

A note of introduction: For Stanley Sadie, Idomeneo was special. He had involved himself with it for many years and written about it frequently. Now it came at that critical junction in the writing of the book, drawing Mozart's early years to a close and setting the stage for "the next and the most dramatic chapters in his relations with the Salzburg court" and in Vienna, "where he was to spend the rest of his life." My thanks to Julie Anne Sadie and W.W. Norton & Company for allowing me to include this culminating chapter of "Mozart: The Early Years, 1756-1781" here.

Stanley Sadie

Idomeneo at Munich

IDOMENEO IS MOZART'S Mannheim opera. 'My dearest wish', he told the Palatine Elector in November 1777, 'is to write an opera here'. It took three years for his wish to be fulfilled, and by that time 'here' was somewhere else. What he had wanted was to write an opera that drew on the intellectual commitment of the Mannheim court coupled with the expressive resource of the splendid Mannheim orchestra. But now, of course, the Munich and Mannheim courts were amalgamated, the Elector Palatine was the Elector of Bavaria, and most of the members of the former orchestra were in Munich, where they formed the basis of the Bavarian court orchestra. So it was from Munich that the commission came in 1780. Mozart had his connections there too, including the opera intendant Count Seeau, to whom he will surely have spoken when in 1779 he was in the city and went to the carnival opera. His friends from Mannheim, Raaff and Cannabich in particular (Cannabich was close to Countess Paumgarten, the Elector's current favourite), are likely to have supported his claims for consideration. The fee he was paid is unknown. Leopold referred in a letter to its modesty;¹ it may have been as little as the 125 gulden he had talked of, back in 1777, for a German opera in Munich, though more probably it was nearer 200. The librettist received 90 gulden and the translator 45.

The choice of topic for a new opera, especially one as important as the carnival opera, lay with the ruler himself, in consultation with his literary advisers and the opera intendant. The Mannheim court had long been progressive in its operatic outlook.² Operas given there had often used texts based on French models, and there had been experiments, as in Schweitzer's works, with opera in German. The 1780 carnival opera, *Telemaco*, was by a Mannheim composer, Franz Paul Grua, primarily a writer of church music, and this was his only opera. Its main source was François de la Motte-Fénelon's influential didactic romance *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1696), in which a version of the mythological story of Idomeneus, king of Crete at the time of the Trojan War, is related. Fénelon was an admired Enlightenment figure: the Mozarts had visited his tomb at Cambrai in 1766, and Wolfgang read at least part of *Télémaque* at Bologna during the summer of 1770.³

THE FOOTNOTES ARE FOUND ON PAGES 16 AND 17; THE INDEX BEGINS AT PAGE 17.

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The text for Mozart's opera was to be based on the libretto that Antoine Danchet had written for André Campra's *Idoménée*, given at the Paris Opéra in 1712, drawn from Fénelon and a drama of 1705 by Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon. The five-act *tragédie en musique* now had to be translated and rearranged in three acts. An Italian librettist was needed. Clearly it would be convenient to engage someone resident in Salzburg who could work closely with Mozart. One of the chaplains at the court there was Giovanni Battista (or Gianbattista) Varesco, born in Trento in 1735 and trained in the classics by the Jesuits. Presumably Mozart and his father put his name to Seeau when the commission was agreed, during the late spring or the summer of 1780. There is a note in Nannerl's diary, in Mozart's hand, of a visit by Varesco to the Mozarts' house (his only recorded one during the summer) on 22 August.

We have no means of knowing whether the 22 August meeting was an initial approach, a discussion of progress to date or, least likely, the handing-over of a draft text. Most probably it was about that time that a plan for the opera, referred to several times in the correspondence, was drawn up: it will have constituted a list of the scenes, indicating the placing of the lyrical musical numbers (arias, ensembles, choruses) and probably also where the recitative was to be orchestrally accompanied as opposed to simple recitative with continuo. The plan was submitted for agreement with Count Seeau and others at Munich, probably including Cannabich (as orchestra director), the ballet master, the scene designer and even the senior singers.

Varesco's task was a complicated and difficult one. Mozart, and his father too, probably played a considerable part, not as regards the actual wording but in determining the structure. Varesco had not only to translate the text – he used about two-thirds of Danchet's actual lines in direct translation – and to adjust the plot, but also in effect to change the genre. It had to be given the happy ending that by this date was obligatory, politically and philosophically, and it had to be imbued with some of the moral force that had become part of serious opera in the Metastasian era – human beings must be less the playthings of the gods and more in control of their own fates, and thus made responsible for their bad deeds and worthy of reward for their good ones.⁴ Varesco reduced the number of characters, taking out most of Danchet's confidants (allowing for soliloquy, as opposed to the dialogue so beloved of French *tragédie*) as well as the now out-dated allegorical or supernatural figures (Jealousy, Nemesis and Venus). He needed to eliminate or adapt the *divertissements*, the spectacular dance and choral scenes important in French opera. He had to adjust Danchet's scene structure to some degree so that arias represented an emotional culmination, as in normal Metastasian *opera seria*, but – and this was surely at Mozart's specific request – he often kept characters on stage, even after their own arias, to maintain continuity by eliding scenes, so that the action would be as if in 'real time'.

Writing for the Munich company, Mozart had no need to defer composition until he met the singers. He knew all but one of them already and had composed for Raaff and Dorothea Wendling in the past. (Aloysia Weber was no longer in the company: she and her family had left in 1779 when she took up a position in Vienna, and on 31 October 1780 she had married the court painter and actor Joseph Lange. Her father had died in Vienna in October 1779.) He could start at

the beginning and write most of the opera straight through, if he wanted to. But he would of course need to be in Munich, to be sure that the singers were happy with their arias (and to adjust or rewrite them if not), to teach them to those singers who needed it, to complete the work in collaboration with the intendant and his colleagues, to rehearse the opera and to direct the early performances. There is no record of his application to the archbishop for permission to travel to Munich, nor of the archbishop's reply, but a later reference in the correspondence implies that he was granted only six weeks' leave, scarcely sufficient for a full-scale serious opera – and that despite the promises that Leopold had originally secured, or claimed to have secured, about leave of absence to compose operas. (Leopold later decided to interpret this as six weeks to compose and another six to rehearse and perform; the archbishop was preoccupied with other matters and raised no objection.)⁵

