz's National Theatre (the Estates Theatre today) has undergone various renovations, details of which are only partly known to us. Documents from about the same time as the production give an indication of the disposition of the spaces. Prints by Philipp and Franz Heger show the theatre as being very large, and that the depth of the stage was similar to that of the auditorium.<sup>12</sup> Image 6.6, the engraving by Johann Berka after plans by Philipp and Franz Heger, shows that the stage had seven pairs of wings and a back extension.



**Image 6.6.** Section and plan of Count Nostitz's National Theatre, Prague, 1793. Copper plate engraving by Johann Berka, after Philipp and Franz Heger. Reproduced with permission from the copyright owner/holder, AKG images / TT Nyhetsbyrå. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.

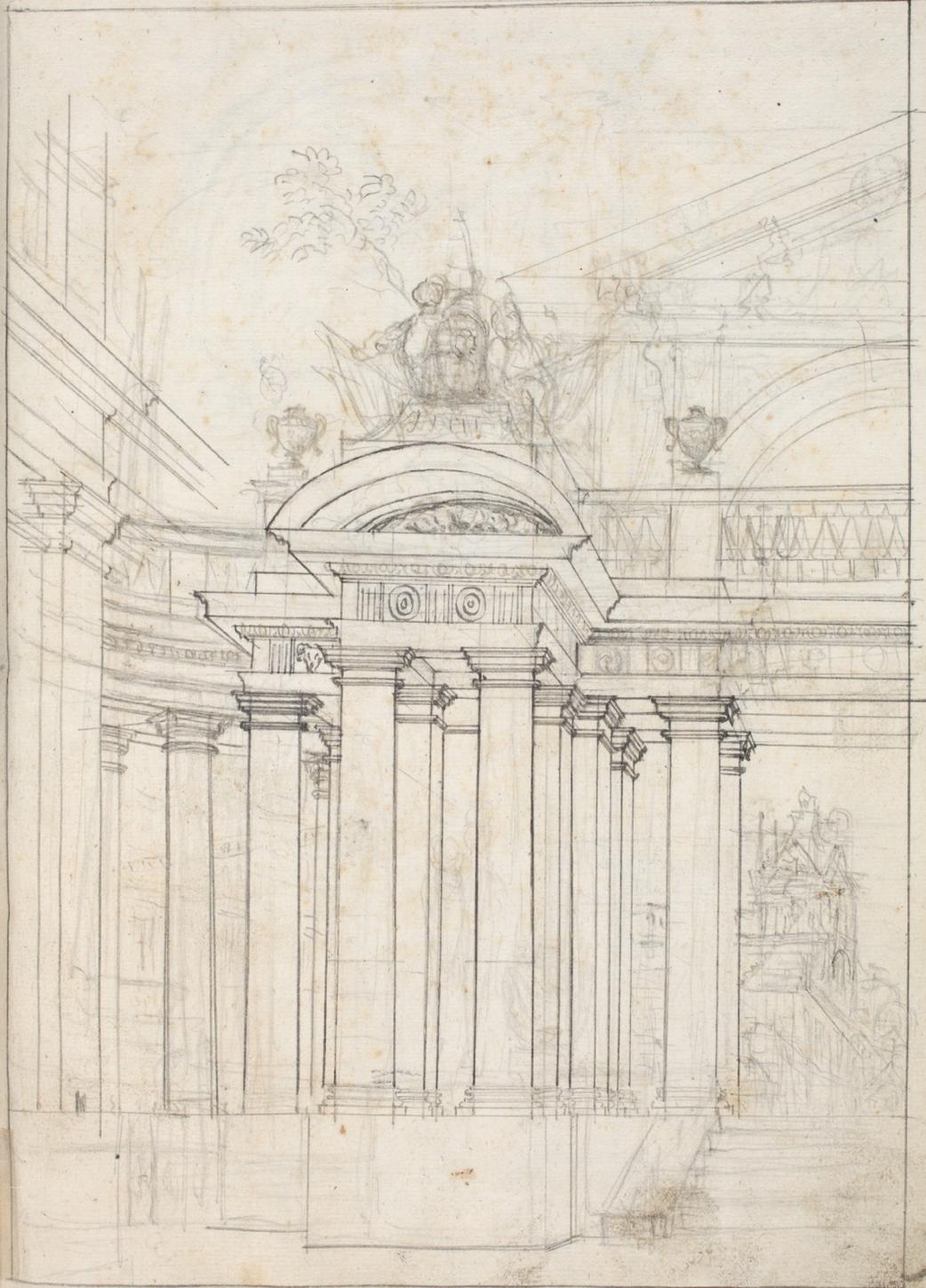
On 12 September 1791, a week after the premiere of *La clemenza di Tito*, a ‘coronation ball’ was held in the theatre, which was transformed into a single ballroom of huge dimensions—or at least it was intended to appear so for the occasion, the ball probably being a socially more important event than the coronation opera. The decoration of the space is documented both on the prints of the Hegers and on Caspar Pluth’s re-elaborated water-colour version of the print, which includes human images.<sup>13</sup>

