

Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf

My Life

Contents.

1. First signs of my musical talents. My first performance in church.
2. How I met Prince Hildburghausen and entered his service. Kapellmeister Bonno.
3. I become a Page boy and am fitted out appropriately.
4. Vittoria Tesi's story. The parrot and the Holy Inquisition. A Duke is frustrated by a wig-maker.
5. My teacher Trani. How I was humiliated by the bandy-legged Mathes. The clock.
6. The journey to Schlosshof and my first sojourn there. A tragic-comic wolf hunt. A private shooting club. Travelling Players. Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* in a coach house.
7. I show off in Vienna. Useful advice for virtuosi. Cadenzas. A Viennese aristocrat's opinions about Mozart. Dülön's Fantasies.
8. Mademoiselle Starzer. Therese Teiber. Preparations. Peasant's ballet. The four bagpipes.
9. Emperor Franz at Schlosshof. A Peasant choir of 200 voices, some in trees. Water carousel. The Floating Garden. Gluck's Chinese opera. Unusual designs. Departure of the Imperial family.
10. My situation changes. I begin to compose. *Il professore di violino*. My daring ruse. Pale and red faces.
11. Short exile in Hildburghausen. Schweitzer. A fateful sleigh ride.
12. I get into bad company and start gambling. Desertion. Arrest. I am taken to Vienna and relate what happened to me there.
13. The orchestra is dismissed. Count Durazzo. My journey to Italy with Gluck. The Marini. My sojourn in Bologna. Farinelli, Nicolini and the blind beggar. Delegation. Padre Martini. A fright. My hasty return to Vienna. My contest with Lolli.
14. Out of pocket at the coronation of Joseph II. A misunderstanding between Count Spork and me. The Bishop of Grosswardein. My appointment.
15. Arrival in Pressburg. Journey to Prague. Pichel.
16. I become director of the orchestra. My first public appearance. Renner. Ungericht. Father Michael. Stadler etc. My first cantata. Building a theatre. My oratorio *Isaac*. My brief affair with the daughter of a noble *cassae perceptor*.
17. Scandalous denunciation sent to Maria Theresa. The Bishop's woes. The orchestra is dispersed. The story of Pichel's marriage.
18. My return to Vienna. Herr von Blanc and the Trieste factories. My trip to Venice. A lucky storm. My affair with a prima ballerina.
19. Count Lambert. The Prince Bishop of Breslau. My appointment. Stag hunting. I become *Eques aureatus*. Frederick II in Rosswalde. Count Hoditz. Affable exchanges with the Crown Prince. I am appointed Chief Forest Ranger.
20. The oval theatre in the tower. My oratorio *Davide*. My comic opera *Il Viaggiatore Americano*. Demoiselle Nicolini. My respectable marriage.
21. Florian Gassmann becomes Kapellmeister on horseback. He tries to play a trick on me. Dubious origin of my oratorio *Esther*.

22. My elevation to the Nobility and promotion to Amstshauptmann. Lolli in Johannisberg. Anecdotes about the castrato Quadagni in Venice.
23. The orchestra in Johannisberg is disbanded. I am in a tight spot but I evade a trap set for me.
24. The orchestra at Johannisberg is reconstituted. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. My conversation with Emperor Joseph. The Court Kapellmeister Greybig. My German operas.
25. Hard times in Johannisberg. First signs of gout. My conversation with King Friedrich Wilhelm in Breslau.
26. My journey to Berlin. Reichardt. Professor Engel. The King introduces me to the Queen. My oratorio *Job* is performed in the Opera House. The operas *Medea* and *Protesilao*. Madame Rietz. Theatrical debates. My expectations in Berlin are exceeded.
27. The Prince Bishop's illness. My discussions with him
My Farewell.

Translator's introduction.

It was his name which first attracted my attention as a musically interested teenager, long before I had heard a note of his music. Who was he? The "von" in his name suggested a nobleman but where was the place called Dittersdorf? Recourse to a detailed map of central Europe did not answer my question. And why was his music so rarely played?

Answers came quite suddenly one week in August 2014 when BBC Radio 3 decided to feature him in its series *Composer of the Week* introduced by Donald Macleod whose impeccable pronunciation of all foreign names, places and phrases is a joy to the ear. For the first time I listened to a wide selection of his music, something about his life and learned that he had written an autobiography. Intrigued, I ordered a recently reprinted edition and read it through. It is an absorbing story of a life dedicated to music in the latter half of the 18th century in the Habsburg empire centred on Vienna. We read about his burgeoning musical talent, his violin lessons and first public performances, life in a princely household, travels to Italy with Gluck and to Frankfurt for a coronation and meetings with famous musicians. He hobnobs with Kings, Emperors and assorted aristocrats, often giving us verbatim conversations he had with them. He tells us about his amorous entanglements, how a marriage proposal was unsuccessful, how he became infatuated with an Italian prima ballerina and how he finally managed to propose –this time successfully – to one of his pupils. He describes his elevation to the nobility but also all the intrigues, back-stabbings, conspiracies and squalid machinations of courtly life, many of which were directed against himself. Money plays a major role in his life and details of his income and expenditure offer fascinating insights into the everyday life of his time. There are jokes and anecdotes, some quite *risqué*. His last years were clouded by acute attacks of gout which robbed him of the ability to walk as well as poverty and destitution. The pension he was expecting turns out to be totally inadequate to support his family so in desperation he dictates these memoirs to his son in the hope that its sale will provide a modest income. Two days after its completion, he dies.

Dittersdorf's music is generally considered to be in the so-called galant style, very much in vogue during the second half of the 18th century. Other composers of this genre were J C

Bach (the “London” Bach), Abel, Türk and Boccherini. Carl Krebs, a Berlin music historian (see my epilogue) who has catalogued all of Dittersdorf’s 341 extant works, catches the spirit of the galant style in his book *Dittersdorfiana* (1900). He writes;

“Ditters composed rapidly and with great ease but symphonies and chamber music of the time were different from what came later under the influence of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. The music of his time did not plumb the depths or express powerful emotions. Those members of high society who employed orchestras would have been astonished if the leader of the orchestra had burdened them with his joys and sorrows. The conversations in those rococo salons avoided serious topics so music, taking its cue, skated over emotional depths and made light of them and where it appeared to take them seriously, then only to mock and dismiss them with a merry laugh. Ditters, the consummate socialite who inwardly cherished life’s trivialities, was completely at home in this milieu. In general his instrumental music reflects the cheerful sides of life; the movements are fast or moderately slow and pure adagios rarely occur, if so, then usually as short, slow introductions.....”

I think this is fair comment on most of the instrumental works but his oratorios show a more serious side, harking back in style to the earlier baroque although, as Krebs points out, his handling of polyphonic textures was not his strong point.

Dittersdorf’s autobiography was first translated into English by A D Coleridge in 1896. Arthur Duke Coleridge (1830-1913), a great nephew of the poet, was born in Devon and educated at Eton and King’s College Cambridge. In his *Reminiscences* (1911) he tells us that he spent his long vacations from Cambridge in Dresden where he acquired his knowledge of German and took advantage of the rich musical life of the city. Professionally he was a lawyer, Clerk of the Assizes on the Midland Circuit but music was his real passion. He founded the Bach choir and organised the first English performance of Bach’s B minor Mass. In his spare time he translated Goethe’s play *Egmont*, and lives of Schubert and Dittersdorf.

Coleridge’s English version reads well but now sounds slightly dated. He omits several pages from the original (which I have restored), makes a small number of minor errors and moderates some of Dittersdorf’s more ribald language, possibly to avoid offending Victorian sensibilities. He also leaves many of the titles of various Habsburg officials in the original whereas I have tried to find roughly equivalent English titles, no easy task given the different hierarchical structures of Habsburg and English royal and courtly institutions.

To give an example of his style, I have selected the first paragraph of Dittersdorf’s chapter 6, giving first the original followed by Coleridge’s version followed by mine. Readers competent in German can then draw their own conclusions.

Schloßhof, wohin der Prinz und der gesamte Hofstaat Anfang Juni abging, war ein herrlicher Sommeraufenthalt. Schloß und Garten waren prächtig, und der Ort schien eine halbe Stadt zu sein. Held Eugen von Savoyen, der im Gedächtnisse jedes patriotischen Östreichers lebt und der seinen Geschmack in der Baukunst an dem Palais Belvedere zu Wien, das jetzt dem Kaiser gehört, bewährt hat, hatte dieses Schloßhof von Grund aus erbaut und eingerichtet.

Ein Beweis seiner vorzüglichen Schönheit ist, daß Kaiser Franz so viel Wohlgefallen daran fand, daß er die ganze Herrschaft dem Prinzen abkaufte und sie der Erzherzogin Christine, die er vorzüglich liebte, verehrte.

Coleridge's version.

In the beginning of June we moved to Schlosshof – the Prince, and all his Court with him. It was a glorious place in summer. The castle and gardens were splendid, covering the area of half a town. It had been built, from cellar to roof – this Schlosshof – by the hero, Eugène of Savoy, who lives in the memory of every patriotic Austrian; he proved his taste in architecture by the erection of the Belvedere Palace in Vienna, now the property of the Emperor. The beauty of Schlosshof may be taken for granted, when I add that Kaiser Franz was so delighted that he bought the entire property from the Prince and presented it to his great favourite, the Archduchess Christine.

My version.

Schlosshof, to where the Prince and all his retinue moved at the beginning of June, was a beautiful summer residence. The palace and gardens were magnificent and the whole place resembled a small town. Duke Eugen of Savoy, the hero who still lives in the hearts of all patriotic Austrians and whose architectural taste is seen in the Belvedere Palace in Vienna, now belonging to the Emperor, built and furnished the Schlosshof. Proof of its extraordinary beauty was provided by the Emperor Franz who was so impressed that he bought it from the Prince and presented it to his daughter, the Archduchess Marie Christine, whom he deeply loved.

Coleridge provides barely any explanatory notes. I have added many more to explain allusions in the text, making use of those two authoritative reference volumes, the *New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and the *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* as well as the inexhaustible, if sometimes unreliable, resources of the Internet.

Whenever I read an English translation from a language with which I am familiar and come across an arresting phrase, I frequently wonder what the original was. Accordingly, in my translation, I have sometimes given the original in a footnote so that readers proficient in German can make a judgement – and perhaps suggest something better?

(Epilogue by the translator at the end.)

Publisher's Foreword.

The origin and purpose of the publication of this autobiography has already been described in our advance notice in which confidence in Germany's magnanimity towards the Dittersdorf family was expressed. However, large-scale political and literary events appear to have drowned out the softer voices of modest friends so that this publication received scant notice.

Tormented by the prolonged sufferings of his wasted body and bowed down with grief and sorrow at his family's undeserved fate and aware that his life, once in the morn of light was now facing imminent darkness, he spent his last days dictating, as he could no longer write, the story of his life to his eldest son, partly to lighten his days and partly to bequeath his family a small legacy which might be of benefit to them after his death. He sat in his armchair in his spacious entrance hall, a smile on his lips belying the pain of his hopeless condition, unaware of how rapidly death was approaching, already wielding his scythe over him. For, two days after he had finished dictating, he died and his widow then sent the manuscript in accordance with his wishes to the publisher Breitkopf and Härtel who hastened to honour the wishes of the worthy but unfortunate artist by bringing out his work in a slightly modified version. The publisher was entrusted with this task, confident that he would carry it out without betraying the spirit of the work or doing harm to its unique character.

The publisher believes he has now accomplished this task in all conscience. He has taken a few liberties here and there but they were necessary because the composer's long-winded reminiscences recalled in crabbed old age might have irritated his readership and weakened the thread of his narrative. But nothing has been done to the detriment of the work or its unique character for nobody is more convinced than the publisher that the posthumous work of an author must be treated with the same respect as his work during his lifetime. The pleasure to be derived from a romantic work does not excuse the obligation of allowing an author to speak to us with his own voice. That being so, this is really Dittersdorf's own life story. This is how he spoke, narrated, felt and judged; only a little more shape, style, coherence and judicious editing has been made to the literary remains of a man no longer in possession of all his faculties but without in any way misrepresenting them. Indeed, they are a mark of respect due to his *manes*, his dead soul.

But this is difficult without at the same time recalling Dittersdorf's achievements in the field of sacred music such as the superb oratorios *Esther* and *Hiob* and many of his instrumental works which have assured him a significant place among Germany's more important composers. In the case of operettas, he is for us what Grétry was for France. These works are lively and graceful, imbued with truth and character, accessible and popular which appeal to us in the same way as the memorable operettas of Hiller¹, albeit on a smaller scale but from which we have strayed, less for the art of music than from the point of view of drama and good taste. What Dittersdorf's dramatic works occasionally lack as far as doing justice to the poetic content of his declamatory passages and correct setting of his texts is concerned, demanded by any strict criticism of a vocal work which claims perfection, has to be balanced by the beauty of his theatrical style, his brilliant orchestration

¹ Johann Adam Hiller (1728-1804) German composer regarded as the creator of the *Singspiel*, a musical genre combining spoken dialogue and popular song. His music is rarely performed nowadays.

free of overload, his thorough approach to word setting which may sometimes sound ineffective because devoid of content but above all for his beautifully flowing melodies which pour out of the depths of his soul, quite unlike certain of those modern works based on French originals where the accompaniment is formulaic and the vocal part tacked on as an afterthought. If all this is music which appeals to our sentiments and for which every artist strives to attain; if all these works have their effect on the feelings and imagination of the public no less than his songs and operas, then who can deny Dittersdorf his impressive role as a skilled popular composer?