During the composition of well over half of *Idomeneo*, Varesco was in Salzburg and Mozart was in Munich. Their collaboration was conducted by post, with Leopold Mozart serving as intermediary, and a very active intermediary with plenty of opinions of his own. This, happily for posterity, means that we have access to a unique and extraordinarily revealing correspondence, which illuminates every aspect of the work's genesis – its planning, its composition and the theatrical and other practical factors affecting its performance – and above all Mozart's thinking about the relationship of words and drama to music. It also sheds light on the role Leopold continued to play at this point in his son's composing.⁶

IDOMENEO DEALS WITH the dilemma of the father called upon to sacrifice his child, a tale familiar in eastern Mediterranean mythology (as in the biblical story of Jephtha and his daughter Iphis, and the *Iliad* story of Agamemnon and Iphigeneia). Idomeneo, king of Crete, beset by a ferocious storm at sea on his arrival home from the Trojan War, promises Neptune the sacrifice of the first human being he meets if he is spared. He meets a young man who, to his horror, identifies himself as his son Idamante. He flees and tries to circumvent the obligations of his vow, concealing his obligation until he is compelled to reveal it, when a monster ravages the land. Idamante, who is loved by both Ilia (whom he loves) and Electra, prepares himself for sacrifice but is spared by the god, speaking through his oracle, when Ilia offers herself in his stead. This is the cast:

Idomeneus [Idomeneo], <i>king of Crete</i>	Anton Raaff (<i>tenor</i>)
Idamantes [Idamante], <i>his son</i>	Vincenzo dal Prato (<i>castrato soprano</i>)
Ilia, <i>Trojan princess</i>	Dorothea Wendling (<i>soprano</i>)
Electra [Elettra], <i>Greek princess</i>	Elisabeth Wendling (<i>soprano</i>)
Arbaces [Arbace], <i>Idomeneus's confidant</i>	Domenico de' Panzacchi (<i>tenor</i>)
High Priest	Giovanni Valesi (<i>tenor</i>)
Oracle	[Unknown] (<i>bass</i>)
Chorus of Cretans, Trojan prisoners, sailors	

Mozart left Salzburg on 5 November 1780, travelling overnight by the mail coach. It was an uncomfortable journey: ' . . . I really never thought I should bring my behind to Munich intact! – it became quite sore – and no doubt a fiery red – for two whole stages I sat with my hands dug into the upholstery and my

behind in mid-air'. He was soon in contact with Seeau and on 8 November sent instructions to Varesco about the preparation of the libretto for printing. Mozart warned him that alterations would be needed, including cuts in the recitative, but reassured him that his whole text would be printed in the libretto for sale in the opera house (this was the customary procedure: unset passages were normally distinguished by quotation marks, as 'versi virgolati', or with brackets, although here they are unmarked). He also asked Varesco to modify the text of Ilia's Act 2 aria, 'Se il padre perdei' ('Though I lost my father'), to remove an aside – admissible in dialogue, but not in an aria, where words have to be repeated. He notes that 'we have agreed' that the aria would be an Andantino with obbligato flute, oboe, bassoon and horn. This statement indicates a limit to the composer's autonomy: Seeau and Cannabich, and perhaps Dorothea Wendling (who would be singing the aria), partook in the decision, although the idea will surely have come from Mozart himself, thinking of Wendling, Ramm and his other friends in the orchestra.

That aria falls early in Act 2. It seems likely that Act 1 was by then nearly complete and Mozart may have been quite advanced with Act 2, as on 15 November he could report that Elisabeth Wendling (always 'Lisel' in his letters) was delighted with her two arias and had sung them half-a-dozen times (the second falls halfway through Act 2). The Wendling sisters-in-law were typically cast, Dorothea in the *prima donna* role, calling for pathetic singing, Lisel in the fiery *seconda donna* one.⁷ Dorothea too was 'arcicontentissima' with the opening scene. Mozart wrote Idomeneo's Act 1 aria within a few days of reaching Munich; he showed it to Raaff on 14 November. No doubt he felt he should postpone composing for the elderly tenor, now 66, until he had heard him again. (The aria is written on different paper, a type otherwise used only in Act 3, so probably bought in Munich, and Mozart's letter of 27 December anyway makes it clear that Leopold had not heard it.) Mozart had misgivings about Raaff's acting ('like a statue') and feared for the crucial recognition scene where father and son meet and which demanded particular sensitivity, especially as he had heard that the castrato had never before appeared on the stage (that was not in fact true) and was apt to run out of breath in the middle of an aria. When Mozart came to work with his 'molto amato castrato dal Prato' he realized that he would have to teach him the opera note by note.

That ironic phrase comes in Mozart's letter of 15 November, by which date discussion had begun of the general shape of the drama as it was developing. From this point onwards, two themes run through everything Mozart had to say on the subject: brevity and naturalness. It had become plain to him that the libretto was far too long and could not be set in full. Varesco had to be told that a duet planned for the sacrifice scene, where Idamante and Ilia vie for the right to die so that the other may live, must go, 'and indeed with more profit than loss to the opera; for when you read it you realize that it becomes limp and cold. . . and the noble struggle between Ilia and Idamante is prolonged and loses its force'. Varesco resisted, but Leopold persuaded him, and went on to advise Mozart how the scene should be set: 'a few words of recitative, interrupted by a subterranean rumbling, and then the utterance of a subterranean voice. This voice and its accompaniment must be moving, terrifying and out of the ordinary; and it can be a masterpiece of harmony'. Leopold makes suggestions too about the staging. There was no single stage director or producer in charge of such

matters. Mozart's letter of 13 November refers to a working lunch at Seeau's with Cannabich, the stage designer Lorenzo Quaglio and the ballet-master Le Grand on the subject, and in a later letter he refers to the 'action and groupings' being settled with Le Grand. It generally fell to the librettist, as creator of the drama, to control the staging, but the composer, the designer and the ballet-master would also contribute their ideas, and so too would the singers, especially the senior ones, in their own arias. Stage etiquette was so standardized and stage compoartment so well understood that there was little scope for disagreement.