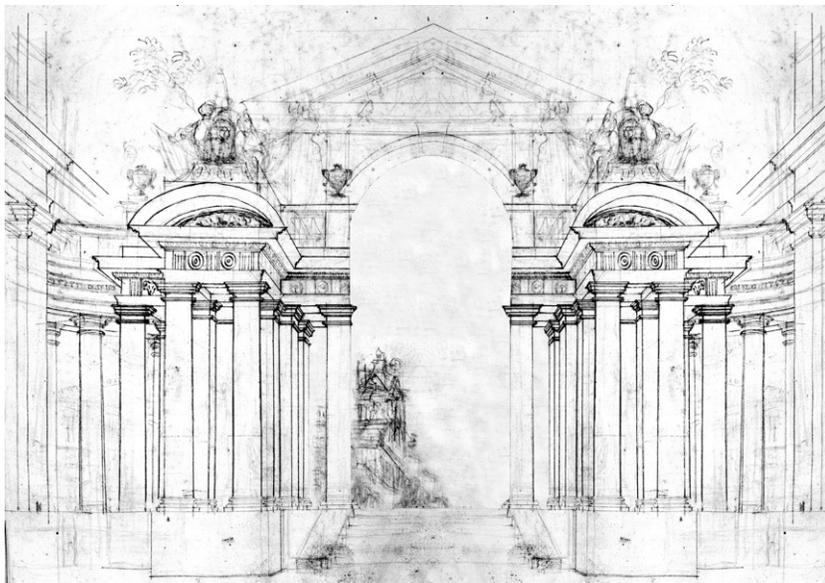
Anyone visiting the cosy Estates Theatre in Prague today will realise that the purpose of the prints was to amplify the true dimensions of the space, to enhance the sense of *grandeur* associated with the social and political import of the coronation festivities. Franz Alexander von Kleist—who was one of the few commentators who reported positively on the premiere of *La clemenza di Tito* (see Chapter 1, II Document 13)—also gives a description of both the coronation ball and the lavish ornamentation of the space.<sup>14</sup>

This historical context explains to some degree why the impresario Domenico Guardasoni was faced with extra costs for the new stage sets for *La clemenza di Tito*, and why these expenses were eventually reimbursed (see Chapter 1, II Documents 2 and 16). The show had to meet the expectations of the occasion, whatever the cost.

Travaglia’s second design is linked to the first one because of its contiguous position and its decorative detail, the bucranes and metopes being unique to the two designs within the sketchbook. Image 6.7 shows the second design, which is more problematic than the first one because it transmits two overlapping versions: one that is more ‘finished’, with a flat balcony, and a second one, which is more lightly drafted, with an arch and tympanum.

**Image 6.7.** P. Travaglia, [parte del foro romano (...)] Campidoglio. Pietro Travaglia’s Sketchbook, f. 12. Published with permission from the copyright owners/holders the Collection of Theatre History at the Hungarian National Széchényi Library, Budapest. Access. Nr. 1955/9645. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.





**Image 6.8.** P. Travaglia, [parte del foro romano (...)] Campidoglio, symmetrically expanded. Designed by Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Reproduced with permission from the copyright owners/holders Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.

While the implications of the two versions are much the same, I believe it was the second one that was actually realised in Prague, because it offers a better view of the rear space of the stage. This design corresponds to the setting described in the libretto at the beginning of Act I, scene 4, at Tito's first triumphal entry:

Parte del Foro romano magnificamente adornato d'archi, obelischi, e trofei: in faccia aspetto esteriore del Campidoglio, e magnifica strada, per cui vi si ascende.

