

# The PRINCE LICHNOWSKY Newsletter

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Our Motto: *All the news that fits the Prince!*

## Some initial published reactions to Brauneis find

Since the first issue of the Newsletter appeared in September last year, two articles concerned with the discovery of a lawsuit by Prince Karl Lichnowsky against Wolfgang Mozart and prepared by well-known Mozart scholars have come to the Editor's attention. One is by Dr. Erna Schwerin, the President of the New York-based Friends of Mozart Society; the other, by Dr. Stanley Sadie, Editor of The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians.

In the interest of making these first published reactions to the entry of November 12, 1791, in the *Hofkammer* correspondence ledger uncovered by Walther Brauneis more broadly available, the Editor gives extended quotations from them on the following pages. The first article comes from America, the second from England. So far the Editor has seen no similar articles out of either Austrian or German publications; if and when articles from these countries show up, a further issue of the Newsletter may appear.

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**Erna Schwerin:** Lichnowsky versus Mozart. The Enigma of a Lawsuit.

(From the Friends of Mozart Newsletter, Box 24, FDR P.O. Station, New York, NY 10150; No.30, Fall 1991)

Although "we know nothing about the nature of the debt, (or) the time of its origin and filing of the suit," Dr. Schwerin writes, ". . .It is highly unlikely that the litigation in this case was motivated by its financial aspect alone, even if it involved a debt of honor. Prince Lichnowsky was a very rich aristocrat, Mozart's fellow Mason and patron, with whom he was supposedly linked in friendship until at least 1789. Only the challenge of a major narcissistic injury to the prince, related to very personal factors, could have prompted such an aggressively hostile act. As we have no other clues for successful detective work on the facts of the suit itself, we will explore the prince's motivations from a more personal vantage point, as well as his relationships with Mozart and Beethoven.

"It is not known when Mozart met Count (later Prince) Carl Lichnowsky (1756-1814), his contemporary who in 1789 married Countess Christina Thun-Hohenstein, a daughter of Countess Wilhelmine Thun, whose house the prince had visited regularly during his courtship. Wilhelmine Thun's salon was then the center of Viennese aristocratic musical life, to which Mozart also gained access for active participation shortly after taking up permanent residence in Vienna in 1781. . . .After their marriage, and especially after the death of the elder countess, the Lichnowskys became prominently identified with generous musical patronage, and their soirées were great favorite meeting places. The prince had family ties to Berlin, which may account for his interest in Bach. He brought his

music to van Swieten's weekly concerts which he attended regularly, and where he may have met Mozart. An intimate acquaintance with him must have existed in 1784 at the latest, when the composer joined the Lodge 'Zu wahren Eintracht' of which Lichnowsky was also a member.

"In the spring of 1789 the prince invited Mozart to travel with him to Berlin via Dresden, Leipzig and other stops. He had business in Berlin, and Mozart planned to concertize and compose for the court of the King of Prussia. Brauneis conjectures that the invitation may have been extended to provide an opportunity for Mozart to earn money to help repay an already existing debt owed the prince; but according to Deutsch he merely wanted the composer to keep him company, an observation which deserves more credence because he was to take Beethoven on an almost identical concert tour in February 1796.

"The togetherness between Mozart and Lichnowsky was actually limited, as the prince proceeded to Berlin alone from Leipzig. Mozart complained to Constanze in a letter that he had to pay his own board and lodging in expensive Potsdam. He made the return trip alone. On this trip the frequently mentioned 'loan' of 100 Gulden was made to the prince because his 'purse had been depleted,' as Mozart wrote to his wife on May 23, 1789, a request that he 'could not very well refuse—you know why.'

"This is where the mystery depends further: we do not know the reasons. It may well be that it was a partial repayment of a debt. Mozart's income was at an all-time low (for Vienna) during 1788/89, and during his absence Constanze stayed with the Puchbergs who may also have supported her financially. But Braunbehrens observes that the composer cleared at least 1,000 Gulden from this 1789 journey after travel expenses. He was very preoccupied with financial concerns before leaving Vienna, later warning Constanze that he may return almost empty-handed. He never described his relationship with Lichnowsky to Constanze except once referring to him as 'my princely travel companion' with a touch of irony. . . .

". . .The Lichnowskys were united only in sharing their musical interests and patronage, especially their strong emotional investment in Beethoven. Their attitude toward him was characterized by obsessive idealization and a humility bordering on obsequiousness. It provided a striking contrast to the litigation against Mozart. Soon after Beethoven's arrival in Vienna, an apartment in Lichnowsky's palace was put at his disposal, and an annual stipend of 600 Gulden made available to him until he would become self-supporting. In addition, the Lichnowskys showered him with lavish gifts, including valuable musical instruments and other favors. Beethoven was overwhelmed by and gratefully accepted this bountiful generosity. Based on his respect for their artistic judgment (and probably gratitude), he even permitted them to make suggestions for major changes in rewriting 'Fidelio'! But with the passage of time he felt increasingly stifled by the continual intrusions of the couple who had taken complete possession of him as an artist and human being.