Effective musical drama was one thing, plausibility another. The text had specified that Idomeneo, a king, should be all alone on a ship at his first entry. That would not do, Mozart said; a king must have a retinue. Leopold remarked that he had made this point before in a letter to Munich but had been overruled, as thunderstorms and the sea pay no attention to the laws of etiquette. But now Quaglio himself raised the point. A suitable modification would be made. Then, Mozart asked, could the short aria for Idomeneo within the Act 2 finale be dropped and a recitative substituted, at the point where a thunderstorm has frustrated the departure of Idamante and Electra? 'There will be such noise and confusion that an aria at this point would cut a feeble figure. . . and the thunderstorm is hardly likely to subside just for Mr Raaff to sing an aria, is it?' The vain Raaff, wanting more opportunities than his earlier arias allowed to show off his cantabile, asked for an extra aria at the end of Act 3, where a quartet had been planned, which Mozart thought a good idea – 'thus', he wrote, 'a useless piece will be got rid of – and Act 3 will be far more effective'.

In his first two weeks in Munich Mozart, it seems, was doing almost as much planning and working with the singers as actual composing. He did write one piece beside Raaff's aria. Before he left Salzburg he had promised to provide a song for use in a play, Gozzi's *Le due notti affannose*, being given (in German, probably as *Peter der Grausame*) by Emanuel Schikaneder's company, who were playing at the theatre. Leopold had to send him a couple of reminders. The piece, 'Die neugeborne Ros' entzückt' K.315a, was wholly lost until 1996, when one sheet (probably of four or five) came to light. But by 24 November – when he told his father about a scandalous incident at a court concert, when the husband of the famous soprano Madame Mara had tried to oust the orchestra's cellist and practically came to blows with Cannabich – he was planning the embarkation scene at the end of Act 2. The original libretto here had four appearances of the choral refrain, with three solo sections in between, and these were reduced to two and a single solo. Five days later Mozart had received a text for the new Raaff aria, but neither he nor Raaff liked it, particularly since the way the sense fell across the lines precluded a normal musical treatment of the verse; would Varesco try again? Also, he commented on the oracle scene:

Tell me, do you not find the speech of the subterranean voice too long? Consider it carefully.--Imagine yourself in the theatre, and that the voice must be terrifying – it must be penetrating – and one must believe that it is real – how can this be believed, when the speech is so long, for during this time the hearer will become increasingly sure that it is meaningless? If the Ghost's speech in *Hamlet* were not so long it would have a better effect.

Just before then, Mozart had lunched with Panzacchi. One result – there being no such thing as a free lunch – was a request that Arbace's Act 3 recitative be extended; 'we must do what we can to oblige this worthy old fellow', who was a good actor. Raaff had now seen his Act 2 aria and 'is as excited by it as a passionate young man with his beloved, for he sings it at night before he goes to sleep and again in the morning when he wakes up'. At the first rehearsal, at Seeau's house with a reduced band, Ramm had told Mozart that no music had ever impressed him so deeply. 'I cannot tell you', Mozart wrote to Leopold, 'how delighted and astonished they all were.' Most of the family correspondence during December is concerned with local news and gossip, with reports on musical events and, from Nannerl to Wolfgang, on theatre activities in Salzburg. In only one letter, written on 16 December when the six-week leave was due to expire, does Mozart refer to his discontent with Salzburg, in particular the archbishop and his nobility. He clearly had hopes that a Munich position might be available. On 29 November 1780, Maria Theresa had died in Vienna. With Munich outside the Habsburg domains this fortunately did not involve closure of the theatres, but it did make it necessary for Mozart to ask Leopold to send his black suit (in which Leopold could conveniently wrap a pair of trumpet mutes, not available in Munich and needed in the march in Act 2).

But a few days later more anxieties surfaced. On 19 December, when Mozart had only three arias, a chorus, the overture and the ballet music still to write, the first two acts were to be rehearsed with full orchestra, the third (as far as it went) with a small group. This must have shown that the opera was running far too long. Mozart demanded cuts in several places, including the recognition scene in Act 1 and at the opening of Act 2. Leopold summoned Varesco for an emergency meeting. They 'saw no reason to shorten' the recitative; he explains why every line is significant, and ends with proposals of cuts of about a minute in Act 1 and a half-minute and two-and-a-half minutes in Act 2. In his next letter Mozart described further tussles with Raaff, who objected to the quartet in Act 3 – no opportunity to open up the voice – and complained about the new Act 3 aria, with its awkward syllables ('vien mi a rin vigorir'). Leopold argued the point, but by 1 January 1781 Varesco had written another new text, and Mozart had it two days later and immediately set it. The oracle's utterance came up for discussion and drew suggestions from Leopold:⁸

I imagine you will choose low wind instruments to accompany the subterranean voice. How would it be if, after the *slight* subterranean rumble, the instruments *sustained*, or rather *began to sustain*, their notes, softly, and then make a *crescendo such as might inspire terror*, and during the *decrescendo the voice would begin to sing*? And there might be a terrifying crescendo at *each phrase uttered by the voice*.

To this Mozart responded on 3 January: the accompaniment was for just three trombones and two horns, behind the stage. That however was only the beginning of a saga. A week later he reported a 'desperate fight' with Seeau over the trombones; clearly the hire of three extra players for a few moments' music did not please the intendant. Another week later, after rehearsal of Act 3, the opera was still running far too long. The aria for Idamante, as he goes to his (supposed) death, had to go; 'in any case, it is out of place there', Mozart wrote on 18 January, not without justification. And finally the new aria for Raaff, which had caused so much trouble, had to go too: 'we must make a virtue of necessity'. This surely was problematic, since it meant that after the oracle's

pronouncement (which Mozart had shortened yet again) there was only Electra's stormy aria, a brief recitative and the chorus and ballet to end the opera.

At this point the family correspondence ends. Leopold and Nannerl left for Munich, arriving there on 26 January 1781. It must have been shortly after Mozart's final letter that the libretto was reprinted. Like most librettists, Varesco took his work very seriously in its own right and required that his drama be printed in full, and in the correspondence Leopold often stressed the importance of respecting his wishes. He had sent the text, with a German translation by J. A. Schachtner, and it had already been typeset and printed, including all the items and the recitative to be cut, with the Italian text on the left-hand pages and the German on the right. But now there were so many changes that it would be useless for its primary purpose, that is, to enable a member of the audience to follow the text in the opera house. So a revised edition was rushed into print, in Italian only (it was too late now for a translation). Reflecting the intentions of Mozart and his colleagues as they were, probably on or about 20 January, it shows the cuts he had detailed in his letters and more. Electra's final aria, 'D'Oreste, d'Aiace', is excised, replaced by a fiery exit recitative, and there are cuts in the earlier public scenes too. The text of the oracle's pronouncement in the original libretto is the lengthy one that Mozart first set, before he protested about it; he had in fact produced two more settings with trombones, one fairly short and another a perfunctory nine bars, but the text in the second libretto corresponds with a further, fourth setting, without trombones, presumably under pressure from Seeau. Economy had prevailed.