It is thus even more difficult to suppress the desire that the public be encouraged to express their appreciation for the pleasure that Dittersdorf's music including his many German operas have provided and continue to provide. Nobody can read the final lines of this autobiography without being profoundly moved. Who can remain indifferent to the plight of an unhappy father who, now approaching the end of his arduous earthly pilgrimage, contemplates with pain and sorrow from beyond the grave the predicament of his family left unprovided for? Who can bear to contemplate the humiliation of a worthy artist who, in the prime of life enjoyed hopes and promises but is now faced with penury and the awful prospect of begging from his beloved German nation which he served so well and to be placed amongst those unfortunates dependent on the generosity of others!

But an appeal is now made to the nobler and especially the wealthier sections of our nation who, in so far as they are made aware that here the family of a fine artist is in need of comfort and help, are moved to absolve the shame of our nation which has blighted the lives of so many of our worthy scholars and artists. The small number of subscribers following an announcement in the press is sufficient proof that more needs to be done in order to assure a greater response.

May these words serve that purpose!

Leipzig, December 1800

Karl Spazier

Chapter One

First signs of my musical talents. My first performance in church.

I was born in Vienna on 2 November 1739.

My father came from Danzig where he was a costumier at the Royal & Imperial theatre during the reign of Charles VI and as he was also a talented draughtsman, he was promoted first lieutenant in the artillery corps of the Civil Defence and defended the so-called Löbel-Bastion with 20 cannons during the Bavarian war which broke out in the reign of Charles VII after the death of his predecessor.

His earnings were such that he was able to pay for a rather better education for his five children than otherwise available to normal citizens. His three sons, of whom I was the second, were educated by the Jesuits and a tutor was also engaged who lived with us, his board, lodging and salary paid for by my father. I owe this worthy man, who was neither a fanatic nor a freethinker, a solid grounding in religion and freedom from prejudice. My father also arranged for French lessons, a language he himself spoke well and as he enjoyed music, he engaged a violin teacher for my elder brother.

I was scarcely seven years old when I began to feel strong inclinations towards music. I asked my father to provide for music lessons which he did and in the space of three and a half years I made such progress that my teacher – his good name was König – told my father that he had taught me all he knew and that it was now time to find another teacher with whom I could advance my studies to concert standard. “I would not wish” he said, “to hold your son back any longer because he has the makings of being a far better player than myself”. Would that there were more people like him! My father acknowledged his selfless action and as a reward, retained his services for my younger brother.

My second teacher was Joseph Zügler, a fine violinist and also a skilful and recognised composer of chamber music. He took enormous pains with me and my diligence and enjoyment of the violin increased accordingly. In order to improve my sight-reading, he advised me to go on Sundays and Feast days to the “Choirs” – the name given to Catholic church music – and recommended the Benedictine choir on the Freyung (a square in central Vienna) which gave the best performances of Masses, Motets, Vespers and Litanies together with a well equipped orchestra.

So one Sunday I went along. I approached the choirmaster, Herr Gsur, and asked for permission to play in the orchestra. He sized me up and then snapped at me. “Why should I? This is no place where any whiffersnapper can turn up with a violin and start scraping away”. Young as I was, the word “scraping” angered me and straight away I replied, “You have no idea whether I can play or not. If I couldn’t, my teacher Herr Zügler would never have advised me to seek your permission”.

“So, if that’s the case” he replied rather more amicably, “and *he* really sent you here, then you are welcome” and he ordered a violin for me and told me to take a seat next to the first violinist, Karl Huber who watched me carefully to assess my playing; he even stopped playing at the entry of a fugue to hear whether I could manage the rests. I didn’t miss a note. “Bravo” he said afterwards, “I didn’t think you could do it”. My performance also hadn’t escaped the attention of the choirmaster who expressed his satisfaction, adding significantly that I could come as often as I wanted as I would always be welcome. Now that was something unexpected so it was no wonder that I went home feeling quite pleased with myself. So for the whole of the following year I missed no opportunity to play wherever church music was being performed. I thus became a practised player for choirs and developed a huge appetite for musical scores.

During this year it often happened that Huber played violin solos in church. His bowing, technique, intonation and interpretation moved me to the depths of my soul. I studied night and day to imitate

him. When an opportunity arose once again to play a violin solo in a Mass totally unfamiliar to me, he said, "Are you brave enough to play the solo?" "I'll have a go" I said, "but I'll never be able to play it as beautifully as you". "I'm sure it'll be fine" he said, giving me his violin. I played the solo passage, at first not without nervousness but I soon had the comfortable feeling that my playing was exceeding expectations and so when the first passages and modulations were repeated towards the end, I varied them just as Huber would have done and afterwards enjoyed public applause. I am not saying this to boast of my youthful talents but I feel that I should not pass over such events because they have exercised a profound influence on my life.

Chapter 2

How I met Prince Hildburghausen and entered his service. Kapellmeister Bonno.

It was common for crowds of music lovers to attend services in this church, especially on Feast Days when very select and beautiful music would be performed with utmost perfection. Afterwards, some of Huber's admirers would come up to him thinking that he had played and warmly congratulated him. But they were amazed when Huber introduced me to them with the words, "Gentlemen, not I but this one here deserves your praise." Astonishment showed on their faces which caused me much pleasure. Among them was Hubaczek, the famous French horn virtuoso who was in the service of Field Marshall and Artillery Commander Prince Joseph Friedrich von Hildburghausen².

As I set off home, Hubaczek approached me, asked my name, who my father was, where I lived and promised to visit me shortly. He kept his word and after a few days came to see us and during a meal he informed us that his master whom he served had a very presentable orchestra which rehearsed three times a week at 11 o'clock and at the same time requested my father's permission for me to be present there. My father gratefully accepted this invitation on my behalf. The next day Hubaczek came to fetch me and I took my violin with me. On arrival I was not a little surprised to be given the first place in the orchestra.

We had hardly finished tuning up to play a Jommelli³ symphony I was familiar with already on our music stands when the Court composer Bonno⁴ entered. He received an annual salary from the prince to conduct concerts for the Viennese aristocracy during the winter season. He was startled to see an eleven or twelve year old boy seated at the head of the orchestra and so came and stood by my side to observe me. After the performance he left, presumably to inform the prince, both of whom then entered the hall.

The prince summoned me and kindly asked who my father and my teacher were, how old I was and many other questions. After I had answered his questions truthfully and without embarrassment, he then asked, "Can you sight-read any music I put before you?". "If it's not too difficult" I replied. "Right, let's see" he said and sent Bonno off to fetch an easy flute concerto and a flute sonata from his music cabinet whereupon I played the first piece quite successfully. After a few symphonies and arias had been performed, I was invited to play the solo and although it was much more difficult than the concerto, I nevertheless managed it quite well.

² 1702-87. A distinguished soldier who took part in many campaigns waged by the Habsburgs principally against the Turks and the Prussians. His marriage in 1738 to Princess Anna Viktoria of Savoy, niece of Duke Eugene of Savoy and 20 years his senior brought him immense wealth and the ownership of Schlosshof (see below) but little happiness; they separated in 1754. In Vienna he lived in the Palais Strada where presumably Dittersdorf performed before later occupying the Palais Auersperg. The Palais Strada was demolished in 1875 during the rebuilding of the Burgtheater.

³ Niccolò Jommelli (1714-74) a celebrated and highly productive Neapolitan-born composer in his time of some 60 operas and a large quantity of instrumental music, nowadays little performed.

⁴ Giuseppe Bonno (1711-88) a minor Viennese-born composer of Italian origin to whom some 24 operas are attributed. He is a supporting character in Schaffer's play about Mozart, *Amadeus*.

It was now well after midday so the prince kindly invited me to dine at the staff table, making a few jocular remarks, and at five o'clock I was told to bring my father to him. After he had conferred with him in a side room for quite a while, he came out again saying, "Well, we are agreed. Now it all depends on whether your son agrees too" and, turning to me, said "Will you leave your father and come to me? You will want for nothing but you must work hard on your music and languages. I shall see that you continue your Latin studies but above all you must master the French language and also study Italian, necessary for all musicians. You will have plenty to do because I will not tolerate idleness. Will you accept and promise me that?"

Overwhelmed with happiness, I fell on my knees and cried, "Yes, kind prince, I will". "Stand up, my son" he said, "only kneel to God in church but not to me!"

"Keep your son at home" he then addressed my father, "and on the first of next month bring him here and I will take him off your hands and act as father in your place."

Deeply touched, we departed and when we came home and told my mother, she wept tears of joy and that evening friends came round to celebrate.

Chapter 3

I become a Page Boy⁵ and am fitted out appropriately.

On the morning of 1 March 1751 my father took me to the Prince's palace where I embarked on a new life. The Prince was not in residence so we were referred to the Chamberlain, Johann Ebert, a refined, respectable gentleman. He had orders to receive us and after giving me some instructions in a very fatherly manner, he took us to the room of the Head Clerk, Bremer, who had been charged with my supervision. "The Prince" he told my father, "is not available at the moment as he has gone out but is expected back at around two. Meanwhile you are invited to dine with our staff so that you can see whether your son can thrive on our food. Today is typical of every day". He presented me with a set of rules which, he told me, the Prince himself had drawn up and dictated to Herr Bremer.

The latter, a handsome man of about twenty-six, welcomed my father very politely and allocated me a room next to his own in which a solid bed, a desk, a wardrobe with beautiful ornaments and nice chairs had all been newly installed. He gave me an inventory list of all the furniture and garments and mentioned that he had orders to check up from time to time. I was told to remove all my clothes from head to foot and change into new ones. The coat and breeches of my every day wear were ash-grey but my waistcoat was red. Everything was made of the finest Dutch cloth and the button holes were lined with silver braid in the latest fashion. There was no shortage of underwear. I also received white, silken stockings, silver shoes and buckles *à la mode*. The Prince had arranged all this beforehand as he had sent a tailor, cobbler and seamstress to my father's house without me noticing anything at all. "You see" said Herr Bremer, noticing my astonishment, "that's what the Prince is like. He is generous and loves to surprise everybody. Did you expect to find all this here? Now, look after everything carefully and behave well and everything will be fine. Here is your own key so that you can come and go as you please".

Imagine my satisfaction when I was placed in front of a wall mirror to admire my new finery. One always feels better when one is well dressed.

"It is now just on eleven o'clock" he said. "Go to the drawing-room where the rehearsal is about to begin. I went and found nearly everybody already assembled. They showered me with congratulations and my appointment as Page Boy, which entitled me to join the other musicians, filled me with no little joy.

As soon as we had played a symphony, Madame Tesi appeared who today wanted to rehearse two new arias composed for her by Kapellmeister Bonno. She was a pleasant lady, already over fifty but well preserved. Bonno sat at the harpsichord, placed the score in front of him and Madame Tesi

⁵ Kammerknabe

stood behind him. She had a high, mellow contralto voice and her majestic performance delighted me greatly. Afterwards she spoke to Bonno and then sat down in front of the orchestra. "Madame Tesi" said Bonno to me, "would love to hear you play. Have you got anything?". "Yes" I replied and produced a sonata by Zügler which I played with Hubaczek accompanying. At every passage I played well, Madame Tesi cried *Bravo!* and sometimes *Bravissimo!*. Afterwards she requested an audience of my father and they conversed in French for a while. After several more instrumental works, she again stepped up to the harpsichord and sang the next aria, an Adagio. If her wonderful performance had previously delighted me, then her meltingly soft and gentle voice so enchanted me that I could imagine nothing more beautiful in the world.

Three chimes of the porter's bell announced the arrival of the Prince himself. He went straight up to my father and engaged him conversation by the window for quite some time. Then he called me over and said, "Now I hope you are satisfied with your room and everything in it. Work hard and conduct yourself so that I too can be satisfied with you. But above all, read through the rules carefully and make sure you obey them."

Then he called for his flute and some music, sat down and started to play. I have to admit quite openly that he was no great flautist but even so, he played much better than I had expected. He kept to the right tempo and had an excellent embouchure. When he had finished playing, the rehearsal ended and the Prince went to dine.

When I returned to the Chamberlain I found the Prince's Page, a certain Baron Ende together with the Court Secretary. His name was Göhrn and he came from Saxony. "These gentlemen" said Herr Ebert, "will instruct you in Latin and French and will also be so good as to teach you fencing. Instruction in riding, dancing and Italian however will begin when we go to Schlosshof where the Prince resides every year from the beginning of June. But the most important thing I had almost forgotten. Although the Prince is a Catholic (he converted from Protestantism at the request of the late Empress Elisabeth), almost half his Court is partly Lutheran and partly Protestant as are the supervisor of your son, Herr Göhrn as well as Bremer and myself. But we are no less proselytes for that so to put your mind at rest, the Prince has ordered a priest of your religion to instruct your son in his faith for a decent fee. But as you already have a suitable priest in your house, the Prince would prefer if he were to take over that duty".