(Part of the Roman Forum, magnificently adorned with arches, obelisks and trophies: opposite, an external view of the Capitol and of the magnificent pathway leading up to it.)

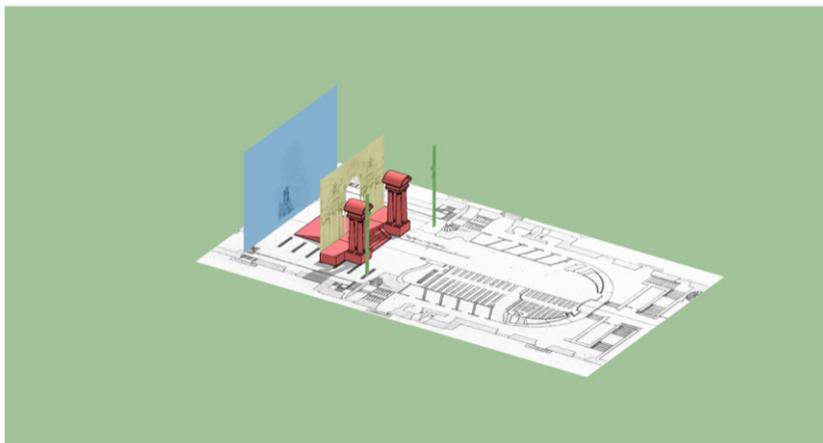
The complete image would have looked approximately as Image 6.8.



**Image 6.9.** Hypothetical realisation of the scenographic elements. Designed by Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Reproduced with permission from the copyright owners/holders Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.

Image 6.9 suggests a possible technical realisation: the set might have included two wings (green), two three-dimensional movable elements and one walkable stairway (*carri*, in red), with a pierced main *trompe l'oeil* backdrop (in yellow, to be placed approximately at centre-stage). A second painted backdrop at the extreme rear of the stage would have shown the image of the Capitol (in light blue, including an enhanced design of the Capitol by Silvia Tinazzo).

The representation of the Capitol must have been a compromise between historical imagination and spectacular requirements. Travaglia's rather rough sketch provides a degree of verisimilitude by including three elements: a steep hill, the pathway leading to it, and the temple, or temples, at the top. The painters' work would have provided a little more detail. Today we know more about the appearance of the first-century Capitol than our ancestors in the late eighteenth century. If Travaglia was concerned about faithfulness to reality, he is most likely to have drawn on representations of contemporary Rome.



**Image 6.10.** A rendering of the scenographic elements placed above the map of Count Nostitz's National Theatre. Designed by Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Reproduced with permission from the copyright owners/holders Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International use.

Image 6.10 shows a conjectural 3D rendering of the set, placed above the map of the National Theatre in axonometric projection.

If this is how the stage was laid out (not taking the decorative details into account), we may now ask what the public actually saw on stage in the famous Act I finale. The question does not concern the movements of the principal characters, which are crystal clear from the libretto, but rather the movements of the chorus, and two intriguing captions by Mozart that refer to two different placements of the choristers.

The chorus participates twice in the quintet with chorus 12. 'Deh conservate, oh Dei': the first time at bar 47, when screams are heard ('Ah'), at which point Mozart indicates 'Coro in distanza' ('chorus at a distance'); and later, after Sesto has announced the death of Tito, when the chorus participates in the lament for the emperor (Andante),

at which point he writes 'Coro in lontananza'—a different expression, which also means 'chorus at a distance', however.

This is indeed puzzling, as it also seems to have appeared to the editor of the opera's critical edition in the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, who omitted this second indication from the text, as if it had been a mistake on Mozart's part. This editorial decision lacked the evidence of the stage designs, and so it was based on the possibly incorrect assumption that the indication 'in distanza' means that the chorus screams from behind the wings. Both from a dramatic and from a visual point of view, it would not be logical for the chorus to remain out of sight throughout the lament that closes the Act—the editor seems to have reasoned—and so Mozart's second indication must have been a mistake. Therefore it should be omitted.

And yet a different hypothesis may be drawn from the scenic layout suggested in Travaglia's sketchbook, with its distinction between a downstage and an upstage section, divided by the stairway and by the main pierced backdrop.