In the edition of *Idomeneo* published in the NMA in 1972, the primary text corresponds broadly to that of the second libretto;⁹ all the remaining music, including many stretches of recitative, is consigned to an appendix. But in 1981 the original performing score, prepared by a court copyist, belatedly came to light in the Bavarian State Library. This makes it clear that the battles over the text persisted up to the last moment.¹⁰ There are two further layers of changes, made in pencil and red crayon (there are corresponding red crayon marks in the autograph score). In Acts 1 and 2 there are some small cuts, mainly in recitative, and of singers' cadenzas. In Act 3 two more entire numbers disappear, the love duet for Ilia and Idamante at the beginning of the act and Arbace's scene, with his finely sombre orchestral recitative and his aria, soon after. There are also clear indications that Idamante's 'No, la morte' was restored, although it may seem the least significant and dramaturgically the weakest of the last three arias as well as being the one Mozart was least reluctant to part with.

Idomeneo had its first performance on 29 January 1781, at the new electoral theatre, now known, after its architect, as the Cuvilliès-Theatre: it still stands (although in a slightly different position since its destruction in World War II). The opera was repeated on 5 and 12 February and had been scheduled for two further performances, on 19 and 26 February, but gave way to a banquet in honour of the Duke Karl August Christian of Zweibrücken and in favour of a fancy-dress ball. The 12 February performance was followed by a ball. Possibly some of the marked cuts may have been made only on nights when an early finish was necessary; or perhaps there were changes, one way or another, between performances in the light of the opera's length. There are no records whatever of its reception. Mozart himself reported the Elector's pleasure after one of the rehearsals. Newspaper reports merely mention the event, that Quaglio was the designer and that text and music came from Salzburg.

JUST AFTER THE beginning of Act 2 of *Idomeneo*, Ilia sings her aria with four obbligato wind instruments, 'Se il padre perdei', the E flat *aria d'affetto* that is traditionally the emotional centrepiece of the *prima donna's* contribution. It is tenderly written and exquisitely scored. In it she tells Idomeneo that although she has lost her father (King Priam) and her Trojan homeland, she has found new kindness here in Crete and he is as a second father to her. She goes off, leaving him alone to muse, in his ensuing recitative, on the cruel fate that his oath has brought about, for her as well as for himself and Idamante. The first part of his recitative is run through with excerpts from the orchestral accompaniment to her aria, now darkened by transposition to the minor key, a lower register and different scoring. This is a unique example, showing Mozart using thematic material in a new way, to comment on the relation between Ilia's hopes and Idomeneo's gloomy thoughts. He is recalling her expression of happiness which, as the music is telling us, is illusory.

Within the confines of the operatic idiom of Mozart and his contemporaries, this is something that can be done only in what is usually called 'accompanied recitative' or 'orchestral recitative', of which there is far more, and of a far more varied character, in *Idomeneo* than in any of Mozart's earlier operas (and, broadly speaking, his later ones too). Here he uses orchestral recitative not, as he generally does elsewhere, primarily for representation of a character *in extremis*, leading to an aria in which the extreme emotion is given vent, but to play a much more active role in the depiction of character and feeling. This is of course not unrelated to what Gluck had been doing in his recent 'reform operas'. Mozart and his father knew Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Alceste*, and comparisons have been drawn between the oracle scenes in *Alceste* and *Idomeneo*. It is however clear from the family correspondence that, even though Leopold's ideas here were not unlike Gluck's, he thought when writing that he was making original suggestions; he would otherwise surely have referred to a model familiar to both of them. But Gluck was not the only 'reformer' in this sense. Other composers, such as Tommaso Traetta and Niccolò Jommelli, and librettists (notably Mattia Verazi) had been working to very similar ends, and several of them had been closely associated with Mannheim. Munich too had links with this reform movement during the 1760s and early 70s.¹¹ The central point, historically and aesthetically, is that from the outset *Idomeneo* was projected as an Italian opera on a French-style libretto, and that Mozart's opportunity to control the revision of the Danchet libretto allowed him, in his aim to write a powerful and effective *dramma per musica*, to expand his armoury and go far beyond the relatively simple succession of arias and recitatives that he had taken for granted as part of the genre when he was writing *Mitridate* and *Lucio Silla* in Italy.

The result is an opera in which the musical pull on the emotions very rarely relaxes. It begins in the eighth bar. The overture starts with a formal, conventional, fanfare-like phrase, to which the lower strings then respond, against a menacing tremolando, with a lowering chromatic phrase that at once hints at the dark events to come. The woodwind downward flick ending with repeated notes occurs at several points in the opera and seems to stand for Idamante:



It appears in Ilia's opening area, when she expresses her guilt at falling in love with a Greek:

27 **Andante con moto**
Ilia

e un gre-co a-do-re - rò? D'in-

32

- gra - ta al san - gue - mi - o

and most poignantly where Idomeneo finally discloses, in Act 3, the identity of the sacrifice victim. The form it takes there, five times in six successive bars at the end of the next example, incorporating chromatic falling fourths with some of the intermediate notes omitted, also occurs elsewhere, notably at the end of the overture and at the fateful moment where Idomeneo recognizes his son.

78 **Adagio**
Idomeneo

la vit - ti - ma è I - da - man - te,

80

e or or ve - dre - te, ah Nu - mi!

82 **Andante**
Oboe

con qual ci - glio?

Other phrases in the opera also seem to be used allusively, notably a short one that appears numerous times (for example in the closing three bars of the overture) and has been identified as referring to reconciliation.¹² These are not leitmotifs in the Wagnerian sense; Wagner's leitmotifs have a different function. It is highly unlikely that Mozart used such devices with any thought that they

would be perceptible as specific indicators of meaning to the opera-house listener, but they provide a particular kind of expressive coherence, and certainly held additional meaning for him as the creator of the work. Their persistent presence heightens the effect of the recitative. It is also likely that Mozart had the allusive use of key in his mind: there are several points at which striking or unconventional modulations seem in some sense portentous, or at least suggestive. The use of key in Mozart's operas is however a large topic and one better discussed in conjunction with the Da Ponte operas of the later 1780s.