My father was delighted with this generous offer and gave an assurance that Father Johannes would be pleased to do so without payment and indeed, he came two or three times a week to me until we moved to Schlosshof whereupon he received a sweetener of nine ducats and as much black Brussels camelot⁶ as needed to make a gown.

My readers will now have received a small foretaste of the Prince's remarkable philanthropy and later they will learn more about his incomparable kind-heartedness. But here I want to break off and relate the story of the inestimable Madame Tesi who would otherwise have no place in this narrative.

Chapter 4

Vittoria Tesi's story. The parrot and the Holy Inquisition. A Duke is frustrated by a wig-maker.

Vittoria Tesi-Tramontini. Tesi was her maiden name, Tramontini her husband's name. In Italy it is not unusual for famous singers and dancers to retain their maiden names even after marriage. In the prime of her life she was the leading singer and actress of her time all over Europe and she remained famous into her old age.

⁶ A fine fabric thought to be made of camel or goat's hair woven in Brussels.

Enraptured by her acting skills, Father Metastasio⁷ wrote three operas especially for her; *Zenobia*, *Didone* and *Semiramide*. The foremost opera houses in Italy competed for her services and rewarded her so handsomely that she amassed considerable wealth. She was also invited to Madrid where she made her debut with Farinelli, the most famous castrato who ever lived and whom the King of Spain held in such esteem, not only for his musical talents but also for his wide-ranging knowledge that he appointed him a Minister of State and invested him with the Order of Calatrava. Farinelli was so delighted with Tesi's voice that, as he admitted freely to the King, he did not wish to appear with any other singer on the stage as long as he lived. She was thus engaged to sing for several years until Farinelli's voice weakened as he grew older so he stopped singing and retired to Bologna. A considerable portion of her wealth was acquired here in Spain as she received not only large amounts of money but after each new opera the King rewarded her with jewellery and other ornaments. Eventually she moved to Vienna at the behest of Emperor Charles VI who paid her generously.⁸

I would here like to relate an anecdote about her which demonstrates the extraordinary degree of fanatacism then prevailing in Spain.

In Naples she acquired a very rare parrot and with enormous patience trained him to laugh and ask questions like a human being in impeccable Italian. I once saw this extraordinary bird myself. When the Prince wanted to amuse his dinner guests, he ordered the cage to be brought in for the bird to demonstrate his skills. It was very funny when, after hearing a silly joke from his owner, he giggled and burst out laughing. Everybody else then laughed and the parrot, thus encouraged, would set up a cacaphony of prolonged screeching and chortling so that anybody would think that dinner guests and servants had escaped from the madhouse.

She took this parrot to Spain and placed his cage in her reception area. One evening a group of high-ranking persons visited her and the talk centred around the parrot and his skills. "Does he really talk?" asked one of the distinguished Spaniards. "Oh yes" replied Tesi, "I'll show you" and she went over and chattered about various trivialities. The Kapellmeister, who had composed the music for the opera that Tesi was to present for the first time in Madrid, listened to the parrot and joked that he could hear that the "scholar" had studied in Naples. "Oh, please forgive me" said Tesi, "believe me, he can speak the best Tuscan like a true Roman. Just a moment, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'll prove it" and with that she rang the bell for the maid to bring a biscuit. She had spent a year training the parrot and rewarding him with this type of biscuit so she knew her success was guaranteed. The parrot then answered all her questions perfectly for she had trained him to make it appear that he really had human intelligence. Most of her guests complimented her on her patience and skill in training the bird but a few fanatic blockheads among those present murmured that there was something unnatural going on involving sorcery and magic.

Such superstition Tesi treated as a joke and asked everybody to sit down in a circle. She then began to hold forth in her usual inborn good humour, deliberately spicing up her stories to encourage everybody to contribute jokes of their own until somebody did just that. She giggled and that was the cue for the parrot to laugh out loud with the result that has been described above.

Shortly afterwards two gentlemen appeared on a business pretext. Tesi's servant, who understood Spanish, led them downstairs by torchlight and heard one of them say, "You are right, my friend. It is our duty to report the matter today to the Grand Inquisitor". But as the servant did not know what he was referring to, he paid no more attention.

The next morning two men entered the hall followed by two porters carrying a large basket covered by a black cloth. The men asked to speak to the lady of the house. Tesi was in the reception room

⁷ Metastasio, pseudonym of Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi (1698-1782), the most famous librettist of his day, author of well over 100 texts (operas, canzonas, cantatas, oratorios) set by all the major (and minor) composers then and since. Italian born, he spent the last 40 years of his life in Vienna.

⁸ Vittoria Tesi (1700-75). Other sources are less starry-eyed about her than Dittersdorf's portrayal. She was considered to be a better actress than singer. She contracted a marriage of convenience and reportedly squandered her fortune on one of her lovers by the name of Casnedi.

feeding her parrot. "Aha" said the men, "is that the parrot who so astounded yesterday's company here?". "At your service" replied Tesi. "Who are you? How may I be of service?". "We are the servants of the Holy Brotherhood" they replied, "and have been ordered by the Grand Inquisitor to deliver your parrot to the Inquisition." Tesi's protests were in vain. They quickly seized the cage, put it in the basket, covered it with the cloth and departed. Tesi wept bitterly at the loss of her dear *amico*, as she called him. Eventually she gathered her wits, got dressed and went to see Farinelli for advice. He went straight to the King and persuaded him with great eloquence that the parrot's skills were quite natural. The King, finally convinced, intervened and after eight days, Tesi's dear *amico* was restored to her from the clutches of the Inquisition.

But back to the story of her life. For many years she sang at the Vienna Court Theatre and was handsomely rewarded. Approaching her fiftieth year, she left the theatre and decided to retire. Prince Hildburghausen, who had long admired her exceptional talent, offered her free board and lodging in his palace as well as a reasonable salary. The first two she accepted but declined the third as well as all gifts offered by the Prince. One might suspect that there was rather more to the arrangement than mere friendship and common artistic interests but her success proves the opposite. She was a woman of excellent character, far superior to the usual run of opera singers. I could carry on praising her many virtues but will merely content myself with relating the story of her marriage which is quite unusual.

Wherever she sang, she was used to receiving visitors and became so adept at forestalling declarations of love that hardly anyone dared to make them. Among the many smitten by her charms was a certain Duke of N. One evening, finding himself by chance alone in her company, he seized the opportunity to formally declare his love for her. She gently and elegantly discouraged his ardour but this only served to heighten his passion and he became ever more persistent with extravagant promises. But Tesi treated him with such respect and good manners that the Duke withdrew in shame and ceased his pursuit. But his passion did not die down but rather became daily more inflamed. The more he observed and heard this delightful creature on the stage, the more he burned for her. He confided in one of his courtiers who attempted to negotiate on behalf of his master but he too was turned away. Both of them now realised that this was not the way to go about it. "So" said the Duke, "I will have to possess her and tomorrow evening I will surprise her with a formal proposal of marriage. But be careful not to warn her". The shrewd courtier swore the strictest silence but, thinking to ingratiate himself with the future Duchess, as he thought, lost no time in informing Tesi under an oath of secrecy.

Now alone, what was she to do? In order to rid herself of the Duke's persistence once and for all but without unduly antagonizing him, that same evening she summoned the theatre's wig-maker, a handsome man, and offered herself as his wife. "If you want me" she said to Tramontini, who could scarcely believe his luck, "here is my hand and early tomorrow morning we will get married. I shall grant you a sizeable sum of cash, subject to negotiation and everything you spend it on will be your property. The upkeep of the house will be my responsibility as will be your clothing and furniture. I shall also bequeath you a third of the capital I already have now and what I shall acquire in future. There is however one condition on which I shall never yield, namely, that you never seek marital relations with me. A physical condition with which I was born, not acquired through promiscuity, has made me incapable. If you decide to give me your hand after this declaration, then by noon tomorrow we will be a couple. I will let you think it over until early tomorrow morning."

One would imagine that the delighted man would have offered not one but both hands there and then. In short, the next day at nine o'clock, they went to the bishop to obtain permission to marry in the nearest parish church. Permission granted and without any further announcement, they were married at eleven o'clock and shortly afterwards received the marriage certificate from the notary duly signed and delivered. After a celebratory meal, Tramontini's belongings were moved to her quarters and she paid over to her new husband, now in utter bliss, two thousand zecchini in cash.

Imagine the astonishment and embarrassment of the Duke when that evening he saw the transfigured, magnificently attired Tramontini seated informally next to his adored Tesi who broke

the, to him, dreadful news. Although she did her best to spare his feelings and although he did his best to keep his rage and frustration within acceptable bounds and a show of indifference, he was unable to conceal his injured pride so, coldly and formally, took his leave and never saw her again. It remains to add that she lived happily with her husband for many years in the Prince's palace until the Prince moved to Hildburghausen in order to act as guardian to the underage Duke. Tesi was no longer able to undertake the journey on account of her age and infirmity so she parted from His Serene Highness, remained in Vienna and died a few years later. She left an estate valued at nearly three hundred thousand gulden, one third of which accordingly passed to her husband and the remainder to somebody I now cannot remember but, whoever it was, had the obligation to pay her servants double wages for as long as they lived and share out her wardrobe amongst them. Rest in peace, excellent Lady. I shall revere your ashes to my dying day.

Chapter 5

My teacher Trani. How I was humiliated by the bandy-legged Mathes. The clock.

Although looking back on my youth tempts me to be rather long-winded in view of its importance to me, I would not expect the reader to share my interest in tediously relating every minor event or occurrence that happened to me so I shall briefly mention that I was perfectly provided for and all my needs met. I had my allotted place among nearly thirty others at the staff table at which seven meals were served every day and every evening my meal was brought up to my room. In addition I received every month five gulden and thirty kreutzer as pocket money for which I had to account to Herr Bremer. A supplementary fee was paid to one of the Prince's servants to attend to my hair every day and my laundry and cleaning were well taken care of. In truth, I can say that the Prince looked after me like a father.

After the first meal which my father took with us, he came up to my room, advised me not to put my good luck at risk by bad behaviour, gave me his paternal blessing and, after I had kissed his hand, departed. But my down mood lasted for only a few moments. I went to my wardrobe and marvelled wondrously at each item, especially the beautiful ceremonial dress made of the finest French cloth with elaborate silver braid. It flattered the vanity of a page boy who soon forgot his father.

That same day I was summoned by the Prince who introduced me to Herr Trani, my future violin teacher and told me to play something for him. I can truthfully say that this man dedicated himself wholly to my musical education.

From now on I lived strictly in accordance with the rules which I read conscientiously and so three months passed which I recall with pleasure. Shortly before we were due to leave for Schlosshof, my father came and brought the good news that the Prince had taken my elder brother Joseph into his service and in addition to board and lodging had agreed to pay him three hundred gulden a year as well as taking him to Schlosshof. My joy knew no bounds. Knowing that my father was very partial to Cyprus wine (when he was in a good mood he would take me and my brother to his favourite spice store in the Graben and order a bottle), I slipped a taler into the hand of the bandy-legged servant who cleaned my room, who was a bit of a simpleton, and got him to bring me a bottle.

Meanwhile my father was curious to know what sort of progress I had made with my teacher so I had to play something for him. I took one of the sonatas of Locatelli provided by my teacher. They sound a little old-fashioned nowadays but I would thoroughly recommend them to all would-be violinists, not to perform but to study for they offer excellent practice in fingering, bowing, arpeggios, double-stopping etc.

My father was pleasantly surprised to find a bottle of his favourite Cypriot wine, which he had promised himself, already with me and appreciated my thoughtfulness and so stayed quite some time with us, giving us friendly tips about life at Court enlivened with witty stories. When he left that

evening, he gave me a Kremnitz dukat⁹ for my expenses, one gulden of which I passed on to my simpleton of a servant which made him jump around for joy like a madman on his deformed legs.

This little incident would not normally be worth mentioning were it not for my hardly praiseworthy knack of being able to imitate all the mannerisms and oddities of other people. Next morning, just as I was tottering up and down the room with bandy legs like our servant, causing me and Herr Bremer loud laughter, who should enter but the man himself, bringing us our breakfast. This made us laugh even louder and I redoubled my efforts to walk like him but the honest servant affected not to notice. But he had taken offence and later that day I had cause to rue my behaviour.

When I began to expose him to ridicule over lunch by relating my heroic deed to the others in his absence, they summoned him and demanded that he should show them what he did but he refused so I myself demonstrated his antics, whereupon he almost choked with laughter. But after calm had been restored, he stood with a plate behind a fellow diner sitting opposite me and, looking at me with a friendly expression, said simply, "Truly, Master, I enjoyed your performance. You witnessed my art just once and were able to imitate it exactly. But if only you could do the same with your violin! Alas, you've got problems there. I'm sometimes sweeping the corridor when your teacher is there and I can overhear him playing a flourish on his violin which you try to imitate but you can't so your teacher says, *da capo*, but you still can't and so it goes on, twenty or thirty times and all the while your violin squeaks and yowls like a cat's concert. A propos, Mr Chamberlain, I meant to tell you last week that since our joker", here he pointed at me," joined us, all our rats and mice have gone". "Well done Mathes" I interrupted. "you have amply repaid me for my malice. I deserved it".