". . .this brief sketch of the prince's relationship with Beethoven. . .(is) offered because an insight into Lichnowsky's emotional investment in the life of a composer of genius enables us to draw a parallel between the reaction of both composers. If the prince had felt inclined to become an important personal presence in Mozart's life, we could perhaps predict a similar negative outcome as

occurred with Beethoven and relate it to the prince's litigation. That he had a tendency to invite rejection (wife, Beethoven) has become clear. But first we must ask the question whether Lichnowsky regarded Mozart's music as highly as he later would Beethoven's. We cannot be certain about it but we know that he must have been aware of Wilhelmine Thun's great admiration for the composer. His own musicality as well must have guided him in evaluating it just as positively. Although Mozart and Beethoven were dramatically different personalities, they shared the most important criterion for Lichnowsky's interest -- the gratification of championing a genius. Had such all-encompassing patronage been offered to Mozart, he would have felt pleased, flattered, enjoying the advantages of the promotion of his music, but never at the expense of giving up, or even sharing, control over his musical creativity. He would have strongly resisted creating a parallel to his relationship with his father whose narcissistic extension he had been for a long time. In adolescence he had become exquisitely sensitive to his control, finally freeing himself after a long struggle and conflict by his move to Vienna, at the same time shedding the oppressive bondage of the archbishop. . . .

"On a personal level, Mozart and the prince shared the tendency for high living. Solomon notes that Lichnowsky spent money beyond his means which backfired later when, like many aristocrats, he faced financial ruin in the course of the Napoleonic wars. We know that Mozart accumulated large debts, and the one related to the suit may well have originated at the gaming tables. But we have no tangible evidence that Mozart gambled beyond social limits. His strong predilection for elegant clothing and other luxuries must have depleted his fluctuating income. Perhaps his aspirations, interpreted by an aristocrat as exceeding his social status, may have elicited a negative reaction in Lichnowsky, feeling betrayed like the count in 'Figaro' by his servant and looking for revenge because Mozart left his debt to him unpaid for other 'priorities.' . . ."

"The question arises why some compromise solution could not have been found to avert litigation. Why did the elder Countess Thun not come to Mozart's rescue when she had been so warmly supportive early on? The implication here is not that Mozart should have been excused from meeting his obligation but that he deserved to do so without undue embarrassment. The lawsuit has opened a Pandora's box without revealing its contents, and this discussion has raised more questions than it has answered. The assumption offered here is that the prince's aggressive, punitive action against Mozart was motivated by very personal feelings, only incidentally related to the monetary value of the debt. . . ."

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**Stanley Sadie:** Mozart: Persecuted to an early grave?

(From *The (London) Times*, Arts section, page 12; 3 December 1991.)

"In 1781 Mozart, at the age of 25, left his job as director of the court orchestra in Salzburg and settled in Vienna. Then years later, universally recognised as the supreme musical genius of the time, he died there, after years of financial stress. What went wrong? . . ."

"A discovery of the last few months. . . suggests that his death -- whatever its immediate physical cause -- was hastened by events that took place during the month before, and which depressed him to a degree that his will to live was severely weakened.

"To understand these events, we need to look at Mozart's career and his finances in Vienna. . . ."

". . . In fact 1785 -- the year his father visited him and heard such gratifying reports on his son's success -- was Mozart's best year ever, financially speaking. But it seems that 1786, in spite of a good fee for Figaro, was a bad year, in which he earned less than 1,000 Gulden. He was in debt much of the time from then on.

"Most employed people, such as Mozart's fellow composers, received a large part of their salaries in kind: firewood, housing, wine, corn, flour, meat, and medical care, for example. Mozart had to pay for all these himself. Attractive apartments (such as the fine one he had in 1785-87) were more costly and the kinds of clothes he needed to wear, so that he could move comfortably in aristocratic circles, were probably a heavy drain on his purse. So was the medical treatment and the cures at spas that his wife, with her frequent ailments and pregnancies, seems to have needed. He sent his elder son to a costly boarding school. It seems, unless some of the improbable theories about Mozart's gambling at billiards are true, that the Mozarts found themselves unable to cut back on the high standard of living they had enjoyed in their more prosperous years. . . .

"Over three years, (Michael) Puchberg lent Mozart 1,450 Gulden. Mozart borrowed a modest sum at least once from Hofdemel, the husband of a pupil, and a larger one, 1,000 Gulden, from a moneylender, Lackenbacher. At his death, his assessed debts (918 Gulden) were to merchants, apothecaries and the like; his widow later said that he owed 3,000 Gulden. There must have been loans outstanding.