I do not believe that Mozart made a mistake, but that he intended the stage directions to indicate two different positions for the chorus. The first one suggests that the choristers and extras are placed in the upstage area, within the view of the audience and participating in the action—screaming, possibly running around ('Ah che tumulto orrendo!' ('What a frightful uproar!') Servilia exclaims in scene 12), and trying to extinguish the fire, which must have been ignited in the wings.<sup>15</sup> And the second one, which occurs during the Andante and after the fire has been extinguished, suggests that the chorus is further downstage though still 'in the distance' with respect to the solo singers, who are placed in front of the stairway and the colonnade.

If this is correct, it implies two significant deviations from the prevalent performing tradition: firstly, that the aural impact of the screams is more intense from the rear of the stage than from the wings,<sup>16</sup> and secondly, that the spectacularisation in visual terms is a *coup de*

*théâtre* not unlike the one in the second finale, although even more intense and exciting. While there is no definitive proof that this hypothesis reflects what was seen in Prague, it helps us interpret Mozart's indications and points to the importance of establishing a satisfactory coordination between theatre and music.<sup>17</sup>

A further under-investigated scenographical problem concerns the contribution of the second set designer, Johann Breysig, whom the Prague libretto credits with a 'fourth decoration' (see Chapter 1, II Document 7). It is difficult to make sense of this, however, so for our present purposes we may conclude that Travaglia's contribution to the production was the most crucial.

### **Staging and the Aesthetic of *La clemenza di Tito***

Before discussing the general aesthetic of *La clemenza di Tito*, we must ask: 'whose aesthetic?' The expression 'the aesthetic of *La clemenza di Tito*' appears to assign a compact and well-defined aesthetic integrity to the work itself, whether it is understood as an 'opus' in the classical nineteenth-century sense or as the composite result of the 1791 production. But first we must hypothetically account for a degree of indeterminacy, or even inner contradiction, within such an 'aesthetic' complex, whether it is to be regarded as the sum or stratification of different artistic stances, or as a number of different practical operations carried out by the composer (to whom we traditionally grant the most important position), the librettist (who possibly figured above the composer), the set designer, the costume designer, the singers, and so on. Secondly, the 'aesthetic' of the work is the result of an even broader social and cultural interplay, which suggests that the initial question should be rephrased as 'whose aesthetic for *La clemenza di Tito*?' And it is to this question that I hope to provide a concrete answer.

I would like to represent the aesthetic of *La clemenza di Tito* in the form of a Russian matryoshka doll, the innermost doll being enclosed

numerous times by larger matryoshkas, each of which represents a historical time closer to the present.

The first matryoshka represents the culture which generated the concept and historical impersonations of *clementia* in the West—distant in time and yet an immediate ideological context for Metastasio's version of the ancient trope: Lucius Annaeus Seneca's *De clementia* (55–56 CE). This is the earliest theoretical source for the concept of clemency, considered the highest attribute of monarchic sovereignty. It was also the literary source for Pierre Corneille's tragedy *Cinna ou la Clémence d'Auguste* (1643), the immediate precedent of Metastasio's dramatic treatment of the concept in his *dramma per musica*.<sup>18</sup>

Even before the clemency of the ageing Augustus, or of the younger Titus Vespasian, became a subject for the stage, it served as a political justification for absolutism. The possibility of exerting clemency, i.e. of surpassing the law, gave tangible substance to the divine right of the kings because it made the sovereign similar to God. The benevolence of the sovereign, as manifested in his clemency, is a structural function of monarchy, and one of its strongest ideological pillars.

At the time of Metastasio and Mozart, clemency was especially associated with the 'Clementia austriaca' ('Austrian clemency'),<sup>19</sup> although it was applied to a broad array of monarchies. We should not be surprised, for example, that in 1807 Jérôme Bonaparte—a bourgeois king—was celebrated in Westphalia as a new Titus, with the music of Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*.<sup>20</sup>

While *clementia* as a concept might be dismissed as an irrelevant ideological feature, I believe that it had assumed an aesthetic significance by Mozart's time, which was lost to dramatists and critics of later generations. This seems to have occurred not long after Mozart's death, when Friedrich Rochlitz (ca. 1809) wrote a German version of Metastasio's text in which Sesto is actually acquitted of his crime. Understandably, Otto Jahn criticised the drama in 1856–58 because he could see no reason for Tito's clemency:<sup>21</sup> an understanding of

clemency as a deeply-rooted cultural structure is therefore an indispensable preliminary to the aesthetic appreciation of Mozart's opera.