"Rubbish, Mathes" said Herr Ebert. "Once again you've shown yourself to be nothing more than a clumsy, ill-mannered house servant. Now listen as our page boy makes amends". "No offence, Master" he said in a good-natured tone of voice. "It just slipped out and I didn't really mean it. Forgive me." "Certainly, dear Mathes" I replied. "I not only forgive you but thank you for a good lesson learnt. Here's twenty kreutzer, buy yourself a bottle of wine. You have earned it."

On the evening of the next day I was unexpectedly summoned by the Prince to bring a sonata which I had been studying with Herr Trani. I found him in the company of Madame Tesi and Bonno.

The Prince addressed me. "Now, you may have been wondering why I have not asked you to play for eleven weeks but I wanted to hear what progress you have made. So, play". With Hubaczek accompanying I performed the Sonata to his satisfaction. He then signalled for Hubaczek to go and as I thought he also meant me, I too prepared to go. "Stay here" said the Prince, "or are you already sleepy?"

Me: Oh no, Your Excellency. It's not yet late.

Him: What's the time?

Me: I'll have a look (I turned around to go)

Him. Where are off to again?

Me: to the anteroom to look at the clock¹⁰.

Him. Fool! Why don't you look at your own watch?

Me: My own?

Him: Yes.

Me: I haven't got one.

Him. What? No watch?

Me: No, Your Excellency.

Him: Yet you turned up to your lessons on time. How did you manage that?

Me: When I wanted to know the time, I went to the anteroom.

Him: But that's out of the way.

Me: I am fit enough.

⁹ A coin worth 4 gulden and 22 kreuzer minted at Kremnitz, now called Körmöcbánya, in Hungary.

¹⁰ German *Uhr* means clock or watch. I have assumed there was a clock in the anteroom but what the Prince gave Dittersdorf was a pocket watch of which a man of his rank would most probably possess more than one.

Him: Well, so that in future you don't have to run up and downstairs just to tell the time, (here he pulled a watch out of his pocket) take this and now go to your room.

I kissed the Prince's hand in gratitude and made for the door.

"Oh, by the way" he said. "one more thing. I heard that you can sing and dance quite nicely and that you learnt it from the house servant Mathes". I blushed scarlet and said nothing. "Don't worry" said the Prince, "your red face shows that you are ashamed of yourself and tells me that you will try and behave in future. Anyway, I much prefer my staff to have lively temperaments and presence of mind, not half-wits who know nothing. You misbehaved – but the fact that you immediately apologised shows your honourable *presence of mind*." (He pronounced these words with great emphasis). "Now go, my son".

A noble and generous man! And how delicately he knew how to handle me. Even when I subsequently discovered that the present he had given me was for my quick-wittedness, which he held in high regard, rather than for my musical progress, it was clever and considerate of him to let me think it was for the latter.

Chapter 6

The journey to Schlosshof¹¹ and my first sojourn there. A tragic-comic wolf hunt. A private shooting club. Travelling Players. Pergolesi's *Serva Padrona* in a coach house.

Schlosshof, to where the Prince and all his retinue moved at the beginning of June, was a beautiful summer residence. The palace and gardens were magnificent and the whole place resembled a small town. Duke Eugen of Savoy, the hero who still lives in the hearts of all patriotic Austrians and whose architectural taste is seen in the Belvedere Palace in Vienna, now belonging to the Emperor, built and furnished the Schlosshof. Proof of its extraordinary beauty was provided by the Emperor Franz who was so impressed that he bought it from the Prince and presented it to his daughter, the Archduchess Marie Christine, whom he deeply loved.

A few days later Herr Trani arrived with Herr Pompeati. In his youth the latter had been a solo dancer but as he aged, he left the theatre and now gave dancing lessons and taught Italian. He now gave lessons to me and the Page, Baron Ende, in dancing and Italian. The Baron made good progress in both subjects and this was a spur for me to keep up with him.

Trani brought me an extraordinarily beautiful violin which the Prince had arranged for him to buy me. Despite many offers I have kept this instrument all my life and two years ago I presented it to my eldest son.

My lessons, which now included riding given in turn by the Prince's Cavalier, Baron Beust and the Equerry, continued regularly as they had done in Vienna. I also had to serve at table, taking turns with the page. As Madame Tesi dined there, the conversation was mostly in Italian which suited me well and within a few months I was able to speak to her quite fluently. But with the Prince I was only permitted to speak French to gain practice in the language. Whenever I made a mistake in a word or a sentence, he kindly corrected me and asked me to repeat it.

This reminds me of a funny event with which I must amuse my readers.

Trani had been granted permission to shoot hare and partridge but not pheasant or other game. Madame Tesi happened to mention at table that she had seen him early that morning going out to hunt with a shotgun. As I was waiting at table, the Prince asked me in French whether he had returned home yet. "*Je crois que oui*" I answered. "*Eh bien, allez le demander s'il a pris quelque*

¹¹ The Schlosshof is a stately palace situated north east of Vienna on the border of what is now Slovakia. Built in the 1720s by Prince Eugen of Savoy, it was inherited by Prince Hildburghausen's wife, Eugen's niece, and in 1755 sold to the Empress Maria Theresa. Subsequent Habsburg monarchs showed little interest in the building and it deteriorated badly. Under the Emperor Franz-Josef it was used by the military and later by the German army and, until 1955, by the Red Army. From 2002 to 2005 it was restored at great cost and is now open to the public. It offers an extensive programme of exhibitions, concerts and other cultural events.

chose!" I went up to Trani's room and found him in bed, lying on his right side in a dressing-gown. As he was now obsessed with speaking German, although his command left much to be desired, the following dialogue ensued.

Me: Are you ill?

Him: I not ill but I tired *come un can da caccia* (like a hunting dog). I 'ave run like the devil.

Me: Oh, so you are in bed because you are resting.

Him: *Ma!* I must lie in bed because I no can sit.

Me: The Prince wants to know whether you caught anything while hunting.

Him: I 'ave shoot a....a...how you say *una lepre*?

Me: A hare.

Him: *Si, si!* An 'are. And when I 'ave shoot him, the 'are make a jump and I run to 'im but 'e jump and run away but one leg make (here he waved his hand from side to side) wiggle waggle and 'e sit again and I run to 'im but 'e jump and run into the thick wood and I lose 'im. And because it is so 'ot and I run like a deer, I sweat like a meat on a fire and I no get an 'are but I get a big wolf. When you go down, tell the servant to bring cold water and....and...how you say *spunga*?

Me: *Spunga*? I don't understand.

Him: *Aspettate!* I explain. *Spunga* is a thing, you put in water, it drink water up and when you take hand and press, it spit all water out.

Me: Perhaps you mean a sponge?

Him: *Si, si, caro figliuolo.* A shpund, a shpund.

I left, passed on the order to the servant and as I was going, wondered to myself how I could explain all this to the Prince in French. I understood that Trani could not have shot the wolf but what he actually meant I had no idea and was embarrassed. Well, I thought, I'll do my best and if I make a mistake, the Prince will correct me. I had no sooner got back to the table when the Prince called out. "*Eh bien?*"

Me: *M. Trani est au lit.*

Him: *Est-il malade?*

Me: *Pas justement malade, mais il dit qu'il est fatigué comme il fait chaud aujourd'hui.*

Him: (correcting me) *Parce qu'il fait chaud.*

Me: *Parce qu'il fait chaud.*

Him: *A-t-il tué, a-t-il pris quelque chose?*

Me: *Il a tué une lièvre, et la lièvre est tombée. Il est couru pour prendre la lièvre et quand il est arrivé, la lièvre est courue de nouveau et son pied était en deux.*

Him: *Fracassé.*

Me: *Fracassé. Enfin, la lièvre est entrée au bois et il a perdu la lièvre. Mais au lieu de la lièvre il a pris un tres grand loup.*

Him: Good Heavens! That is certainly the wolf my hunters tracked last year but couldn't shoot it.

Turning to his gunbearer, a Swabian, he said, "Listen. Trani has shot a wolf but he couldn't bring it in. Go up and ask him where it is. Then take a couple of horses and bring the wolf here. I want to see it."

"Blow me down" said the Swabian, "who would have thought such an amateur could have bagged a wolf with his pea-shooter!"

I jumped up and caught him by his coat and asked him to stay, then turned to the Prince.

"Excuse me, your Highness. I may not have said in French what Trani exactly meant."

"So, say it in German, but just as Trani said it."

"But then it might be like the servant Matthes again".

"How do you mean?"

"Well, if I imitate his German, people will think I'm mocking him".

"This time I'll excuse you. Speak."

I repeated the above dialogue as faithfully as possible, causing the Prince to smile not a little but when I came to the "big wolf", the Prince burst out laughing. "Let the devil see it!"

Everybody laughed and the Prince was so amused that every time he subsequently ran into Trani, he always asked him how many wolves he had shot since the big one.

The Prince loved hunting and was a great expert so it was no wonder that on his estate the conditions for both big and small game were in excellent shape. But he could no longer indulge his passion because his weak legs prevented him from walking and running so now he preferred to sit on his field chair and have beaters drive the red deer towards him. Now, apart from the Prince, Mme Tesi and Baron Beust, nobody hunted so game was now increasing and becoming a nuisance. So the Prince arranged for seven members of the orchestra, including Trani and my brother, to practise target shooting every Sunday so as to train them to become hunters and keep the stags under control. I too was also there and enjoyed watching so much that I asked to take part so the Prince ordered a shotgun to be brought and was good enough to instruct me how to use the bolt, add the powder and adjust the sights and when I fired, a small hole appeared in the target. "Bravo" said the Prince, "you can hit more than just notes" and he immediately enrolled me in his Shooting Club. Later we practised free shooting for prizes of stockings and handkerchiefs of which I received a fair share.

My riding lessons also went well and soon I was riding out every morning with Baron Beust, an excellent rider, and later, even with the Prince himself. It was a blissful time. Then there came an opportunity which for me was the *non plus ultra* in encouraging my modest talent for music for the stage which has played a major role in my subsequent life and which may have first begun as a result of a favourable combination of circumstances during those carefree days of my youth in those beautiful surroundings at Schlosshof.

A certain Piloti, director of a group of Travelling Players arrived with his wife and another actor at the local inn and requested an audience of the Prince. This being granted, he told the Prince that they performed in Pressburg from November until the end of May but during the summer they toured the smaller towns of Austria with some of his company. He then asked the Prince for permission to perform for the Court for fourteen days. On being asked what sort of things they could perform, he mentioned various comedies and then added that Pergolesi's *Serva Padrone*¹² was in their repertoire which they had already performed to great acclaim and full houses over thirty times in Pressburg and that his wife and another actor were able to perform this *Intermezzo* on this very day, adding that he had even brought the costumes with him. Although neither of them were Italian, although his own father was, he had nevertheless taken great pains to make sure they could speak the best standard Italian. "So, if your Highness commands, we can put this show on today in any room as long as there are folding screens." "Fine" said the Prince, sent for his Chamberlain and ordered him to prepare the *sala terrena* and offer the three guests suitable refreshment.

After the *Intermezzo* was rehearsed with a few violins to agree the tempi, the performance was given and nobody, neither the Prince, Mme Tesi, Bonno nor the whole orchestra could withhold their applause, so well deserved. Afterwards the Prince took the director into the garden and arranged for him to give performances in the Schlosshof from 1st July to the end of October for an agreed fee every day except on those days forbidden by the court. The venue was to be the coach house, so beautifully built by Prince Eugen that it looked more like a drawing-room.

For me this was a wonderful prospect. I awaited their arrival with bated breath as until then I had not had such unexpected pleasure and I counted the days and hours of June which never seemed to end. I became distracted from my lessons in anticipation of Pilati's arrival in a few days. He arrived with eight performers and his theatrical effects which were in excellent condition, something not often seen in travelling players exposed to the hardships of their calling. The first performance began promptly on 1st July and continued daily until the end of October. The Prince, never happier

¹² La Serva Padrona (Servant turned Mistress) is a short *opera buffa* performed, as was the custom at the time, between the acts of an *opera seria* – hence *Intermezzo*. Its plot whereby a cunning maid tricks a wealthy old bachelor into marriage has had timeless appeal and it has rarely been out of the repertoire since its first performance in 1733. Its highly gifted composer, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-36) died in Naples of tuberculosis at the age of 26.

when allowing others to share in his amusements, gave free entry not only to all his court and household staff but also to any visitor, even to the peasant farmers – but the latter only on Sundays and Feast Days.

I cannot say that all these various distractions, which made my life so paradisiacal at Schlosshof, caused me to neglect my studies. They only encouraged me and although I may not have shown any signs of latent genius, which never rests and seldom turns out as expected, I was very satisfied and the candour and sincerity in my dealings over time have stood me in good stead throughout my life.

Chapter 7

I show off in Vienna. Useful Advice for Virtuosi. Cadenzas. A Viennese aristocrat's opinions about Mozart. Dülons Fantasies.

