

The PRINCE LICHNOWSKY Newsletter

Issue No. 8.16 November 2011

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

The two questions

When the Newsletter series came to a prolonged pause in early 1994, it was with the realization that two questions remained to be addressed: what exactly was Mozart's debt that Lichnowsky went to court to reclaim; and how on earth, in a society as given to gossip as the one which Lichnowsky and Mozart shared, did the matter remain so private.

The Editor is indebted to Peter Hoyt for providing the occasion to resume serious examination of the first of the questions; his analysis is found in Prince Lichnowsky Newsletter No.7.

This Newsletter presents comments and analysis relating principally to the second question submitted by Anne-Louise Luccarini, a historian of the 18th century, especially with regard to the Mozart family.

My thanks to both Prof. Hoyt and Mrs. Luccarini for their contributions to the ongoing of the Newsletter series.

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The comments and analysis of Mrs. Luccarini follow:

Prof. Hoyt's number-crunching appears to my dazzled eyes unassailable, but this particular calculation is based on the loan having been formalized in Potsdam on Saturday 2 May 1789 as the last day both Mozart and Lichnowsky "could have been together in Prussia." In Prussia, yes, but they saw each other again in Leipzig a week later before finally parting company, by which time Mozart had received, on top of his earnings in Dresden, 100 friedrichs d'or (700 florins) in Potsdam. It seems to me more likely that the loan was unrelated to the Berlin journey and was contracted in Vienna, subject to the jurisdiction of the Lower Austrian Court, at a later time, more of which below. However, Prof. Hoyt has mentioned other possible scenarios which would arrive at the same figure, and it will be extremely interesting to read his complete analysis of the Berlin journey.

So to the mystery of the 200-year silence. The correspondence ledger entry exists. There was a suit, there was a court decision. If the debt had been extinguished and the matter duly annulled, surely this too would have been noted in the ledger as well as the dossier? Did the dossier go in the 1927 fire? Or was it removed in 1791 by someone so unused to minor bureaucratic procedures that he simply overlooked the quiet existence of the correspondence ledger? Someone as highly-placed as a Privy Councillor, for example, or a President of the Studies Commission?

Whoever drafted Constanze's expertly-worded petition managed to imply that Vienna had an obligation to support the penniless widow and children because Mozart had chosen loyalty to the Emperor rather than seeking something better elsewhere, only to be struck down by fate just as lucrative offers were flooding in from abroad. A good point: Mozart was already admired to the point of adulation, and to have left the widow of the blameless genius to starve would have reflected poorly on Vienna in the eyes of the world. The petition was approved by two senior officials, who saw no reason not to recommend Imperial clemency, just as the salaries clerk had seen no reason not to pay the last two installments in full. Further, by the time the pension was awarded, one Emperor had died and another had been elected, and yet not even the clean-up that takes place during an administration change had revealed any impediment. The paperwork must have been suppressed, by fair means or foul.

Why. The Lichnowsky suit would have let the cat out of the bag. "Honour" was the measure of a man's worth. A man was dishonoured by an unpaid debt or the misconduct of wife or child (harder to hide than, say, lying or stealing, which could moreover be disguised as virtues). In March/April 1790 Mozart wrote to Puchberg "If it [*his present situation*] were known, it would damage my application to the Court — you know how necessary it is for it to remain secret, because at Court they judge not according to circumstances but only according to appearances". He was able to conceal a great deal because Puchberg's constant rescuing was private: his Lodge Brother - and friend - never formalized the loans. Was it Puchberg or Mozart who kept the letters, on which were noted the amount sent and the date? They were obviously not made available to whoever drew up the inventory on December 7, 1791 (where Puchberg is named as Constanze's agent).

Who. According to Dr E Vehse, in *Memoirs of the Court, Aristocracy and Diplomacy of Austria*, Vol. II, 1856 (translated by Franz Demmler), the *Heimliche Botschafter* informed its readers on December 16 that "The worthy Baron von Suitten has adopted the boy (...) and the Countess Thun the girl". A seal of respectability if ever there was one, even if that's not what happened - but accuracy is not what makes the popular press popular.

The worthy Baron was Gottfried van Swieten, who was the son of Dr Gerhard van Swieten, brought from the Austrian Netherlands in 1747 by Empress-Queen Maria Theresa to be her personal physician and reform the Austrian medical profession. Gottfried's ruling passion was music, but he was steered into a diplomatic career. In 1768, aged 25, he was between postings, and became involved in the *Finta Semplice* debacle in Vienna. "(...) my son played the whole opera on the piano for the young Baron von Swieten, in the presence of Count von Sporck, the Duke of Braganca and other music-lovers." (Leopold Mozart, *Species Facti*, 25 September 1768). The next posting was Ambassador in Berlin 1770-1777, where he became deeply absorbed in the music of J S Bach. Forkel's biography of Bach was dedicated to him. Back in Vienna from 1778 on he became Prefect of the Imperial Library, and President of the Studies Commission, until his sudden unexplained dismissal on the day of Mozart's death.