Orchestral recitative is used in the opera in many other ways, often to more conventional and straightforward dramatic effect. At the moment where father and son recognize each other, simple recitative (with only continuo accompaniment) gives way to an orchestral outburst as Idomeneo sees the horror of the situation, and the orchestra plunges in as he exclaims 'Spietatissimi dei!' ('Pitiless gods!'). At the point in the final act when Ilia and Idamante come to perceive that their love is mutual, the strings steal softly in, lending the music a gentle flood of warmth as the couple move towards their duet. Orchestral recitative used a number of standard devices, of which Mozart had established his command in childhood and demonstrated in Milan in 1770. Here that repertory is extended, partly through a new kind of statuesque grandeur or formality of musical diction. Examples include the three sombre, martial wind calls heard at the end of the recognition scene when Idomeneo flees from Idamante and commands his son not to pursue him, and the six chilling chromatic wind flourishes that follow. And there are many examples where Mozart uses contrapuntal, often imitative writing for the strings to establish an almost ritual-like character to the utterance and give it due weight and moment: a good case is the last one in the opera, when Idomeneo addresses the people of Sidon as he hands on the throne. It is this sense of the hieratic that permeates the opera, and it is felt the most powerfully in the orchestral recitatives, which inhabit an exalted world into which Mozart never again ventured.

The role assigned to orchestral recitative is of course intimately connected with the mode of approach to, and departure from, the individual arias. The opera as conceived has fourteen arias, three for each principal and two for Arbace. Only four of them are preceded by simple recitative, the remainder by orchestral ones. Even more significant, just two end with a clear break and a resumption of recitative, although others have natural end-of-scene breaks. With several, Mozart ensures a sense of continuity by writing a brief orchestral phrase to lead directly into the resumption of recitative, so circumventing applause and avoiding any sense of a break in time and continuity. The opportunity for this enhanced continuity was provided by the French libretto, and we may be sure that Mozart had encouraged Varesco to preserve what he clearly saw as opportunities for sustaining the dramatic tension.

The planning of the arias to suit the voices available to him remained, in spite of any higher objectives, a central part of Mozart's task. No opera would be a success if the singers could not sing it effectively and with conviction. Mozart had little trouble with his cast. The *prima donna*, Dorothea Wendling, singing Ilia, had a sympathetic voice and musical personality; here, exceptionally, she has an aria close to the beginning of each of the three acts. Only the first is preceded by an orchestral recitative, which sets the tone of the opera, with its wide and strongly expressed series of emotions, before leading to her G minor aria with its complex

of emotions, sorrow, guilt and love. This aria leads directly into simple recitative: Mozart is both symbolizing her emergence from her inner thoughts to the realities around her and at the same time ensuring dramatic continuity. In just the same way, her second aria leads directly into Idomeneo's recitative where its motifs are echoed, and her third aria at the opening of Act 3 gives way to Idamante's entry and her alarmed exclamation in orchestral recitative (she had thought him departed for Argos with Electra). The range of her arias is narrow, essentially three different expressions of tenderness: she is emotionally a fixed, stable point in the opera.

Electra's arias, which are all seamlessly linked to the items around them, take advantage of Lisel Wendling's passionate manner. Her Act 1 outburst on learning that Idomeneo is apparently drowned is coloured by swooping orchestral figuration hinting at the waves, and is marked by a curious tonal twist: it is in D minor but its recapitulation begins in C minor, giving a sense of the music unhinged or, to the listener, in some way awry or out of kilter. It soon returns to D minor, but then finally reverts to C minor with a violent turn as the aria leads directly into the next scene – the storm that strikes Idomeneo's ship as it approaches Crete. (Electra's reaction makes better sense in Danchet's version than in Varesco's, since there Idomeneo has amorous designs on Ilia, and his death would leave her free for Idamante.) Electra's gentler Act 2 aria again follows an orchestral recitative, motifs from which find a place in the secondary material of the aria, and it leads into the ceremonial march to the harbour. Her Act 3 aria, omitted as we have seen at the premiere, is the furious, crazed 'D'Oreste, d'Aiace', arising from an accompanied recitative of the same character but ending as she storms off and the last scene begins.

It was cutting the suit to fit Anton Raaff's difficult figure that was most problematic to Mozart. Raaff was anxious to deploy his smooth cantabile but eager too to show that he was still capable of dealing with virtuoso *fioritura*. The words of Idomeneo's first aria, as he contemplates the terrible consequences of his vow, offer no scope for either, but the Act 2 'Fuor del mar, ho un mar in seno' is a noble *tour de force*, a brilliant D major piece with trumpets and drums and military rhythms, music fit for a king. It duly portrays both the raging of the seas and the storm within his breast, with its agitated, tremolo-like writing for the strings, its long vocal roulades and its burbling wind passages all adding up to a noble expression of the agonies of mind he has created for himself. This aria ends with a formal cadence – Raaff had to be able to acknowledge his applause – but when, five years later, Mozart revised the opera he provided not only a simplified version for a less sturdy tenor but also adjusted the ending to make the music flow continuously into the next orchestral recitative. Raaff's last aria, 'Torna la pace', bows to his demands, allowing for his old-fashioned *portamento* singing in the manner of his favourite composer, Hasse. It is carefully placed in his best register and never covered by the quite rich orchestration: it is a pity that it was never sung.¹³ It is a three-part aria, *A* (ending in the dominant), *B* (in a contrasting metre) and *A'* (modified to end in the tonic). This sonata-form-like pattern, though usually with no contrast in metre and sometimes no 'development' area at all, predominates in *Idomeneo* and allows for arias more succinct and more purposefully shaped than the expansive scheme of the earlier operas required.

The music for Idamante, most of which Mozart evidently composed before he had met Dal Prato (two of his three arias are in Act 1), is no less carefully composed than that for the singers he knew. The first, 'Non ho colpa', responding to Ilia's reproach at his words of love, emerges from a quickening simple recitative into a slow introductory section, then moves on to an Allegro with several brief Larghetto moments. Its main section is distinguished by the rich expressive detail of its scoring and those shifts between major and minor that cast shadows so strongly over much of the music of *Idomeneo* – including Idamante's second aria, sung after his encounter and apparent rejection by his father. Compared with the music for the principals, the two arias for Arbace are slender. Mozart's professed desire to do well by the singer, Panzacchi, could not override his incapacity to supply strong music for words that carry no effective message. The supreme moment for Arbace is the orchestral recitative 'Sventurata Sidon!', preceding his Act 3 aria, in which he bewails the unhappy fate of his nation, but this was cut before the first night.