The next matryoshka is Metastasio's *La clemenza di Tito* (1734), i.e. his dramatic text and the aesthetic stances on which his text is based. Harking back to Aristotle's *Poetics*, this kind of music theatre has been defined as 'neoclassical'. When compared to the pre-Arcadian operas, however, Metastasio's libretto represents only a partial rationalisation of the earlier dramatic type, retaining more than a few 'baroque' features, including a taste for relatively intricate plots. Metastasio's view of the solos (arias) as serving a function similar to the one of the chorus in classical drama, leads him to entrust the progress of the action to the recitatives, and to suspend it during the set-pieces that comment on and/or express sentimental states or values, as does—in Metastasio's view—the classical chorus. And finally, Metastasio, and Enlightenment-oriented dramatists in general, avoids any act of violence on stage.

These three points lead us directly to the next matryoshka, which is Mozart and the 1791 Prague production. When Mozart described his *La clemenza di Tito* as a 'vera opera' (see Chapter 1, II Document 6) he must have referred to the coherent complex of modifications imposed upon the Metastasian text, including the acceleration and simplification of the plot (with the omission of an entire subplot and the trimming of many of the recitatives), the reversal of the principle that associates dramatic action with recitatives (introducing a number of action-ensembles), and the spectacular representation of turmoil and fire on the Capitol: an episode which Metastasio represented merely through the intervention of messengers, but which Mozart made visible in Prague, with a staged action-finale. These alterations may be regarded as a significant stylistic progress towards the opera *der Zukunft*<sup>22</sup> and, in the case of the scenic spectacularisation and the expansion of the role of the chorus, as an inclusion of French-inspired elements. The clear striving for *Pracht, grandeur*,

*sublimity*, had to come to terms with the space of Count Nostitz's National Theatre, however, which was anything but grand. In this way the Prague production—if not *La clemenza di Tito* altogether—marked a gap between artistic intention and historical achievement. Other aspects, both musical (such as the use of a castrato voice or the introduction of smaller arias for minor characters) and dramatic (the subject itself), were soon to fall out of fashion in accordance with the spirit of post-Revolutionary Europe.

Yet in today's cult for Mozart, the revised libretto is considered an 'improvement' upon Metastasio's original, though Mazzola's version, from a purely technical perspective, has both advantages and drawbacks. For example, it is dramatically inconsistent that the subplot of Annio and Servilia ends in the first Act rather than in the second; and the reduction into two Acts, although masterly in many respects, implies a very different dramatic pace in the two parts, with a fast Act I and a much slower Act II. This does not even take minor narrative incongruences into account, furthermore, which are hardly noticed in today's productions.<sup>23</sup> Metastasio would almost certainly have found the visual rendering of the first Act finale—that we today, with good reason, consider a stroke of genius—unnecessary and unstylish.

The next matryoshka accounts for the original reception of *La clemenza di Tito*—a complex phenomenon that has been summarised elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> It is sufficient to recall here that the early reception was highly contradictory, and that the opera was equally praised and criticised by authoritative enthusiasts and detractors, which caused a great deal of critical confusion. For example, in 1802 Franz Horn went as far as to describe *La clemenza di Tito* as 'durchaus Romantisch',<sup>25</sup> and as late as in 1816 Heinrich Marschner wrote music to the libretto of *La clemenza di Tito* that he considered a model of Romanticism. But their idea of Romanticism was far from the mature theorisation established by August Schlegel in his 1808 *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*.<sup>26</sup> Both

Horn and Marschner (at least in his early years) refer back to the 1790s and to W. H. Wackenroder's essentialist and non-historicist idea that all music *per se* is intrinsically 'Romantic'. On the other hand, Schlegel develops a more mature and structured theory that connects any high aesthetic achievement to clearly defined historical and national roots, consequently rejecting the neo-Latin (and neo-classical) cultures (be they Italian or French) as models for an authentic Germanic art. It is on this ground particularly that a negative critical attitude towards a Metastasian operatic setting by a 'German' composer, blossomed and bore fruit, no doubt influencing Otto Jahn and the strongly negative image of *La clemenza di Tito* that he presented in his 1856–58 Mozart biography. Deeply rooted in nineteenth-century German national and bourgeois culture, such negative views were repeated and even intensified by Hermann Abert in his revision of Jahn's book from 1921. And these views, albeit not undisputed, have dominated until recent times, and even now they still find authoritative followers, such as Manfred Hermann Schmid, who in his recent guide to Mozart's operas excludes *La clemenza di Tito* from his list of the 'unsterbliche Werke' ('immortal works').<sup>27</sup>

