

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Series II

Works for the Stage

WORK GROUP 5: OPERAS AND SINGSPIELS

“Siano pronte alle gran nozze”

No. 4 from L'OCA DEL CAIRO · KV 422

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Foreword

The music collection belonging to the composer Johannes Simon Mayr (1763-1845), in the Biblioteca Civica in Bergamo, contains a large number of works by other composers, copied and collected by Mayr himself. He was director of music at the church Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, was Donizetti's teacher and a very noted opera composer. The manuscript *Sala 32 E 1. 16*, a small volume in oblong octave format, apparently a travelling album, contains some charming operatic arias and ensemble scenes of the 18th century, works by Jomelli, Cherubini, Winter, Salieri, Cimarosa, Paisiello and Dittersdorf, also including – surprisingly – a complete score of the Scene “*Siano pronte alle gran nozze centotrentasei carrozze*” from Mozart's operatic fragment *L'oca del Cairo* KV 422.

Only a fragmentary excerpt of 48 measures from this piece was previously known, preserved along with Mozart's autograph sketches and Varesco's original, incomplete libretto.¹ This excerpt, written by a copyist,² contains only the solo vocal part and the foundational bass, and was thus clearly intended as a copy for the singer. As the individual parts were generally only copied once the finished score was available, one can surmise that Mozart had already composed and completed the Scene “*Siano pronte*”; it is therefore particularly regrettable that precisely this complete Scene was missing amongst the extensive outlines and sketches for other pieces. One important piece of evidence spoke for Mozart's autograph of this number having originally been included in the bundle. In the manuscript libretto there is, exactly at the point where the text for the Scene is written on fol. 9^r, a revealing remark dating from the 19th century: *This aria for Don Pippo is missing, was there during the lifetime of Court Counsellor A[ndrès] and must meanwhile have been lost.* Johann Anton André (1775-1842) must therefore have obtained the Scene “*Siano pronte*”, along with the autograph outlines known today, from Constanze Mozart; it was only later, after his death, that the number (it is described as an aria, since it is in fact an aria which opens into a *buffo* trio) disappeared.

Mayr's manuscript in Bergamo reproduces Mozart's composition and is obviously immediately dependent on the original score. Its authenticity is guaranteed in the first place by the agreement with the libretto. It is reasonable to conclude that only Mozart could have set this text, for no-one would have picked up the incomplete libretto at a later

date for the sake of setting one single and, out of context, almost incomprehensible scene. A second indication is the agreement with that fragmentary excerpt. The disposition of Mayr's score corresponds precisely to that of the other outlines by Mozart: on the top three staves, Mayr notates *Violini* and *Viole*; next come *Oboè*, *Corni in D*, *Fagotti*; the vocal roles (*Auretta*, *Don Pippo*, *Chichibio*) follow; the foundation is provided by *Violoncello / Contrabasso*. As a heading, Mayr wrote the name *Mozart* at the top of the first page.

The agreement with the fragmentary excerpt, the textual identity with the libretto and Mayr's attribution confirm that the copy is genuine. But, more than this, the melodic and rhythmical shape, the interweaving of the vocal lines and the instrumentation show Mozart's style everywhere. As wind instruments, Mozart uses two each of Oboes, Bassoons and Horns. Clarinets are therefore missing, as in the rest of the score; the work was intended for Salzburg, and the Salzburg Court Music had no Clarinets at that time.

One wonders how Mayr managed to see the original. One of Constanze Mozart's letters, preserved in the Mayr legacy in the Biblioteca Civica in Bergamo,³ casts a certain amount of light on this. Based on its contents, it can be dated to Karl Mozart's years of study in Milan, i.e. in the period 1805 to 1810. Constanze asks Mayr to take care of her son: “*Do not be astonished*”, she writes, “*that, having only once had the good fortune to speak to you in Vienna, I allow myself the liberty of burdening you with such a major request [...]*”.⁴ Mayr must therefore have visited Constanze once before in Vienna. He no doubt had the opportunity of seeing the music Mozart had left to Constanze and was able – one may perhaps assume – to copy the only complete scene in this fragmentary opera previously unknown to him.⁵

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³ Sala 32 D 8. 29/1.

⁴ Published *in extenso* by Ludwig Schiedermair, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Oper*, vol. I: *Simon Mayr* (2 parts, Leipzig, 1907–1910) II, p. 192.

⁵ As a supplement to these remarks, cf. my essay *Neue Mozartiana in Italien*, in: *Die Musikforschung* XV (1962) pp. 227–236. – I thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, which made my researches on site possible; further, the staff of the Biblioteca Civica in Bergamo for their friendly and generous assistance; finally, the Chief Editors of the Neue Mozart-Ausgabe, Dr. Wolfgang Plath and Dr. Wolfgang Rehm.

¹ State Library Berlin – Prussian Cultural Heritage (Music Department) (from the Johann Anton André collection).

² Facsimile p. XIV (= mm. 1–25), Edition pp. 17 f. (Neue Mozart-Ausgabe II/5/13); cf. Friedrich-Heinrich Neumann's *Introduction to the present Volume*, particularly p. XI, as well as the *Kritischer Bericht*.