That recitative follows what is perhaps the most emotionally charged item in the opera, the quartet 'Andrò ramingo e solo': Idamante, told by his father to leave, resolves to seek death alone elsewhere. There ensues an ensemble like no other in Mozart's operas, as the lovers express their suffering, Electra calls for vengeance and Idomeneo himself rails at Neptune, all in music that is highly chromatic, constantly shifting between major and minor and modulating to distant flat keys. The voices sing sometimes singly or in pairs, often in successive imitations that build up a full and harmonically rich texture, heavy with dissonance and of almost unbearable poignancy. The quartet ends with Idamante repeating his opening line, 'I go to wander alone', his last phrase tailing off unresolved as the orchestra draws to a hushed E flat cadence.¹⁴ A later anecdote refers to this quartet. When Mozart and his wife were visiting Leopold and Nannerl in Salzburg in 1783, the quartet was sung: Mozart 'was so overcome that he burst into tears and quitted the chamber'.¹⁵ Mozart valued it at the time of its composition too. When Raaff had questioned it, as it gave his voice no scope, Mozart replied: ' . . . if I knew of one single note that should be changed in this quartet, I should alter it at once. But there is nothing so far in my opera with which I am as pleased . . .'.¹⁶ There are two other ensemble items. The love duet for Idamante and Ilia in Act 3 which immediately precedes the quartet is an appealing, sensitively written two-tempo piece, moving from an Andante to a gentle Allegretto as their love is fully owned; it was omitted in the original performances. There is also a terzet, which in effect is part of the Act 2 finale.

That and the other great public scenes represent another part of the French legacy to *Idomeneo*. French opera of the post-Lully period normally included extended and spectacular *divertissements*, often one in each of the five acts, embodying dance and choral singing and sometimes only quite loosely related to the *tragédie* itself. The ending of Act 1 of *Idomeneo* is typical, as the original libretto acknowledges. There the words 'Fine dell'Atto Primo' follow Idamante's aria, there is a new heading 'Intermezzo' for a scene in which Idomeneo's homecoming is celebrated, and at the end the words 'Fine dell'Atto Primo, e dell'Intermezzo' appear. The Act 2 finale is heralded by a formal march as the Cretans arrive to see Idamante embark for Argos with Electra, and a chorus (in E major, Mozart's favoured key for gentle breezes) 'Placido è il mar' follows, in a gently rocking metre, with one solo verse from Electra (not the three Varesco had contemplated). After Idomeneo has charged his son to heroic deeds to fit

him for kingship, the three join in a terzet, for Electra a formal farewell, for Idamante a heartbreaking parting from Ilia, for Idomeneo a fearful evasion of his vow. The music touches on all these emotions. When Idamante and Electra move to embark, it turns from major to minor and accelerates as the sky blackens and a fierce storm breaks – 'Qual nuovo terrore!' ('What new terror!') cry the chorus, as the music tears into shooting scales and wailing chromatics and a fearsome monster emerges from the sea. The people of Crete will suffer for the failings of their king: who, they ask, in a demand twice repeated and punctuated by harsh, disruptive wind chords, is to blame? In a tense, fragmented recitative (this is the point where Mozart wisely ruled out an aria) Idomeneo confesses that he is the guilty one. The storm rages on to turbulent music, and the terror-struck Cretans flee the monster, leaving a desolate scene.

That scene drew from Mozart the boldest music he had yet composed, in its range of expression and its novelty of techniques, both harmonic and orchestral. The great scenes of Act 3 surpass it in grandeur and majesty. After the quartet and Arbace's scene, a flurry of allusive themes of strongly contrasting character and abrupt changes of key warn us that great events are afoot. The High Priest calls Idomeneo to account in the great square before the palace for the blood, death and devastation that have beset Sidon: 'Al tempio, Signore!' ('To the temple, Sire!'). Who is the victim? Idomeneo can no longer conceal the truth. 'Oh voto tremendo!' ('Oh terrible vow!'), sing the people of Sidon, as the music settles in the fateful key of C minor, to the anxiously muttering triplets of the muted violins, the chromatic wails of the woodwind and the sombre fanfares of the muted trumpets. The choral utterance possesses a gravity learnt in Salzburg Cathedral but far beyond anything Mozart had written for the church. The music softens, to C major, through a passage laden with familiar motivic allusion, into a solemn march in F as they move to the temple. There Idomeneo, echoed by the priests, prays to Neptune in a 'Cavatina con coro' of extraordinary originality and compelling hieratic force. The violins, *pizzicato*, are in fast-moving arpeggio patterns, the flutes and oboes in echoing, overlapping three-note phrases that lend the texture a curious glacial quality, and at the end an ascending, aspiring oboe phrase falls back on a sombre cadence, unmistakable symbol of a prayer unanswered.

The dénouement follows, with Idamante's entry and the long, intense dialogue between father and son before the sacrifice. Idamante's aria 'No, la morte io non pavento' ('No, I do not fear death') belongs within it, but it is easy to sympathize with Mozart's doubts about its dramatic propriety, and still easier to agree that a further duet with Ilia at this point would have been damaging. Such movements at this point belong in an earlier concept of serious opera, and *Idomeneo* has gone beyond them. The same cannot be said of Electra's aria. Its excision makes her role seem, if not trivial, at least supernumerary (which in a sense it anyway is, since she has no real involvement in the main action of the opera). But the closing scenes do demand something further from Idomeneo himself – an expression of his setting right his relationship with the world – and that is exactly what Mozart's noble accompanied recitative and his beautiful, lyrical and exquisitely scored setting of 'Torna la pace al core' does perfectly (making prominent use of clarinets, available in Munich but used surprisingly little in the opera). It is, however, very long for its situation in the opera, as Mozart must have realized when he composed it and then speedily agreed to omit it. The work ends with a chorus and a ballet, including a splendid and expansive French-style Chaconne.