At the beginning of November we returned to Vienna. My riding and dancing lessons stopped and I now had more time to practise which, for everybody who wants to make progress in playing an instrument, is the main thing. Music, especially, demands this otherwise nothing will be achieved. Trani told me that I now had to play a solo at every Academy (the name given to concerts in Vienna) which the Prince was accustomed to give every Friday during winter for the Viennese nobility. "Pieces by Locatelli, Zuccarini and Tartini which we have are good for practising but not for performing and besides, they are already too well-known here. So you should play on each occasion a piece by Ferrari whose three concertos and four sonatas you have already learnt. But these won't be enough so we shall have to rehearse new pieces by Ferrari because they are the best."

Ferrari, the great violin virtuoso had spent nine months in Vienna about two years before I entered the Prince's service and was not only highly acclaimed at the Imperial Court, the theatre and at private gatherings of music-lovers but was also handsomely rewarded. I never heard him play but all Vienna at the time considered him the greatest. His concertos and sonatas, which I can still play from memory, deserve the highest admiration, even today¹³. Trani became an intimate friend of his during his stay in Vienna and accompanied him at all his recitals. He thus imbibed all Ferrari's methods, his fingering, bowing and performance and made them his own. Ferrari was so pleased with his skilful accompaniment that he granted him permission to copy his best concertos and sonatas.

Although Trani had no longer given solo recitals for many years, he still retained the gift of teaching his pupils skills that he himself no longer mastered. I was thus able to play Ferrari's pieces exactly like the master himself so that many Viennese joked that I was Ferrari's little monkey. My first performance in front of the nobility was greeted with universal applause and my teacher was heaped with praise. Some even said that he had made a new Ferrari out of me.

When he came the following morning at the usual time for my lesson, I noticed that something was on his mind because he started fussing about before beginning which he always did when he was about to rebuke me. I thought we would both still be glowing in the aftermath of yesterday's performance so I could not understand his cold and serious demeanour nor the fact that he forbore to mention my successful debut. When I asked him whether he bore a grudge against me, he said, "No, but I do for yesterday's audience which you must know about." I looked at him quizzically. "Do not take offence" he continued, "you have brought me and the Prince great honour and I am completely satisfied with you. But now listen carefully and remember what I am going to tell you.

You were generously applauded but that was because you are still a child and you were not thought able to fulfil the expectations which, in fact, you did. If you had played yesterday like a sixteen year

¹³ Domenico Ferrari (1722-80) Celebrated violinist, pupil of Tartini and peripatetic performer throughout Europe. Extended stays in Stuttgart and Paris.

old, no one would have noticed, still less admired. They told me in your presence that I had made a second Ferrari out of you but I can assure you that that was not merely a compliment but a downright lie. Quite frankly, you are scarcely a shadow of the great Ferrari and I consider it my duty to tell you the truth so that you avoid that conceit which makes young virtuosi so insufferable. But as I know your abilities well, I can promise you that if you continue to work hard as you have done so far, by the time you are seventeen or eighteen you will rightly be able to stand comparison with a Ferrari. When you listen to a great performer, be it a violinist, a singer or other instrumentalist, always try to identify exactly what makes that person excel, then try to imitate it, not slavishly but freely so that it becomes part of you and always let yourself be guided by your instincts. Then you will become a great artist. And now, my son, we'll start the lesson."

Hitherto, Trani had taught me the cadenzas for Ferrari's works that he himself had improvised but on bringing me a new work, he told me that from now on I would have to improvise a cadenza myself. Here I would like to make a pertinent observation.

Cadenzas (they used to be called Capriccios) were then very much in vogue but only in order to demonstrate the virtuoso's ability to improvise. Then it fell out of fashion, presumably because however well the performer played the concerto, when it came to the cadenza, he was woefully lacking. But then a new custom arose which I can only tolerate when people like Mozart or Clementi or other creative geniuses play the fortepiano whereby they demonstrate their imaginative powers by introducing a simple tune which they then proceed to embellish a few times in accordance with the rules of the art. But very soon a whole crowd of lesser men arose who started to imitate them like apes so that nowadays the obsession with variations and fantasias is so widespread that you may be sure that when you hear a fortepiano concerto, you will be regaled with convoluted tunes. And it makes you sick when you hear beardless wonders launching themselves recklessly into passages that only great masters should attempt. Their cat-like antics at the keyboard and hare-brained ideas make you want to run a mile.

How angry I was a few years ago when I heard a certain Dülon¹⁴ tootling away on his flute with all manner of whirligigs and barbarities, to quote my honest, bow-legged servant and finished with variations without – *nota bene* – any accompaniment whatsoever. Then just as Kozeluch and I were exchanging looks of disapproval, His Excellency Count N.N graciously interrupted us; "Messieurs, you are both musical dictators. Can you not grasp that music has now reached its acme of perfection? That a Mozart can sit and improvise at a harmonious fortepiano – that is no art. But that a flautist can accomplish on his sterile instrument what Mozart does (oh really! I thought) is that not extraordinary? What do you say, Messieurs?" "Oh, absolutely" I said, laughing a little too loudly, recalling Blumauers¹⁵ description of the Excellencies on Circe's island. Kozeluch however said with his usual professorial air *O tempora, O mores*. The funny thing was that His Excellency understood neither our laughter nor Kozeluch's utterance and remained convinced that when he repeated his judgments subsequently, he added that Kozeluch and Dittersdorf were of the same opinion. Bravo!

But back to my story.

In December of that year Gluck arrived in Vienna. The Prince already knew about the acclamation this worthy man had received in Italy from his correspondent who had sent him a few weeks previously the score of his well-known aria *Se mai senti spirarti sul volto* which had caused a sensation in Italy. The Prince asked Mademoiselle Heinisch, a famous Viennese singer, to perform it

¹⁴ Friedrich Ludwig Dülon (1769-1826) was a blind flautist. See *Blind Dülon and his Magic Flute*, John A Rice, Music & Letters 71/1, (1990) for his life and work. Rice quotes the above passage from Ditters' memoirs in (presumably) his own translation. Ditters uses neologisms *Schnirkel* and *Kribrefax* which Rice translates as *whirligigs* and *rigmaroles*. I have adopted the first but for the second have preferred *barbarities*. Dittersdorf might have had in mind Gryphius' play *Horribilicribrifax* (1663), a portrait of a Falstaffian character given to extravagant oaths and barbarous language. Coleridge translates "tootles and twirligigs".

¹⁵ Aloys Blumauer (1755-98) Austrian poet and Jesuit, noted for very free translations of the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey* and for his collaboration with Mozart.

and it was well received. Naturally the Prince wanted to meet Gluck in person and so Bonno arranged an introduction.

Gluck was a sociable man who, besides his speciality, was worldly and well-read and therefore soon entered into friendly relations with the Prince. Rehearsals for concerts were always held on the evening before so that everything, especially new works were well and accurately prepared and Gluck sat himself at the head of the violins. For rehearsals and concerts, the Prince's orchestra was reinforced by the addition of highly selected players so it was no wonder that our concerts were considered the best in Vienna.

The singers who usually performed were Madame Tesi, whom we have met before and Mademoiselle Heinisch who possessed a wonderful soprano voice, besides being very beautiful. Despite many offers, she could not be persuaded to perform on the public stage but would do so in private for a token fee. The Prince had engaged her for all his winter concerts. Then there was Herr Joseph Fribert, a tenor who had been trained by Bonno and was in the service of the Prince. The usual instrumentalists were Herr Gentsch, violoncello; Herr Tüne, bassoon; Herr Schmit, oboe and cor anglais; the two Hubaczeks, horns, sometimes solo, sometimes together and finally, yours truly. However, when a virtuoso singer or performer was engaged worthy of genuine public recognition, Bonno had to negotiate the fee beforehand and then inform the Prince. I was thus able to hear at our concerts the singers Gabrieli, Guarducci, and Mansoli, the violinists Pugnani and Van Maldre, the oboist Besozzi, the flautist Le Claire, the horn players Stamitz and Leutgeb and similar rare virtuosos. Gluck allowed the Prince to have many of his symphonies and arias copied and every piece from the pen of this worthy composer was a feast for my ears.

Count Kaiserling, the then Russian ambassador in Vienna was an intimate friend of the Prince. One day over a meal, the talk turned to music. "By the way" said Kaiserling, "those twelve violin concertos by Benda¹⁶ you ordered from Berlin have at last arrived."

"So", said the Prince, "who played them then?"

Kaiserling: Somebody called Reinhard.

Prince: (to Bonno) Do you know him?

Bonno: Yes, Your Highness.

Prince: What's he like?

Bonno: Well, he doesn't impress. There are many better players here.

Kaiserling: And who might they be? I asked the Kapellmeister at the cathedral to send me the first violinist so he must know who the best in Vienna is.

Bonno: Yes, but Your Excellency should have demanded the best one, not the first one. Reinhard is indeed the first violinist at St Stephen's Cathedral but not the best in Vienna.

Kaiserling: But Reinhard played the first six concertos not only at sight but also very nicely.

Bonno: That surprises me – Benda's concertos.....

Kaiserling: But they are not as difficult as those he writes for himself to play. Prince N in Petersburg commissioned them but I took them over in my name, not his, so Benda sent them to me, not to Petersburg. I'll despatch them with the next courier. However (to the Prince) if Your Highness desires to hear them, then you might wish to summon your orchestra and I'll summon Reinhard and this evening we can hear the first six and tomorrow evening the other six.

Prince: Why not all twelve today?

Kaiserling: No way. Reinhard can't manage it. After he played the first six to me yesterday, he was so tired he couldn't continue.

Prince: Oh, I see. I hadn't thought of that.

¹⁶ The Benda brothers were celebrated Bohemian musicians of their time. Jiri Antonin Benda (1722-95) was Kapellmeister to the Duke of Gotha and composer of some ten opera seria. The Benda referred to here is his elder brother Franz Benda (1709-86), Konzertmeister at the Court of Frederick the Great of Prussia and prolific composer of violin music; 28 concertos (many now lost) 180 sonatas and 110 pieces for solo violin – again, many now lost.

After the meal, Kaiserling went home and summoned Reinhard who that evening played the first six concertos in the Prince's presence. All of us, even Bonno, Gluck and Trani were delighted with the beauty of the music and indeed Reinhard played them wonderfully well. The only thing that bothered me was that he omitted the cadenzas and went straight on to the trill.

Baron Ende told me that while he was on duty the next day, he heard the Prince discussing these concertos with Gluck and Bonno and praising Reinhard. "Hm" said Bonno, "I bet Karl could have played them just as well".

Prince: The devil he could!

Bonno: I'll vouch for it.

Prince: (to a servant) Fetch Karl. - I came.

Prince: (to me) Did you like Benda's concertos?

Me: Yes, Your Highness. They were wonderful.

Prince: (smiling) But difficult.

Me: I wouldn't have thought so. The solo parts were manageable.

Prince: How do you know if you haven't played them?

Me: I knew just by listening to them.

Gluck: *Dice bene, ha ragione.*

Prince: Would you have the courage to play the other six at sight?

Me: If they aren't more difficult than those played yesterday, why not?

Prince: What if I told the ambassador I wanted to suggest another violinist in place of Reinhard?

Me: Your Highness will do so anyway.

Prince: What if you make a hash of them and shame me?

Me: Then I shall spend eight days under arrest with bread and water.

Gluck: (to the Prince). *Mi piace la presenza di spirito di questo ragazzo.*

Bonno: (laughing, to Gluck) Oh, Karl understood that as well as if you had said it in German.

Gluck: So much the better.

The Prince sent for the Count and to me said; now go and make sure your violin is in good condition.

Me: Oh, it always is. Herr Trani told me once and for all that before going to bed a violinist must always have first checked his instrument to see whether no string is false and that any new string may have time to expand over night so that next day it keeps in tune.

Gluck smiled with satisfaction.

I went to my room, took my violin and practised the cadenzas in both major and minor keys. Trani came, shook his head when he heard about my audacity but gave me encouragement and advised me to pay the greatest attention.

I played the other six concertos which Reinhard had not yet played with all possible effort and did not omit the formal cadenzas at the places indicated. From the discussion among the listeners, among whom Gluck was the most vocal, I understood that they had not expected such a performance and that they were satisfied. When I asked Trani whether I could seek permission from the Prince to play the other six too, he replied, "Only if you don't ruin with these last the good impression you made with those first." But when I insisted, he went to the Prince with the words *In Nome de Dio*. In short, I played them through and they weren't half as difficult as expected.

I pass over in silence what was then talked about as I do not wish to be accused of self-praise. But I would ask any disinterested observer, who really deserves this praise? Indisputably my teacher, who exerted himself on my behalf and especially that gentleman who took so much trouble to promote my growth and development. This generous benefactor.....but I am getting ahead of myself.

Despite my success, my honest teacher's advice, as usual, was not lacking. "Honour to him whom honour is due" he said next morning at the lesson. "You did well yesterday and I am genuinely delighted with you. But.....do not tempt fate too often. I have seen many a fine virtuoso come to grief and ruin his reputation. That you succeeded so well yesterday was down to sheer luck. What would have happened if one of the strings had broken just a few bars before one of the arpeggios which occur in nearly all these twelve concertos? How would you have played a four-stringed

arpeggio on three strings in a concerto that you hadn't studied according to my method or improvised a variation? Wouldn't you have come unstuck? I have always taught you to prepare to play on three strings if necessary but for works you don't know, that is an entirely different matter. Please don't take offence."