The final matryoshka represents the more recent reception and stagings of *La clemenza di Tito*, which owe a great deal to the musical reassessments from the second half of the twentieth century, spearheaded by Tomislav Volek's ground-breaking study, and possibly even more to the general reappraisal of eighteenth-century opera, beyond the confines of Mozart studies. *La clemenza di Tito* has made it back onto the stage, and each new production, according to the custom of modern directorial theatre, or *Regietheater*, represents a 'new interpretation'—not necessarily an intelligent one. From this point of view, we face not so much a new aesthetic for *La clemenza di Tito* as the diffraction of its aesthetic kernel in as many diverse inflections (or disfigurations) as there are productions and directors. Such multifariousness is characteristic of postmodern culture, where more or less

anything can be sold and bought provided it has a good wrapping—a result of the lack of a prevailing aesthetic model.

More specifically, while I have seen numerous productions of *La clemenza di Tito*, few of which were convincing, I perceive a recurring problem that is caused by the idea of staging it in a quasi-neo-Baroque mid-eighteenth-century style, that emphasises elements of classical Metastasian *opera seria* rather than the forceful innovations introduced by Mozart and Mazzolà (and Travaglia for his part). Moreover, the loss of the original scenographic traditions, which are paramount in terms of the spectacularisation of *La Clemenza di Tito*, endangers the full appreciation of the opera's expressive potentials.

All things considered, this opera must be acknowledged both as an immortal masterpiece and as a problematic one. It encloses different stylistic layers that encourage different readings, and in some unfortunate cases, these confuse both directors and spectators alike. The best we can do as scholars is to try to grasp its theatrical potential, and promote a sensible understanding of the opera as a whole.

## Notes

1. Much of the first part of this essay was published in Italian as 'Le scenografie di Pietro Travaglia per *La clemenza di Tito* (Praga, 1791): Problemi di identificazione ed implicazioni', *Mozart Jahrbuch* 1994, 157–169. Since then my work has been more widely known to international readership through John A. Rice's book *Mozart on the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), particularly Chapter 8.

2. A report on the source is found in *Barokk, klasszicista és romantikus díszlettervek Magyarországon* (Budapest: Magyar Színházi Intézet, 1976), 14–15.

3. Horányi Mátyás, *Eszterházi vigasságok [The Esterházy Festivities]* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1959). See also Horányi Mátyás, *The Magnificence of Eszterháza* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962).

4. See the essay by John A. Rice in this volume: Chapter 2 'Operatic Culture at the Court of Leopold II and Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*.
5. Mátyás, *Eszterházi vigasságok*, 14. Travaglia was in the active service of the Esterházy family until 1798 on different locations, including Vienna and Prague. He moved to Bratislava in 1802 to enter the service of the Grassalkovich family.
6. [Pietro Metastasio and Caterino Mazzolà,] *La clemenza di Tito, dramma serio per musica in due atti da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Nazionale di Praga nel settembre 1791* (Prague: Schönfeld, 1791).
7. In Metastasio, the set for Act III, scene 1 is described as follows: 'Camera chiusa con porte: sedia e tavolino con sopra da scrivere' ('A closed chamber with doors, a chair and a small table with writing utensils'). Pietro Metastasio, *La clemenza di Tito, dramma per musica, da rappresentarsi nella cesarea corte* (Vienna: Gio. Pietro Van Ghelen, 1734).
8. [Metastasio and Mazzolà], *La clemenza di Tito* (1791).
9. Designed for this essay by Paolo Kirschner and Silvia Tinazzo and reproduced with permission.
10. Mercedes Viale Ferrero, *La scenografia del '700 e i fratelli Galliani* (Turin: Pozzo, 1963), 161; Mercedes Viale Ferrero, 'Stage and Set', in *Opera on Stage*, eds. Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1-123.
11. [Metastasio and Mazzolà], *La clemenza di Tito* (1791), Act II, scene 16. In addition to the instructions given in the Metastasian caption, all the choristers must be on stage by the end of the instrumental introduction: 11 bars, and no more than 25 seconds on John Eliot Gardiner's recording: Archiv 431806-2.
12. Reproduced in John A. Rice, *Mozart on the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 169.
13. For a reproduction of the coloured print, see H.C. Robbins Landon, *Mozart: The Golden Years: 1781-1791* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 218-19.
14. [Franz Alexander von Kleist:] *Fantasien auf einer Reise nach Prag* (Dresden & Leipzig: Richterschen Buchhandlung, 1792), 131-2, 134.