Countess Thun née Uhlfeld, putative foster-mother of "the girl", (a.k.a. 5-month-old Franz Xaver) was Lichnowsky's mother-in-law, but her connection with Mozart started in 1763. She was married at seventeen to Count Franz Joseph von Thun, born 1734, son of Count J J A von Thun und Hohenstein (1711-1788), hereinafter referred to as Old Count Thun, very wealthy, old Bohemian nobility, with castles all

over the place but living mainly between Linz and Prague. Wolfgang and Constanze stayed with him in Linz in October 1783, then Leopold Mozart and Heinrich Marchand returning from Vienna in 1785. He entertained Wolfgang and Constanze in Prague in January 1787, the year before he died there. In October 1763, when Countess Thun was eighteen, and the first of her six children fourteen months old, Count Zinzendorf made the following observation in that otherwise charmless diary of his: "(...) thence to Thun's, where the little Child from Salzburg and His Sister played the harpsichord. The poor little fellow plays marvelously; he is a Witty Child, lively and charming. His Sister's playing is masterly, and he applauded her. Mademoiselle de Gudenus, who is a good pianist, gave him a kiss, and he wiped his face."

In 1778, when Mozart and his mother had run aground in Mannheim and Leopold was trying to refloat the boat from Salzburg, his wife wrote "As for the letters you've sent to Vienna, that's fine, but I should remind you (...) to write to Count Thun, who is in good standing with the Emperor, and very fond of Wolfgang". She had obviously formed this opinion during 1767/68, that year in Vienna when so many seeds were sown for the 1780s, but she may not have met the Countess, who spent much of that time having her fifth and six babies. The Count, on the other hand, was more than likely to have got to know them in Dr. Mesmer's home in the Landstrasse. When Wolfgang arrived in Vienna in 1781 he found Mesmer gone, but he lost no time in visiting Countess Thun, to whose salon people such as the Chancellor Prince Kaunitz, Vice-Chancellor Count Cobenzl, Fieldmarshal Hadik, and even Emperor Joseph II himself, used to gravitate for conversation and music, and dancing, too, if the mood took them.

From the cultural hub of Countess Thun's salon the way led to Swieten's Sunday musicales in the sumptuous apartment on the Josefsplatz, where the 25-year-old Mozart encountered 20-year-old Count Carl Alois Lichnowsky, fresh from his studies at Göttingen and Leipzig where he too had developed a passion for J S Bach, and collected manuscripts which he brought to the Swieten gatherings.

And Count Franz Joseph Thun, Privy Councillor, Royal and Imperial Chamberlain? "As strange as ever, but an honest gentleman and well-meaning", wrote Wolfgang to his father (24 March 1781). "Strange", because the count was a mystic, a magician, a mesmerist healer, and a Rosicrucian Freemason like his father Old Count Thun (Grand Master of the Rosicrucian Lodge in Prague).

In the Spring of 1788, Old Count Thun died, and so did old Prince Lichnowsky, whereupon Carl Alois, now 27, became the second Prince Lichnowsky, inheriting the lands and title conferred on his father by Frederick the Great when Austria was forced to cede most of Silesia to Prussia in 1748. At the end of November, the new Prince married Countess Thun's third daughter, Christine, thus becoming the brother-in-law of the Russian diplomat Count Razumovsky, who had married the second Thun daughter, Elisabeth. It was nearly Christmas when the Berlin bureaucracy got around to ratifying the transfer of the Lichnowsky title to Carl, which may have been the reason for his trip to Berlin the following Spring. His business with the authorities would take no time at all, and he would have the opportunity to revisit Leipzig, the scene of his happy studenthood and musical epiphany. His bride, three months pregnant with their only child, remained in Vienna. He took Mozart with him. Why?