Indeed, my wise and excellent teacher always made me play any concerto that I had mastered once again on three strings and this practice has been of enormous value to me in my subsequent virtuoso career.

The Prince often went to Schlosshof, mostly in the mornings. One day he came back with the news that the Emperor had promised to visit him there in mid-July for a few days together with the Empress and some of the older Archdukes and Archduchesses. The Prince therefore decided to move with all his retinue to Schlosshof at the beginning of April instead of the beginning of June, as was usual, in order to supervise the catering and entertainment for his high-born guests. Extra staff were hired such as an engineer, a painter, a sculptor etc. The orchestra was enlarged with the addition of a double-bass player, a violoncellist and three violinists among whom was my younger brother Alexander who had trained to become a competent orchestral player. The Prince allowed him a place at the staff table and my elder brother a monthly supplement of 12 Gulden to give him further violin lessons, provide clothing and put him up in his room. But my father stepped in to provide the clothing.

Chapter 8

Mademoiselle Starzer. Therese Teiber. Preparations. Peasant's Ballet. The Four Bagpipes.

When we arrived at Schlosshof, the place was swarming with artists and workmen, carpenters, joiners, painters, varnishers, gilders etc and everywhere you went you came across short-tempered people bustling around as they prepared for the arrival of the distinguished guests.

Bonno had long been commissioned by the Prince to set two dramatic works by Metastasio to music and Gluck had also undertaken to compose a Metastasio text, *Il Ballo Chinese*, but the latter had been delayed because the poet had had to revise the work at the Prince's behest because he wanted a male part to be added to the three female parts. Gluck therefore arrived in mid-May. Besides the usual singers, there also came a certain Mlle. Starzer, a sister of the ballet composer of the same name whose work had achieved astonishing success and applause not only in Vienna and Paris but also in Petersburg, where he had spent eight years, and for all of which he had been handsomely rewarded. This singer had a deep contralto voice and sang beautifully. Bonno had trained her – enough said! He had an extraordinary ability in training singers and I could name many as proof of this but here I will only mention one, the great singer Therese Teiber¹⁷ who, as Bonno's pupil, had created an unprecedented sensation not only in Vienna and Dresden, but also in London and even in Italy.

The closer the time arrived for the imperial visit, the more frenzied were our preparations and opera rehearsals were in full swing. Among other spectacles, the Prince had organised a Bacchanalia involving an amusing carousel, a ballet and a *cuccagna*¹⁸. The roles of the carousel knights, dancers, satyrs etc were to be filled by peasant boys and girls. Twenty-one couples were selected for the ballet which Pompeati had composed and choreographed. But in order to teach these couples the many complex figures, forty courtiers had first to learn these figures themselves before they were then assigned to a man or a woman to dance with them until they had learnt them thoroughly. But although they rehearsed every day, it took them three weeks to bring them up to scratch.

¹⁷ Therese Teiber (1760-1830) created the role of Blonde in Mozart's *Entführung aus dem Serail*. See Jane Glover *Mozart's Women*.

¹⁸ *Cuccagna* is Italian for Cockaigne, the Land of Plenty. However, here it refers to *Albero di Cuccagna*, a greasy pole which people try to climb in order to reach a prize at the top.

Balletmeister Pompeati hummed the simple tune to me and I played it at rehearsals on my violin at the tempo he suggested.

During one of our rehearsals, the Prince said “now we must think about the orchestra which must also be as funny as the ballet”. He brought the orchestra together and asked each player for his opinion. Some said this and some said that but when my turn came I said that last year I had been riding with Baron Beust to the village Hof an der March and when we came to the inn, a wedding was in progress at which two bagpipes were accompanying the dancing. The big one, otherwise called a Polish Buck, sounded an octave below the small one and both of them played the same tune. “How would it be” I continued, “if we gathered together all the big and small bagpipes in the surrounding villages? We would easily find four of them to blend together and that would be enough to fill the castle square.”

“Your idea is the best” said the Prince, “but I’m afraid that the players would not be able to manage the tune”. “That is no problem” I replied. “The tune together with the repeats is only thirty-two bars long”. “Good”, said the Prince. “Make it happen and I shall praise you for it”.

After the rehearsal, I told the administrator to despatch a message to all villages to order all bagpipes and bagpipers to gather that afternoon at 5 o’clock at the tavern. The order was so efficiently carried out that at the appointed time more than a dozen bagpipers had gathered. I even managed to find two small and two large ones which blended perfectly and these I kept and dismissed the rest. Then I fetched my violin and played them the tune so many times until they had learnt it. After they had done so, I ordered them to spend the night here and I would call them early the next morning.

At five o’clock the next morning – ballet rehearsals always began at half past five – I ran to the tavern, found my four windbags and made them play the tune through to me a few times which they did well. Then I took and concealed them behind one of the castle wings which formed part of the square and told them to be quiet until I called them.

Finally the Prince arrived for the rehearsal and immediately called me over and said “Don’t forget about the bagpipes!”. “Everything is in order, Your Highness” I said. “They are already here”. “Where?” said the Prince. “I’ll just bring them” and with that I rushed round the corner. “Hey, come with me” I said to the pipers, “and start playing behind me”. No sooner said than done. They puffed out their cheeks and blew like crazy so that the Prince could hear the tune from afar. As we came round the corner, I started cheering and prancing up and down like a billy-goat. Seeing me acting so, the fools thought that they too had to copy me and started hopping around like madmen. This made me so relaxed that in order to imitate them, I redoubled my efforts and began jumping about all over the place and the more I did so, the more they imitated me. Their zeal was exemplary. In short, all five of us came leaping along like mad, musical goats so that the Prince could scarcely contain his mirth. The ballet dancers shouted out their appreciation and everybody else brayed with laughter. “You are a witty young man” said the delighted Prince. “You’ve done a great job” and putting his hand into his purse, he honoured me with six shiny ducats. Then it was the ballet’s turn and after five or six rehearsals we synchronised the bagpipes with the dancers’ feet perfectly. In short, everything went extremely well.

Soon afterwards I received another task which seemed to offer more difficulties but which I equally successfully accomplished.

During a rehearsal of Bonno’s play *Il Vero Omaggio* the Prince remarked, “It’s a pity that the last verse cannot be repeated by a choir”. “Indeed” replied Bonno, “but where do we find the singers?”

“There are five parishes in my domain” said the Prince, “and therefore as many school teachers, each of whom has boys and girls and an assistant which means we could easily find twenty choristers”. “We have enough space for forty” replied Bonno. “Well, in that case, I’ll send for singers from Pressburg for the final few days. Meanwhile I’ll ask Karl to train the teachers with their charges. I did this so well that the Prince did not need to send for singers from Pressburg as will later be seen. The necessary arrangements for the reception of the imperial family were now made. The Prince requested the General Officer commanding Vienna to send two companies of infantry and a

squadron of cavalry to maintain order and security. Forty men of the former mounted guard while the cavalry was sent to the outlying places where spectacles were to be held and for four days and nights they were to patrol the area and watch out for fires. This little brigade camped out on the grazing meadow.

Chapter 9

Emperor Franz at Schlosshof. A Peasant Choir of two hundred voices, some of them in trees. Water Carousel. The Floating Garden. Gluck's Chinese Opera. Unusual Designs. Departure of the Imperial Family.

The appointed day dawned in all its glory. The weather was perfect and at one o'clock the illustrious guests arrived with their retinue consisting of some of their favourite members of the aristocracy. The Emperor¹⁹, Empress²⁰, Archduke Joseph²¹, Archduke Karl²², Archduchess Marianne²³ and Archduchess Christine²⁴ were accompanied by Prince Salm, the Mistress of the Robes and six other Ladies and Gentlemen. There were also a small number of servants.

The entry took place without any noise; no triumphal arch, no bollards, cannon or mortar fire, no trumpets and drums and no cheering. The Prince had deliberately avoided all the fuss so that the various spectacles would be all the more impressive. He himself together with his Court Equerry Beust received them at the front gate.

After lunch they all proceeded to Niederwenden²⁵ and the Prince accompanied them to the various exhibits until they finally came to the theatre with its magnificent backdrop of the blue hills of Pressburg. Here the overture to the play began while a crowd of peasants surged forward, some keeping their distance and some climbing trees which pleased the Emperor. But he was even more pleasantly surprised when all of them, men and women, boys and girls, including those in the trees, burst into song every time the last verse of the play was repeated as a choir of two hundred voices, cleanly and accurately as if they were all professionals. This choir had an extraordinary effect on everybody, causing a great sensation and the Emperor could not conceal his emotions.

The Emperor was, in fact, a man who loved Nature and simplicity, speaking and behaving with delicacy and kindness. Once when the Prince excused himself to go and change his clothes, the Emperor replied good-naturedly, "Change your clothes? My dear Prince, if you permit me to remain as I am today, you would do me a great favour if you did likewise. Otherwise I would stand out as the only scruffy person in this company and people would think me an oddity." "And I", added the

¹⁹ Emperor Franz 1 (1708-65), reigned as Holy Roman Emperor from 1745 to 1765. Married Maria Theresa in 1736. He nominally outranked his wife who created him Co-Regent but left the affairs of state to her. Noted for his cultural interests.

²⁰ Empress Maria Theresa (1717-80). Archduchess of Austria and Queen of Hungary, a key figure in the power politics of eighteenth century Europe.

²¹ Archduke Joseph (1741-90) He succeeded his father as Emperor Franz II. His enlightenment sympathies were not shared by his mother.

²² Archduke Karl (1745-61) Maria Theresa's second and favourite son. He died of smallpox at the age of 16.

²³ Archduchess Marianne (1738-89). She took the veil and became Abbess of the *Damenstift* (home for gentlewomen run by nuns) first in Prague then in Klagenfurt. She was a noted water colourist.

²⁴ Archduchess Christine (1742-98) Favourite daughter of Maria Theresa and sister of the ill-fated Marie Antionette of France. She married Prince Albert of Saxony in 1766 and took the title Duchess of Sachsen-Teschen.

²⁵ Now called Niederweiden. It is a hunting lodge near the palace, open to the public on certain days only.

equally charming Empress, “would cherish you as my most excellent friend even if you were wearing a pilgrim’s habit”.

I find it impossible to provide a detailed description of all the many festivities, fireworks, Bacchanalian feasts, hunts and so on and besides would earn little thanks from my readers but I have no choice and shall pick out one or two of these events, here and there, and clothe with words because it gives me pleasure, now in my crabbed and stricken old age, to re-live in my imagination those scenes of my happy youth and I daresay my readers might share my enjoyment. On any journey through somebody else’s life – and that is what biography is – it is sometimes pleasant to forsake the company and the guide and, for a change, amuse oneself with other things.

So I shall describe a water carousel on a lake at Kroissenbrunn²⁶ which Prince Eugen had laid out and reinforced with huge blocks eighty paces wide and a hundred long. On either shore half way along the length of the lake two galleries had been erected, two and a half *klafter*²⁷ high. In each gallery there was an ensemble of trumpets, drums and other brass instruments playing in turn. In the lake itself, three *klafter* from the shore, stood eight pillars equidistant from each other, each pillar one *klafter* high and one and a half *klafter* wide. They were painted the colour of stone and a grotesque face was fastened on each one. On the first two pillars, opposite each other, stood two live bears dressed up as Pantalons; on the second two were two wild pigs dressed up as Columbines; on the third two were two large billy-goats dressed up as Harlequins and on the fourth two stood two large bulldogs. You can imagine the contrast of growling bears, grunting pigs, bleating goats, howling and barking dogs with constant music in the background, all of them in postures typical of their kind.

The romantically situated hills on both sides of the lake were thronged with thousands of spectators. Opposite the fisherman’s hut was a gallery resting on pillars with transparent railings. It was made of planks but the celebrated theatre designer Quaglio, rightly called *il Bibieno redivivo* after the great architect Cavaliere Bibiena²⁸, had painted them so lifelike that from a distance it looked exactly like a stone building.

After the Prince had allowed his guests sufficient time to take it all in, he gave a sign with a white cloth for the spectacle to begin.

Two gondolas emerged from either end of the gallery, each gondola bearing four people dressed as Venetian gondoliers. One stood on the bow with lances, spears and similar weapons in front of him. Two others rowed and behind them sat the helmsman who steered the gondola in any required direction. Both gondolas proceeded to sail around the pillars like a carousel. Soon two more came, then another two and finally the last two. There were now eight gondolas moving around in such perfect order that the best Balletmeister in a theatre could hardly have done better. After they had all made their rounds, they then drew up opposite each other and commenced a tournament whereby each of the knights at the bows broke three or four lances. They then continued their rounds until each of them came to a pillar whereupon each knight simultaneously hurled his spear at the grotesque face fastened there. Each blow caused a trapdoor to open in the hollow pillar in which a large number of ducks, geese and a swan had been placed. You can imagine the haste with which these feathered water creatures rushed towards their natural element. Each of them had a marionette attached to their backs according to the size of the creature and these marionettes were in the form of Pantalons, Harlequins, Anselmos, Dottores, Leanders, Pasquins, Scaramouches and other Carnival figures.