15. According to Mercedes Viale Ferrero, fire on stage was produced by burning alcohol-based liquids in flat trays which guaranteed the possibility of a fast fire extinction.

16. The customary indication for the wings is *dentro* (inside) or *dietro* (behind) although neither form is used in Mozart's scores. In *Idomeneo* (chorus 5. 'Pietà, numi pietà' Mozart specifies 'Coro lontano' and 'Coro vicino').

17. Note also that on 15 March 1795 Constanze Mozart organised a concert performance of *La clemenza di Tito* in Vienna. A libretto has survived from the same year, presumably from this performance: *Arie tirate dall'opera la Clemenza di Tito di Wolfgang Amadeo Mozart* (Vienna: Schönfeld, 1795). Because it was printed for a concert performance the libretto provides some extra captions to supplement the lack of visual action. The following direction is included at the first entry of the chorus: 'Gridi del populo tra le fiamme' ('Screams of the people among the flames'). This is probably a direct recollection of what had been staged and seen in Prague four years earlier.

18. Wilhelm Seidel, 'Seneca – Corneille – Mozart: Ideen und Gattungsgeschichtliches zu *La clemenza di Tito*', *Musik in Antike und Neuzeit*, eds. Michael von Albrecht and Werner Schubert (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 109–28. This is included in Italian translation in *Mozart*, ed. Sergio Durante (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991). While theoretically developed by Seneca, the connection between *clementia* and absolutism dates from the end of the republican era in Rome, and is related to Cicero's so-called 'Caesarean' speeches.

19. Adam Wandruszka, 'Die "clementia austriaca" und der aufgeklärte Absolutismus: Zum politischen und ideellen Hintergrund von *La clemenza di Tito*', *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, 31 (1976), 186–93.

20. Emanuele Senici, *La clemenza di Tito di Mozart: I primi trent'anni (1791–1821)* (Thurnout: Brepols, 1992), 249; see also the text, which is preserved in US-Wc, ML48 S6755.

21. Sergio Durante, 'Quando Tito divenne Titus: Le prime traduzioni tedesche della *Clemenza* mozartiana ed il ruolo di Friedrich Rochlitz', *Festschrift Max Lütolf zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. Bernhard Hangartner and Urs Fischer (Basel: Wiese Verlag, 1994), 247–58, and 'La clemenza

di Jahn, ovvero *Le nozze perturbate di Musica e Filologia*, *L'edizione critica fra testo musicale e testo letterario*, eds. Renato Borghi and Pietro Zappalà (Lucca: L.I.M., 1995), 345–57. Clemency is more easily understood and internalised within a monarchy-oriented social body than within a democracy, where, despite the institutional recognition of the act of clemency, it belongs to an elected officer, inevitably suspect of expedience.

22. Hans Joachim Kreutzer, 'Mozart's Opera of the Future *La clemenza di Tito*', W.A. Mozart, *La clemenza di Tito K.621: Facsimile of the Autograph Score* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2008), 1–15; Sergio Durante, 'Musicological Introduction', in *ibid.*, 17–34) describes the genesis of the opera.

23. For instance, the addition of the aria with chorus 15. 'Ah, grazie si rendano' is incongruent with the following recitative announcing that the people are waiting for Tito at the arena (whereas they have just celebrated the sovereign's well-being).

24. John A. Rice, *W. A. Mozart: La clemenza di Tito* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 118–33. See also the article by Magnus Tassing Schneider in this volume; Chapter 3, 'From Metastasio to Mazzolà: Clemency and Pity in *La clemenza di Tito*.

25. Franz Horn, 'Musikalische Fragmente', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, IV/28 (7 April 1802), 452.

26. Sergio Durante, *Mozart and the Idea of "vera opera": A study of La clemenza di Tito*, PhD diss., Harvard University, 1993, Chapter 2, 24–42.

27. Manfred Hermann Schmid, *Mozarts Opern* (Munich: Beck, 2009), back cover. While Schmid might not be responsible for the text of the back cover, it is in itself significant that the notion filtered into his authoritative book.