There is no evidence that they were friends; in Mozart's many letters to Constanze over the two months there are just four passing references to the Prince, who never so much as sends her polite regards. A trophy Lodge Brother to display in musical Leipzig? Nissen explains the presence of the Prince on "Mozart's" Berlin journey by referring to him as "a pupil", but Freemasonry is never named in the first biographies. A study of the itinerary as it has been reconstructed from information in the letters to Constanze, and the arrival and departure dates published in the newspapers, would indicate that as far as Lichnowsky was concerned, Leipzig was the main goal of the voyage. He spent no more than three days anywhere else. They went from Dresden to Leipzig to Potsdam, where Lichnowsky re-lined his purse with Mozart's 100 florins and went alone "in a hurry" on 2 May to discharge his business in Berlin. On 5 May he left Berlin, not for Vienna, but bound for Leipzig (*Berliner Zeitung* 5 May: "Prince Lichnowsky has left for Leipzig").¹

On 6 May 1789, the King left for Holland to fetch his sister. Mozart seems to have reached Leipzig from Potsdam on the 8th, and the hastily-arranged and poorly attended concert took place ("It's all Lichnowsky's fault, because he wouldn't leave me in peace — I had to go back to Leipzig. But more of this when we can talk face to face." (23 May 1789). It was not until after the concert on 12 May that their paths finally separated and Mozart went on alone to Berlin, where (he told Constanze) he played for the Princess, although again there is no mention of this, nor of any payment, in Court records.

Whatever Lichnowsky's purpose, it also seems that Mozart had his own agenda, involving the King of Prussia. In his exhaustive study *The Magic Flute: an alchemical allegory*,² M.F.M. van den Berk examines the Berlin journey and advances a persuasive hypothesis concerning the nature of Mozart's business with the notoriously Rosicrucian Friedrich Wilhelm II, which dovetails with the oboist Ramm's reported remarks about the King's anxiety to see Mozart, and could explain the curiously incognito nature of Mozart's Prussian visit. The *Berliner Intelligenzblatt* of 30 May said "*Herr Kap. Mozard nach Wien zurück*", but apart from the well-known announcement of his arrival at Sans Souci, on which the King quite reasonably wrote the instruction "*Directeur Duport*" meaning that his Director of Music should see to arrangements for Mozart, he is not mentioned anywhere else at all. Not in Court records of payments, not in the hotel records which gave the newspapers their information. The letters to Constanze are evasive, to say the least - "This time I can't write much to you as I have to pay some calls."

Did she know the purpose of the journey (apart from bringing home some badly-needed funds), and were the letters veiled, not to deceive her, but in case of police interception? The political situation in mid-1789 was explosive all over Europe; Joseph II was already mortally ill, and the persecution of the Viennese Freemasons was at its height. When Mozart wrote to Constanze that he couldn't refuse to lend Lichnowsky 100 florins, "you know why", was he referring to the Masonic obligation not to refuse aid to a Brother (which he couldn't put in a letter), or to the debt, or to the fact that Lichnowsky had been paying for the journey?

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1. Also in *Neues Berliner Intelligenzblatt* 30 April and 4 May 1789, and *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen* 2 May and 5 May 1789 (V. Grützner in *Potsdamer Musik Geschichte*, Arani-Verlag Berlin 1993).
 2. M.F.M. van den Berk, trans. J. Berkhout: *Zauberflöte. The Magic Flute. An Alchemical Allegory*. Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, Neth. 2004. From p463 to end.

I think the 100 florins Mozart had obtained from Hofdemel via promissory note just before setting out were for Constanze to use during his absence. She may not have known they were borrowed, any more than she knew exactly how much the Elector of Saxony had put inside the "handsome box" in Dresden. It seems certain that he told her at least part of the truth about why he stayed on in Leipzig after the concert - he was having fun with his friends.

When did he become indebted to Lichnowsky, and why? As far back as 1786, Mozart still had no Court appointment in Vienna and was looking elsewhere. England with the Storaces fell through for various reasons, some of them known. He may have calculated that he needed a lump sum of 2000 florins in order to relocate, because he made several attempts to borrow such an amount. The fact that he had his 1000 fl from Leopold's estate paid to Puchberg may be related.

Lichnowsky had to go to Berlin to tie up the legalities of his succession. I would suggest that the King of Prussia had made overtures which led Mozart to hope for an appointment, and that it was agreed - maybe at Countess Thun's instigation - that it would be simple and practical for the two young men to travel together. But if it were only a reconnaissance trip, surely Mozart would not have borrowed such a sum *beforehand*. We know the Prince was footing the bill until Potsdam, by which time Mozart had money in hand, thanks to the Dresden concert and the Elector's "handsome box" and its contents. By the time he left Potsdam he also had the King's 100 friedrichs d'or (700 florins). Only five weeks after his return home he was frantically asking Puchberg for 500 florins, citing his wife's serious illness and his inability to earn anything because only Swieten had subscribed to a proposed concert, but by the end of the year he was talking confidently about "work for the King of Prussia" next summer. By then, however, Joseph II was dead and all the Electoral courts, including Prussia/Brandenburg, were involved in preparation for the elections. Mozart cannot have had Lichnowsky's loan at that point, because he had been borrowing steadily, even from usurers. On 14 August he wrote to Puchberg "In 8 to 15 days I'll be getting help — it's a certainty — but for the moment I'm in need." Is this "help" Lichnowsky's loan? Five weeks later he was off to Frankfurt, with Hofer and a servant, *in his own carriage*, and given the presence of Wilhelm Friedrich II at the Coronation, the journey may not have been as pointless as it appears. Nothing happened in the short term, but the King's extraordinary generosity to Constanze in February 1792 and thereafter is perhaps not unconnected.