Now the tournament knights fell into disarray, seized their cudgels and threatened each other with them. The gondolas began to deliberately circulate in disorder and every time they confronted each

²⁶ Now called Groissenbrunn, a village about two kilometres from the palace. The lake is still there, now surrounded by smart villas.

²⁷ A Klafter is an obsolete measurement used in German-speaking lands until the metric system was adopted in the later 19th century. It varied between 1.75 and 3 metres according to location.

²⁸ The Bibiena family from Italy were famed throughout Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries as theatre architects and stage designers, much in demand by the Courts of Europe to stage operas, weddings and funerals.

other, the knights dipped their cudgels – they were actually scoops designed to look like cudgels - into the water and soaked each other. Every time they approached a pillar, they threw water over the animals there who, incensed at such discourtesy, set up a hullabaloo. Imagine the effect! The musicians on both sides of the lake had had orders to blast away as soon as the fighting started so one trumpeter played in D, another in C and a third in E la fa. The drummer had partly relaxed and partly tightened his drums and oboists, clarinettists and basoonists did similar. What an infernal noise! Add to that the hideous sounds of the beasts, the quacking and cackling of the ducks and geese thoroughly disturbed by the random movements of the gondolas and finally the uproarious laughter of some three thousand spectators. I defy any hypochondriac not to laugh out loud at this unique spectacle.

After this event had lasted long enough, the gondolas withdrew. Then all the spectators gasped in amazement as the gallery changed into a grove with willow trees. Laughter died on their lips and even the choir, both human and animal, who now saw their tormentors withdraw, lapsed into a *diminuendo* despite the then practice of the famous Electoral orchestra at Mannheim²⁹. Everybody craned their necks and stared at the newly arisen grove in great expectation of what was coming next.

From the middle of the grove there arose slowly and spontaneously a beautiful little garden like a floating island which in the space of thirteen or fourteen minutes moved towards the fisherman's hut. It was surrounded by a waist-high white and green painted fence. Box trees stood in well laid out beds in the garden, resplendent with all sorts of fresh flowers now in bloom. Between the beds there stood twelve orange and lemon trees full of ripe fruit in dishes painted white and green. Right in the middle there was a round pool teeming with a huge number of whitefish. From the throat of a dolphin water spouted six foot into the air. At one end of the garden there was a Mount Parnassus with a Pegasus, the winged horse, from whose hooves two little streams trickled down over the rocks and along a little channel into the pool.

At the entrance stood Baron Beust as a gardener together with Mlle. Heinisch the elder who was dressed in white and green satin and adorned with fresh flowers. He held a gilded rake and she a gilded watering-can. Around the pool stood two fishermen and two fisherwomen dressed in white and skyblue satin. One of the fishermen was myself, the other my younger brother. One of the fisherwomen was Mlle. Heinisch the younger and the other was my sister. Each of us held a small fishing net made of stained-black wood and thin silver-laced netting.

When the garden reached the shore, the gardener invited the distinguished guests to enter and pluck the flowers which they did, making several bouquets for themselves. The Archdukes and Archduchesses to whom we presented our nets caught fish in the pool and threw them into the lake. Finally the guests took their seats on benches by the fence while the gardeners fetched from behind Mount Parnassus cool refreshments in beautiful goblets which they offered to the guests.

That calm summer evening tempering the heat of the day; that soft brass music; that merriment visible on all faces and especially that courtesy and good-humour which the virtuous and contented Prince displayed to everybody, even the humblest – these impressions will remain for ever embedded in my memory.

I also still recall that uncommonly beautiful performance of the little comic opera *La Danza* which Metastasio had adapted from his play *Il Ballo Chinese* and which Gluck had set to music. Quaglio's designs were totally according to Chinese taste on which varnishers, sculptors and gilders had lavished their skills. But what gave the designs their greatest brilliance were prismatic glass tubes cast in Bohemian glassworks which, perfectly matched together, were mounted onto blank spaces which would normally have been painted in bright oil colours. The magnificent and amazing sight of these glass prisms illuminated by countless rays of light produced an indescribable effect on the eye,

²⁹ Under the direction of Johann Stamitz (1717-57), this orchestra was noted for its many innovations and new dynamic techniques in orchestral playing, especially the so-called *Mannheim Crescendo*, a sudden crescendo (and diminuendo) for the whole orchestra. Other techniques were imitated by, among others, Mozart and Beethoven.

even in the light of day. Imagine the mirror-like sheen of azure-lacquered surfaces, the gleam of gilded foliage and the rainbow-like colours produced by hundreds of glass prisms flashing like diamonds of the first water, and still the most vivid imagination would fail to do justice to the sheer magic of the spectacle. And then the divine music of a Gluck! It was not simply the fine performance of the excellent *Sinfonia* which included parts for handbells, triangles, small hand drums and cymbals among others, sometimes alone, sometimes together, which initially delighted the audience; the music itself worked its magic.

After the performance, the Emperor, accompanied by the Prince, stepped up to the orchestra and requested the curtain be raised. It was, whereupon the Monarch took his telescope and Quaglio gave him a detailed explanation of the designs. He also asked for one of the glass prisms so a whole hatful of them was offered from which the Emperor pocketed three or four pieces. He also requested the Prince to have someone sent from Vienna to draw the designs but it was Quaglio who was appointed and he completed the task by the following evening for which he received a gold watch and chain.

The following winter the Emperor arranged for the play to be performed in the Court Theatre (now the National Theatre) and the designs caused a sensation amongst the Viennese public. I often saw it performed in Vienna but in all honesty I have to admit that these Viennese designs, even though they were the same colours and used the same glass prisms, were a pale shadow of what they had been at Schlosshof but why, I do not know. Moreover the actors – but not the singers for they included the great Gabrieli and others of similar standing – fell very short of our standards. They had not been trained by Tesi.

After six days of laughter and merriment the guests returned highly satisfied to Vienna. There the Emperor ordered his court paymaster to reward both the officers, underofficers and rank and file with a month's wages. Madame Tesi received two bracelets from the Empress and a portrait of the imperial couple in a diamond frame, worth two thousand gulden. Baron Beust received from Prince Salm a snuff-box with a diamond-studded lid. The ladies Heinisch and Starzer each received jewels worth one hundred and fifty ducats. Gluck and Bonno each received a gold box containing a hundred ducats and twelve hundred ducats were distributed amongst the imperial household and hunters.

The Prince arranged for the Emperor to present these gifts according to their wage rates so that nobody would have grounds to complain of favouritism. But just as the Emperor was leaving, the Prince called out to him, "the poor devil, Karl, deserves more than his couple of hundred gulden pocket money so he should receive something worth four hundred gulden".

After they had departed, four horses draped with imperial coverings were found tied to the hayrack and it was thought that the grooms had got drunk and forgotten them. But on closer inspection they found a note attached to the mantle in the Emperor's hand;

Ces quatre chevaux, mon cher Prince, sont de ce moment à Votre disposition.

François premier

The Prince had the horses led out and after the coverings had been removed, everybody was amazed at the beauty and magnificence of the livery. The gift was worthy of a Roman emperor and a Prince of Sachsen-Hildburghausen.

The following three months we reverted to the previous arrangement except that the Prince received several visits from friends in the neighbourhood and from Vienna. On such occasions, the new operas were performed a few times both in Niederwenden and in the theatre.

Chapter 10

My situation changes. I begin to compose. The *professore di violino*. My daring ruse. Pale and red faces.

On our return to Vienna, the Prince moved to another palace and so different arrangements were made for the imperial household and the orchestra. Together with my brother I retained my rooms in the palace and received a monthly salary of 37 gulden and 30 kreutzer. The youngest of us, Alexander, over whom I had been given responsibility, received 25 gulden. At the same time I was released from my duties at table and in chambers and stopped wearing my uniform. I had saved so much, as well as being allowed to sell my old clothes that I was now able to afford some smart new clothes.

The Prince had sold Schlosshof on very advantageous terms to the Emperor, who had so enjoyed himself there, so his income was now considerably enhanced.³⁰ He thus increased his household staff and from now on we remained in Vienna.

My French and Italian lesson now ceased as I had achieved reasonable fluency but my violin lessons continued and Trani, who lived far away, was brought in each day for the lesson in a princely conveyance.

One day Bonno told me that he thought he detected a talent for composition in me because my cadenzas showed a degree of creativity. He found my modest talent sufficiently interesting to offer me lessons in musical composition free of charge and I received permission to go to him three times a week. I kissed his hand with delight and the prospect filled me with joy.

The first time I came, he gave me a copy of Fux's *Introduction to Composition*³¹, the best textbook of its kind at the time. It was written in Latin and consisted of dialogues between master and pupil. I saw this book first in a German translation. When Bonno gave me the book, he said "you understand Latin?" I paged through the book, glanced through a few passages and replied, "It's such dog-Latin that even a schoolboy could understand it". "Yes" he replied, admonishingly, "but it's not the style that matters but the basic lessons the book contains". Indeed!

After a few weeks of instruction, Bonno ordered me to compose a sonata which I did and brought to him. He corrected some notes in the bass part and then asked me to make a concerto out of it. I came back fourteen days later with the full score but I had made serious mistakes in the continuo part and I had also ignored the golden rule that accompanying passages should not conceal or drown out the solo part. My teacher pointed out all my mistakes, explained the reasons why and told me how to correct them. It took four lessons before I was able to make a fair copy. When I had done so, he said, "now study the solo part with Herr Trani, write out the other parts in full score and when you are ready, then play it to the Prince."

I performed my concerto. How can I describe my innermost joy when, for the first time in my life, I heard my puny effort performed by a large, first-rate orchestra! I was absolutely enraptured. Everybody who has had this experience knows what it means and will remember with a smile his own impressions of his first creative outpouring. With the pride of a poet whose first successful poem in its silver-bound volume has created such wondrous acclamation, I bowed out of the place where the first fruits of my still confused brain had been revealed to so many connoisseurs, music-lovers and critics. I seemed to walk inches taller.

This not unsuccessful debut now encouraged me to exert myself to learn the rules of my calling. But the more I exerted myself, the greater the difficulties I encountered. But I was not deterred. Young as I was, I realised that besides a thorough mastery of the basic rules, a composer must possess taste and imagination and above all a creative capacity. This latter, although a gift of nature, vouchsafed to few, can nevertheless be cultivated by persistent toil otherwise it will run to seed like a neglected plant and benefit nobody. I therefore resolved to listen not only to everything new, *con tanto*

³⁰ According to Günther Berger (2009), it was Maria Theresa who bought Schlosshof for 400,000 gulden and presented it to her husband after the Prince could no longer afford the upkeep. Gluck was appointed Court Kapellmeister with an annual salary of 2000 gulden while the 16 year old Dittersdorf received just over 444 gulden annually.

³¹ Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741) the foremost musical theorist of his age. Dittersdorf may have been referring here to the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, a treatise on Renaissance counterpoint which had enormous influence at the time. Both Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart are said to have studied it.

d'orecchio (as the Italians say when they mean listening with the greatest attention) but also to ask myself why a particular musical thought was so beautiful. And how often have I discovered that it was beautiful just because it was heard *in the right context* and that if it were not in the right context, it would not have been noticed and indeed might even have ruined the whole work.

The winter concerts ended after Easter and we were at leisure for the whole summer. We had to be on call every day until four o'clock, but if no order came, we were free to go wherever we wanted.

One day, when I knew that the Prince, Tesi and Bonno were dining with the Venetian ambassador, I left town for the grape harvest. For some time I had been a keen billiards player and, like a certain emperor, considered every day that I didn't play, a lost day. I had scarcely returned to the coffee house at quarter to six when the waiter came up to me, exclaiming "Thank goodness you've come. A messenger from the Prince has been here three times looking for you. There's a concert at six o'clock for the ambassador; the others are already there, only you are missing". I rushed home, quickly changed, ordered a fiacre and at quarter past six I arrived at the anteroom where I was informed that the Prince had sent for me three times and that only I was missing. After we had announced our full complement, we were summoned in. The grim and serious expression on the Prince's face left me in no doubt that tomorrow I'd be for the high jump.

The concert began with a symphony and as Trani was indisposed and couldn't attend, I was *à la tête* of the orchestra. The ambassador was lost in amazement. He was even more astounded when his wife sang an aria, which I had never heard before but which I was able to judge the tempo quite correctly. There was nothing remarkable about this; I took my cue from the first few notes Bonno played on the piano as I have always done in similar circumstances. After the aria, the ambassador approached the Prince and pointing at me, indicated somebody quite out of the ordinary and added that he ought to know because he, although a *dilettante*, was a *professore di violino*. "Good" said the Prince, "when his turn comes, I'll get him to play a solo so that you, as an expert, can judge whether he has the makings of a virtuoso."

I had heard every word and began to tremble with fear because in my haste I had forgotten to bring a concerto or sonata with me. Desperately I tried to think up a ruse to find my way out my predicament and avoid having to confess that I had been so careless for not having anticipated this. The Prince would never excuse this oversight, even less so since my late arrival had not disposed myself in his favour. Finally I hit upon a daring course of action. "You must help me out" I told my younger brother. "When I play a sonata, you accompany me by playing the one in G off by heart; it doesn't matter if you miss a note here and there, there's nothing else we can do". "Fine" said my brother, "we'll manage if we get stuck". I couldn't have been more relieved.