MOZART WAS 25 YEARS OLD two days before the opera's premiere. *Idomeneo* is, however, a fully mature work, and it represents the peak of his achievement in serious opera, the field of music that mattered to him most of all. Not until the very end of his life, more than ten years later, did he have the opportunity to return to serious opera, and by then the genre was a different one. Some writers have sought to explain the depth of his involvement in the work with some pseudo-Freudian explanation: it is an opera about father and son, Idomeneo and Idamante, and so struck a special chord in a composer whose relationship with his father was so central. This is specious and unnecessary and in any case the opera is unconcerned with the father-son relationship, which is normal, uncomplicated and predictable. The crucial relationship, the one that governs Idomeneo's actions, is that between himself and the gods, or more broadly between the society of ancient Crete and its gods. *Idomeneo* stands as a masterpiece because Mozart was able to forge what is essentially a new language, in which he could portray so strongly in his music the stark inevitabilities of Greek tragedy while at the same time drawing us deeply into the predicaments and the fates of its principal characters.

Mozart was understandably eager to present *Idomeneo* in Vienna during the next phase of his life. But serious Italian opera was not performed in Vienna except on special court occasions. He had hopes of its use during a state visit and played it over to a group of influential Viennese in May 1781, but Gluck's music was preferred. He was ready to adapt the work to the different conditions there: 'I would have altered Idomeneo's role completely and made it a bass part for Fischer. I would have made several other changes and arranged it more in the French style', he wrote.¹⁷ As in a French opera, the king would have been a bass and Idamante a tenor. His friends advised him to include music from it in his concerts, and he did so at least once, when 'Se il padre perdei' was sung, by Aloysia Lange, on 23 March 1783.¹⁸

Not until 1786 did he have an opportunity for anything more extensive, when he organized a performance in the theatre at the Auersperg Palace in Vienna, with amateur singers. The part of Arbace was dropped, and Idamante was cast as a tenor. This occasioned a number of changes. The Act 2 trio and the Act 3 quartet were adjusted to accommodate a tenor voice: simply singing Idamante's part an octave lower would have blurred the texture, and other modifications were needed.¹⁹ Mozart made a shorter and simpler version of 'Fuor del mar', and adjusted the ending so that it led without a break into Electra's recitative. (It was long supposed that this version was made because Raaff balked at its demands, or Mozart could not trust him to meet them, but it is in fact on a paper-type that Mozart used only in Vienna in the period 1785-9 and there is no sign of it in the Munich performing material.) He wrote a new duet, 'Spiegarti non poss'io' (K.489), to replace the one for Ilia and Idamante in Act 3, which had never been performed; the new one is slower (in a single tempo, *Larghetto*) and substantially shorter.²⁰ Here Mozart made a rare clerical error, writing a soprano clef sign against Idamante's part but notating the music as if he had written a tenor clef. This would not be worth mentioning were it not that there is a greater enigma surrounding the other alteration, the addition of a new, extended aria for Idamante at the beginning of Act 2, to replace Arbace's scene. Mozart wrote an orchestral recitative, 'Non più, tutto ascoltai', and an aria, 'Non temer, amato bene' (K.490), but he notated them in the soprano clef, and this time at soprano pitch. Whether this was simply an error – it would be a highly

uncharacteristic one, for to him sound and symbol were one – or whether it signifies some other intention it is impossible to say. The aria itself is an appealing piece, cast in the new, now fashionable rondò form (a slow section followed by a fast one), and with an elaborate obbligato violin part, written for Mozart's friend Count Hatzfeld. But it can only be damaging to include it in a performance of the opera, for several reasons. In general style (and this applies equally to the orchestral recitative) it is markedly different from, and distinctly later than, the parent work, and the virtuoso violin writing and its interplay with the voice are out of keeping with it. It is excessively long for the opera, and the outright declaration of love on Idamante's part that it embodies is incompatible with what follows. The author of the words of the two new numbers is unknown, but it is unlikely to be Varesco. At the time Mozart was working closely with Lorenzo da Ponte.

THE MOZARTS WERE in no hurry to return to Salzburg. They were presumably obliged to remain in Munich for the first three performances, that is, until 12 February. At that point further performances may still have been in prospect, although none took place. The archbishop was in any case now away. He had left Salzburg about 20 January for Vienna, where there would be various festivities on the full succession of Joseph II after the death of his mother Maria Theresa. Some of the archbishop's retinue, Leopold had reported to his son,²¹ had already left, and others, including the castrato Ceccarelli and the violinist Brunetti, were preparing to follow; it must have occurred to them that Mozart, as the principal court keyboard player, was likely to be required too. The postponement of the *Idomeneo* première meant that Leopold could not seek permission for his journey from Colloredo, who had already left, and that meant too that he would not be drawing attention to Mozart's prolonged absence (Mozart had made it very clear, in his letter when the six weeks had expired, that but for Leopold's feelings he would welcome dismissal and a freelance life in Munich).

No doubt all three of the Mozarts took advantage of the social pleasures available to them in Munich during the carnival weeks. Wolfgang also did some composing. Traditionally, the *Kyrie* K.341 has been assigned to this period, and so until quite recently was the Serenade for 13 instruments K.361/370*a*, but the former probably, and the latter certainly, belong to rather later dates. He did however compose the Oboe Quartet K.370/368*b* in Munich, for Friedrich Ramm, a small masterpiece that artfully exploits the sweet tone and crisp articulation of the instrument. The central Adagio in D minor touches on real depth of feeling, and the finale is a frolic in which, for a time, the oboe has a different time-signature from the strings, leading to a witty contradiction of rhythms – clearly a jocular challenge from Mozart to Ramm. The only other certain product of the Munich weeks is a *scena*, written for the Elector's favourite, Countess Josepha von Paumgarten – a Metastasio setting: 'Misero, dove son! . . . Ah! non son' io che parlo' K.369. In its original context it is sung by a woman whose father's betrayal has led to her lover's imprisonment. It begins with an orchestral recitative, whose repeating string figuration has an almost *Idomeneo*-like character, followed by a two-part aria, a lyrical Andante and an Allegro, making no virtuoso demands. Mozart later had it sent to him in Vienna, where it was sung by the tenor Valentin Adamberger in the concert during Lent 1783 when Aloysia sang 'Se il padre perdei'.