Another possibility: after Frankfurt, Mozart had two genuine approaches from England, one apparently thanks to Thomas Attwood, even naming a figure, the other from Salomon, maybe at Haydn's suggestion. Haydn went, and Mozart did not, but perhaps it was now that there were negotiations with Lichnowsky for, say, a six-month period, to launch an English venture. Still nothing eventuated, and Schikaneder's arrival on the scene, then Mozart's playful dabble in *Der Stein der Weisen* with Schikaneder, Henneberg, Shack and Gerl, may be reflected in renewed borrowing in April 1791 to make ends meet. On 25 June he asked Puchberg to stop another gap, mentioning an expected 2000 fl from which his friend could reimburse himself. But not, evidently, Lichnowsky. Is this when the Prince's patience started to fray?

In PL Newsletter No. 2, Dr. Schwerin suggested that "only the challenge of a major narcissistic injury to the prince, related to very personal factors, could have prompted such an aggressively hostile act." If we are to believe the indiscretions of Countess Thürheim in her memoirs regarding Princess Lichnowsky's physical

distaste for her husband, and given what we know indisputably of Mozart's physicality and his robust tactlessness, it's not hard to imagine a scenario. Perhaps the legal process was initiated on 2 September 1791, after a showdown on the eve of Mozart's departure for Prague late August 1791. Razumovsky's letter of 15 September to Potemkin, mentioning Mozart's "discontentment" in Vienna and suggesting that he would be amenable to an engagement in St Petersburg, initially for a trial period, may have followed an alarmed Thun family conference. Bad timing, Potemkin died about three weeks later. Back from Prague, Mozart was feverishly busy with commissions and very involved with Schikaneder and Stadler. Constanze went to Baden with Süßmayr. In the October letters there is great weariness, but no hint that he was aware of a pending lawsuit.

The Hofkammer correspondence ledger entry was dated 12 November. I don't think Mozart knew what had happened until after he had conducted the cantata at the inauguration of the *New Crowned Hope* on 17 November. If an official letter had arrived in the intervening five days, I think Constanze received it, read it, and kept it from him until the 18th. By the 20th he had collapsed, and word of his grave illness would have spread quickly, particularly in Masonic circles. The Thun family would have moved swiftly to extinguish the debt and gag Lichnowsky, and Swieten would have impressed on Constanze the need for absolute secrecy to avert scandal and disaster - at this point *Der Zauberflöte* was playing to packed houses, the Requiem was still being composed, and Mozart had received confirmation that he would succeed Hofmann as Kapellmeister of St Stephen's. Had he lived, he had every chance of extricating himself from the mess he was in - provided the Thun/Swieten axis could keep him on the rails (which they now had additional interest in doing). If they could not, nobody could.

If an unorthodox intervention into the files of the Hofkammer had been deemed necessary because of the urgency and exceptional nature of the circumstances, it could have been discreetly managed. Not only was Count Thun a Hofkammerer, a Privy Councillor and a Grand Master, but his sister's husband was none other than Prince Dietrichstein, the all-powerful Imperial Obersthofmeister, former (?) Rosicrucian, and Provincial Grand Master of the Austrian Lodges. And Countess Pergen, wife of the chief of the secret police, was a friend of Countess Thun's. Whatever the reason for Baron van Swieten's dismissal, he was reinstated within the year. I don't think Constanze ever told. Not her mother, not her sisters, not even Nissen. If she needed to vent her feelings, she could turn to Puchberg, Swieten, or Countess Thun.

When Constanze had the Nissen biography published in 1828, there was a very long distribution list which makes interesting reading. The King and every member of the Prussian royal family received a copy, or copies, and every member of the court orchestra. And a vellum copy went to the third Prince Lichnowsky in Troppau.

Why was there no leak in the lower echelons of society? They didn't need the truth, they had their story, the rumours were rife, jokes were made. Perinet's satire (see Brauneis article) would not be funny unless it was close to what was believed to have happened, and in the tavern, in the Freihaustheater, in the Prater - who cared about Mozart's honour? He was a man as other men, he gambled, drank and womanised, so what? And they just loved *The Magic Flute*.

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