"The most mysterious debt of all is one that has only lately come to light: to Prince Carl Lichnowsky. Lichnowsky, later to be a substantial patron of Beethoven, was an aristocrat of great wealth. In 1789, Lichnowsky had to go to Berlin, and he invited Mozart to accompany him, visiting Prague, Dresden, and Leipzig; in all these cities Mozart could hope to earn some money by playing. At one point during the journey Mozart had been left to pay his own expenses, and Lichnowsky insisted on Mozart's taking a trip back to Leipzig for a concert that was certain to be unprofitable. Then, Mozart wrote to his wife: 'I had to lend him 100 Gulden as he was short of cash. I couldn't very well refuse him—you will know why.'

"Constanze Mozart may have known why, but we do not. We may guess that Lichnowsky, a brother mason, had been generous to him in some way.

"The new discovery suggests that he may have lent Mozart money. For on November 9, 1791, a legal action was heard in which Prince Lichnowsky sued Mozart for 1,435 Gulden and 32 Kreuzer, and obtained judgment with costs.

"The idea of a nobleman suing a composer for such a debt -- trivial to Lichnowsky, overwhelming to Mozart -- is in itself astonishing. The court directed the financial office that dealt with Mozart's salary to withhold half until the debt was repaid. The debt is mentioned nowhere else in surviving records. Lichnowsky did not act in this way for financial reasons; there must have been some personal issue involved.

"Whatever this was, the judgment must have been a crushing blow to Mozart. It had always been foremost in his thoughts that he must preserve his honour and his good name, partly because he knew that anyone in financial trouble was treated as a pariah and would receive no patronage.

"At the time of the judgment, Mozart was working on a masonic cantata and on the Requiem -- which, in his depression, he is said to have thought he was writing for himself (it had been commissioned anonymously). And he was writing it for himself: music from it was first heard at St. Michael's church in Vienna, during his exequies, five days after his death.

"Could the judgment have brought Mozart -- disgraced, his only secure income halved, too downcast to resist a feverish illness -- to an early death? He may not have been murdered; but it could be that Lichnowsky's persecution sent him prematurely to his grave."

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### Letters to the Editor

There were a number of comments from recipients of the Newsletter's first issue. A few excerpts follow:

Reader A: "I would hope that, as Brauneis mentions, further studies of Lichnowsky's papers, if possible, may shed some light on the case. I like the find altogether because it shows us again how little we know historically about Mozart, and that the attitude of many historians to pronounce documented circumstances as 'true' and non-written ones as 'not true' should give way to a better allowance for multitudes of hypothetical readings. . . ."

Reader B: "I disagree with the suggestion that knowledge of the *Hofkammer's* judgment may not have reached Mozart or his wife before the composer's death. It is well known that Constanze attempted to conceal blemishes in Mozart's character, and it is therefore understandable that the matter was suppressed in Nissen's biography. I anxiously await further developments. The secret may be hidden in the Lichnowsky Archives."

Reader C: ". . . In any case, Lichnowsky was treated very gingerly in Nissen's biography even though he had been dead since 1814. In connection with the Berlin trip, the place in the letter, for example, where the talk is about the 100 Gulden Mozart bestowed on him ('ich konnte es ihm nicht gut abschlagen, du weist warum.'--'I couldn't very well turn him down, you know why'): in Nissen, this became 'auch habe ich Jemanden, dem ich es nicht abschlagen konnte, 100 fl. geliehen' ('in addition, I loaned 100 fl. to someone I couldn't turn down'), even though Lichnowsky was the subject of the sentence that came just before. Why was it that Constanze (and Nissen) did not want to

link Lichnowsky with this matter? Had he waived collection of the debt, perhaps making an agreement with Mozart's widow that nothing further would be made known of the matter so she could hold to her hopes for a pension from the Emperor? . . ."

Reader D: ". . .One possibility you don't mention, and seems quite likely to me, is that Lichnowsky himself may have cancelled the debt after the judgment was made; this wouldn't necessarily be reflected in the *Hofkammer* ledger because, in all likelihood, Mozart would already have been dead by the time the next payment to him fell due. This, of course, would account for Constanze's silence on the matter: what point in mentioning that Lichnowsky took action against Mozart if he cancelled the debt once he had judgment? And could not this impending suit be the mysterious and clearly troubling business that Mozart repeatedly refers to, as a matter needing to be settled, in letters to Constanze during these last weeks? . . ."

#### Dankeschön from the Editor

Thanks are due to Dr. Schwerin and to Dr. Sadie for their published contributions to the case of Lichnowsky vs. Mozart. And my appreciation for the letters with their comments. I will continue to be grateful for any further thoughts on this subject. I especially solicit copies of articles or papers on it that may come your way.

Finally, a word of admiration and gratitude to Ing. Walther Brauneis of Vienna for his imagination and diligence in causing not one but two pieces of the Mozart puzzle to surface after all this years: I refer to his documentary find that exequies were held for Mozart in St. Michael's church in Vienna on 10 December 1791 at which the then completed portions of the Requiem almost certainly were performed, as well as to his discovery in the case of Lichnowsky vs. Mozart. May 1992 be as fruitful!

Bruce Cooper Clarke