The aria is dated 8 March 1781. Between 7 and 10 March the Mozarts visited the Augsburg area. Whether they called on Leopold's brother and Mozart's Bäsle in the city itself is unknown, but a letter survives reporting their visit to the Heiligkreuz monastery nearby: 'In the last few days we have had the honour and pleasure of the company of Herr Kapellmeister Mozard of Salzburg, whose two children, from Wednesday until today have continuously entertained us with almost more than heavenly music on two fortepianos'.²² On 12 March the family broke up: Leopold and Nannerl returned to Salzburg, but Wolfgang had been summoned to Vienna to attend the archbishop. On 14 March 1781 he arrived in the imperial capital, where the next and the most dramatic chapters in his relations with the Salzburg court were to be conducted and where he was to spend the rest of his life.

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FOOTNOTES

ABBREVIATIONS:

AcMOZ	<i>ACTA MOZARTIANA</i>
LMF	<i>LETTERS OF MOZART AND HIS FAMILY</i> ED. EMILY ANDERSON, REV. AFTER ALEX HYATT KING AND MONICA CAROLAN BY STANLEY SADIE AND FIONA SMART (LONDON, 1985, REV. 1988) [REFERENCES INDICATE LETTER NUMBERS]
MBA	<i>MOZART: BRIEFE UND AUFZEICHNUNGEN</i> , ED. WILHELM A. BAUER AND OTTO ERICH DEUTSCH WITH JOSEPH HEINZ EIBL (KASSEL, 1962-75) [REFERENCES INDICATE LETTER NUMBERS]
MDB	<i>MOZART: A DOCUMENTARY BIOGRAPHY</i> , ED. OTTO ERICH DEUTSCH, TRANS. ERIC BLOM, PETER BRANSCOMBE AND JEREMY NOBLE (LONDON, 1965, 2/1966)
MDL	<i>MOZART: DIE DOKUMENTE SEINES LEBENS, GESAMMELT UND ERLÄUTERT</i> , ED. OTTO ERICH DEUTSCH (KASSEL, 1961)
NMA	<i>WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART: NEUE AUSGABE SÄMTLICHER WERKE</i> [NEUE MOZART-AUSGABE], ED. INTERNATIONALE STIFTUNG MOZARTEUM SALZBURG (KASSEL ETC., 1955--)

1 Letter of 11 December 1780: *LMF* 373, *MBA* 558.

2 See Marita McClymonds: 'Mannheim, *Idomeneo* and the Franco Italian Synthesis in Opera Seria', *Mozart und Mannheim*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, Bärbel Pelker and Jochen Reutter (Frankfurt, 1994), 187-96.

3 See letters of 16 May 1766: *LMF* 41, *MBA* 108, and 8 September 1770: *LMF* 111a, *MBA* 207.

4 For an account of the transformation of the libretto, see Lois Rosow: '*Idomeneo* and *Idoménée: The French Disconnection*', paper read at the American Musicological Society, Chicago, 1991, and Julian Rushton and Don Neville: 'From Myth to Libretto', in *Idomeneo*, ed. Julian Rushton (Cambridge, 1993), 69-82.

5 See Mozart's letter to his father, 16 December 1780, *LMF* 376, *MBA* 563, and Leopold's reply of 25 December, *LMF* 380, *MBA* 569.

6 The letters drawn upon in this chapter are those written between 8 November 1780 and 22 January 1781: *LMF* 356-91, *MBA* 535-81.

- 7 See Paul Corneilson: 'Mozart's *Ilia* and *Electra*: New Perspectives on *Idomeneo*', *Mozarts Idomeneo und die Musik in München zur Zeit Karl Theodors*, ed. Theodore Gollner and Stephan Horner (Munich, 2001), 97-113; and Corneilson: 'An Intimate Vocal Portrait'.
- 8 Letter of 29 December 1780: *LMF* 382, *MBA* 572.
- 9 Exceptions are made for the choral scenes in Act 3, which are printed in full with 'Vi-de' markings to indicate the cuts.
- 10 See Robert Münster: 'Neues zum Münchner "Idomeneo" 1781', *AcMoz*, xxv (1982), 10-20.
- 11 See Karl Böhmer: *W.A. Mozarts Idomeneo und die Tradition der Karnevalsopern in München* (Tutzing, 1999).
- 12 See Daniel Hertz: 'Tonality and Motif in *Idomeneo*', *Musical Times*, cxv (1974), 382-6; Julian Rushton: 'La vittima è Idamante': Did Mozart have a Motive?', *Cambridge Opera journal*, iii (1991), 1-21; Julian Rushton: 'Tonality and Motive', *Idomeneo*, ed. Rushton, 129-39; and Rushton: 'A Reconciliation Motif in *Idomeneo*', *Words about Mozart: Essays in Honour of Stanley Sadie*, ed. Dorothea Link and Judith Nagley (Woodbridge, 2005), 21-32.
- 13 See Daniel Hertz: 'Raaff's Last Aria: a Mozartian Idyll in the Spirit of Hasse', *Musical Quarterly*, lx (1974), 517-43.
- 14 For discussion of the quartet see Daniel Hertz: 'The Great Quartet in Mozart's *Idomeneo*', *Music Forum*, v (1980), 233-56, and Marita McClymonds: 'The Great Quartet in *Idomeneo* and the Italian *opera seria* Tradition', *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on his Life and Music*, ed. Sadie, 449-76.
- 15 Rosemary Hughes and Nerina Medici di Marignano, eds.: *A Mozart Pilgrimage: Being the Travel Diaries of Vincent & Mary Novello in the Year 1829* (London, 1955), 114-15.
- 16 Letter of 27 December 1780, *LMF* 381, *MBA* 570.
- 17 See his letter of 12 September 1781: *LMF* 424, *MBA* 624.
- 18 Letter of 29 March 1783: *LMF* 484, *MBA* 734.
- 19 The two versions are printed in parallel in the NMA score.
- 20 There also survives a 22-bar sketch, Sk1785i in Ulrich Konrad: *Mozarts Schaffensweise* (Göttingen, 1992), 259, for a soprano-tenor duet in A major, which Konrad cannot place. It belongs to the period of the revision of *Idomeneo* and could be linked with the Act 3 duet, although the text Mozart ultimately used and the rhythms of the sketch do not match. See Ulrich Konrad: 'Mozart's Sketches', *Early Music*, xx (1992), 119-30.
- 21 Letter of 11 January 1781: *MBA* 578 (also *LMF* 388, but the relevant sections are omitted).
- 22 Letter from D.B. Strobl, treasurer of the monastery, to H. Lech: *MDB* 193, *MDL* 171.

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