The dreaded order to play finally came. I went nonchalantly to the music stand where the scores lay, selected the first violin part from the next best symphony and the bass part. I placed the violin part in front of me and gave the bass part to my brother. Unfortunately it was in E major but undeterred I launched bravely into my G major sonata. I had hardly played ten or twelve bars when I saw the ambassador rise from his seat, beckon another Italian *Cavaliero* to follow him and both of them then stood behind me. Imagine my alarm at having the *professore di violino* standing right behind me. Quite unnecessarily he produced a telescope from his pocket and focused over my shoulder on the music in front of me. "Now I'm in real trouble" I thought. "This is it!" I whispered to my brother. I decided then and there to come clean after the first movement and tell the ambassador the truth and ask him not to betray me to the Prince. But I soon became aware that the His Excellency was not only *not* a violin professor but was just an empty windbag who knew nothing about music and merely wanted to impress his neighbours with his superior knowledge. This he did by whispering to them from time to time, quite inappropriately, "*Adesso viene un passaggio*" (here comes a passage). I then became mischievous and executed a few runs, a flourish and the odd variation or two off the cuff which succeeded brilliantly. Now that I was no longer in any danger, my mood lightened considerably and I played with unaccustomed precision and finished up to everybody's satisfaction. The ambassador applauded me and couldn't assure the Prince enough what a wonderful treasure he had found in me.

Meanwhile Bonno came up to me and said “you really played well today with real skill but I’ll have to take your brother to task because he accompanied you so badly”. “Please don’t” I said, “because he played the bass part by heart”. “How so?” asked Bonno. “the bass part was in front of him”. “Yes, but only for show” I replied and told him the whole story. “Cheeky, I must say!” he repeated but when I told him about the *Adesso viene un passaggio*, he laughed out loud, thereby attracting the Prince’s attention who beckoned him over. But I had sworn him to secrecy and was confident he would keep it.

The next day as I was sitting at table, the Prince summoned me. I suspected the worst because I had heard from the servants that my name had been mentioned. I presented myself apprehensively because the awful thought had occurred to me that my rebuke would be witnessed not only by the guests at table but also by the servants, so I stood awkwardly on the threshold.

“Ha” said the Prince, “look how the lad stands there, as pale as a wh*re picked up by the police. But I’ll soon make your cheeks redder! Who would have thought that yesterday *he* had the effrontery to play a sonata in G as if it were a symphonic part in E and make a fool of an ambassador!”

“It was not my intention, your Highness” I said, “because I had meant to ask him not to let you into the secret.” “Did you really?” asked the Prince. “It wasn’t necessary” I replied, “because I soon realised that he couldn’t read music”. “That may be so” the Prince continued, “but it was still a dirty trick to play. What do you deserve?” I shrugged and stammered, “Punishment”. “Right. Come here and receive your punishment”. A box on the ears was the least I might have expected but instead, the Prince gave me a tray on which stood a full glass of Tokay and five or six sponge cakes. “I promised I’d make your cheeks redder” he said, offering me the wine. “Take it, sit down there and see if it will happen”. I did as ordered and when I picked up the third cake, I found ten ducats underneath. When I stood up to thank him, he said, “that’s because you managed to extricate yourself so well from yesterday’s incident”.

As I believe I have already said, the Prince loved above all else to reward quick-wittedness and as I was aware that it does not pass unnoticed, I often succeeded in earning myself a few rewards.

Around this time Gluck was summoned to Rome where he was much applauded and received the Order of the *Cavalieri dello Sperone d’oro*³². This Order is awarded in Rome and its holders are entitled *Comites Palatii Romani*. They receive a scroll of parchment with a large seal. They also enjoy in Rome and in all Papal States the same liberties as the Aristocracy and have free and unrestricted access to the Papal palace as well as having equal rank with chamberlains in other ruling courts. The decoration is a yellow, enamel cross set in a gold frame like that of the Knights of Malta and like them, they wear it round their necks on a crimson ribbon or, slightly smaller, made entirely of gold and suspended by a red ribbon from the buttonhole. The Order is very ancient and in the past was more highly regarded than it is today. In order to promote the fine arts and sciences, later Popes awarded it to outstanding geniuses such as Metastasio, Bibiena and Guarini etc. Thus Gluck was singled out and now describes himself as *Cavaliere*, *Chevalier* or *Ritter* Gluck.

I may be forgiven for dwelling on the details of this Order for in 1770 I too was honoured with it. But it is not for this reason that I now describe myself as von Dittersdorf, but rather because in 1773 I really was raised to the nobility by the Imperial Court. But more of that later.

Chapter 11

Short exile in Hildburghausen. Schweitzer. A fateful sleigh ride.

³² Order of the Golden Spur awarded to Gluck by Pope Benedict XIV. Mozart and Paganini were also recipients. By the middle of the 18th century, Popes were handing out this Order indiscriminately, even to such doubtful characters as Casanova who wrote in his Memoirs (vol. 8) “the Order they call the Golden Spur was so disparaged that people irritated me when they asked me for details of my cross”.

In 1758 the so-called Seven Years War broke out³³. The following year the Prince was given command of the Imperial army. He took with him fourteen members of his orchestra, including me and my two brothers.

In the middle of April the Prince and his equipage, adequately protected by cavalry set out and four weeks later arrived in Fürth by Nuremberg which had been chosen as the muster-point for the Imperial army. There we remained for a good two months before the army of about 90,000 men arrived. Then we marched to Erfurt in Thuringia to join the French army of about 25,000 men under the command of General Soubise. I could have said much more about all this but it is not part of my plan.

As both armies advanced, the Prince's baggage train and retinue retreated back to Hildburghausen protected by two squadrons of Cuirassiers. We passed through the extensive Thuringian Forest and the Sattel (a high mountain pass,) Saalfeld and the University of Jena, before ten days later finally reaching Hildburghausen³⁴, the residence of the reigning Dukes, where we were to spend the whole winter. Concerts were held once a week in the ducal castle and we had to perform every time.

We were on very friendly terms with the Duke's orchestra among whose players was a young man who, as a boy had been an excellent treble but now, after his voice had broken, played the viola there. We were the same age and met every day. My elder brother took such a liking to him that he offered him accommodation in his roomy quarters and both of them lived together until our departure in two rooms adjacent to each other. This pleasant young man's name was Schweitzer³⁵ who afterwards distinguished himself as the composer of the music to Wieland's *Alceste*.

The winter we spent there was the most pleasant I can remember. Yet I only escaped by a hairsbreadth being snatched away in the prime of my life.

One of the Duke's horse-trainers, a very civil gentleman whose father possessed a fortune, played the violin and asked me for lessons. I did so but refused payment. In exchange he provided all sorts of diversions involving horses and coaches. Snow fell early that year and lasted the whole winter. Every week he would call for me in a sleigh and drive me to a busy inn about half a mile from the town. On one occasion he arrived dressed very smartly in shoes and stockings and asked me to dress up like him because a birthday party and ball for one of the Court lawyers had been organised and he had been asked to invite me. A groom would collect me in a handsome sleigh from my house at three o'clock. I gladly accepted the invitation and went to my wardrobe to select shoes, stockings and a suitable jacket. But just as I was leaving my room, I was seized with fear, as if an icy hand was crawling up my spine. I did not believe in premonitions but suddenly I felt I no longer wanted to go. I closed my wardrobe and sat down at my desk and when the horse-trainer arrived, I told him straight out that I had changed my mind. All his entreaties were in vain, yet I could give no sensible reason. The barber who had just arrived was sent away again in his presence. The horse-trainer departed in high dudgeon and made the groom sit in the sleigh instead of me in order to achieve the correct balance while he himself sat up at the back. From my window I watched them go down the street, cross the wide square and head towards the town gate.

As the sound of the sleigh bells died away, I put on my coat and went to my brother. I found him with Schweitzer taking it in turns to read to each other out of Rabener's satires³⁶. We settled down

³³ 1756-63. Austria, France, Saxony, Sweden and Russia against Prussia, Hanover and Britain. The war was fought for territorial possession both in Europe and overseas. Prussia and her allies emerged victorious.

³⁴ The castle of Hildburghausen in Thuringia was begun in 1685 and took many years to complete. It was totally destroyed by American artillery in April 1945 and soon after demolished. But the grounds remain and today has become a pleasant park open to the public.

³⁵ Anton Schweitzer (1735-87). Little is known about his life. His setting of Wieland's play *Alceste* was given in Weimar in 1773 and is considered one of the first German *Singspiels*.

³⁶ Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener (1714-71) author of the widely read, at the time, *Sammlung Satirischer Schriften*. (1751-5)

to play the six new quartets of Richter³⁷ which Schweitzer had obtained. He played the violoncello, I the first violin, the elder brother the second violin and my younger brother the viola. In between we drank some excellent coffee and smoked some fine tobacco. We were in a good mood.

We were just tuning up for the next quartet when suddenly news reached us from below that the horse-trainer had had an accident just by the town gate. The sleigh had hit a stone, overturned and thrown the groom head on against the gate, smashing his skull and killing him on the spot. Imagine my shock! Schweitzer ran off to find out more. He returned in half an hour and confirmed the sad news. The police had taken the horse-trainer into custody where he had told Schweitzer that the only consolation he had was that I had not gone with him because I would certainly have suffered the same fate. The Duke arranged for half the man's wages to be paid to his unfortunate widow for life while the horse-trainer's father covered the other half by court order. The horse-trainer was detained for four weeks at the police station for his carelessness.

An uncanny feeling had saved my life.

We remained here until March after which we set off again on the long and laborious journey back to Vienna.

Chapter 12

I get into bad company and start gambling. Desertion. Arrest. I am taken to Vienna and relate what happened to me there.

After the Prince had relinquished his command, he almost regretted that that he had sold Schlosshof because he did not like spending his summers in town but preferred the countryside. He therefore decided to rent a hunting lodge in an estate somewhere in Moravia or further east. This meant that he was constantly on the move so for many months we had nothing to do.

This was my undoing. I got into bad company and began to live beyond my means. Despite my salary and quite generous fees for giving private lessons and despite earning many a ducat for performing in churches and private houses, it was not enough. Billiards, cards and skittles used it all up and by the middle of the month I was broke.

From time to time, of course, I won substantial amounts at billiards, which I played well, and this was enough to pay off my debts and take on new ones but the end result was that I reinforced my bad habits. But the good thing was that I did not neglect my studies and continued to practice the violin diligently and compose. I wrote six symphonies which attracted attention in Prague and Vienna.

Count N, a Bohemian knight, who himself possessed an orchestra, had acquired these symphonies. On coming to Vienna he quite naturally set about making my acquaintance, summoned me and commissioned six new symphonies for a fee of 24 ducats, 12 of which he paid in advance and told his agent to pay me the balance on delivery of the completed score. At the same time he asked me if I were employed to which I replied that I was in the service of the Prince at a monthly salary of 37 gulden and 30 kreutzer. "Disgraceful!" he said, "that's nothing for a person of your ability. If you enter my service, I will pay you 16 ducats a month³⁸ with free board and lodging and two new outfits a year". I replied that it would be ungrateful of me to leave the Prince in view of everything that I had learnt in his service. "As you wish" the Count replied, "but if you should ever leave the Prince's service, you will receive from me everything I have just promised".

³⁷ Franz Xaver Richter (1709-89) a prominent and prolific Bohemian composer who became the Maitre de Chapelle of Strasbourg Cathedral. Among his many works are 80 symphonies and 39 Masses. The six quartets referred to here are his opus 5, published in 1757. They can be heard on YouTube.

³⁸ 60 kreutzer = 1 gulden. 3 gulden = 1 ducat. A Viennese government official at the time could expect an annual salary of between 300 and 600 gulden. Haydn's salary as Kapellmeister, from 1766, at the Esterhaza court was 600 gulden a year. In 1796 Haydn was commissioned by a London publisher to compose three symphonies for £100. The approximate rate of exchange at that time was 9½ gulden to the pound sterling. (See Festschrift for Robbins Landon 1996, p 72)

As my disreputable behaviour continued, I found myself falling behind in my payments and my debts amounted to 70 gulden. My creditors threatened to denounce me to the Prince if I did not pay them by the first of the next month. But it was absolutely impossible to find 70 gulden from my monthly pay of 37 gulden and have enough to live on. I confided in one of my fellow complices and mentioned the Count's offer and, before I knew it, I had been persuaded by him to do a runner.

The following morning he came to me with the news that he had booked a seat for me on the coach leaving for Prague on the first of the next month. There were just five days of this month left during which time I smuggled under my cloak clothes, linen and musical manuscripts to him. He also lent me a little case in which to pack my belongings and ensured it was delivered to the coach. I arranged for my salary due on the first of the month to be paid a day earlier. I felt deeply ashamed of this underhand trick I was about to play but I was now so deeply implicated that, like anybody else contemplating an ignoble deed, I convinced myself of its necessity.

Early on the first day of the month I departed from Vienna with a beating heart. It seemed to me that trees and fields were reproaching me for my ingratitude and I dared not contemplate nature in all the beauty of early summer. I wrapped my cloak around me in shame. But my irresponsibility soon gained the upperhand and the further we travelled and the more the movement of the coach invigorated my blood circulation, the happier and more relaxed I became. I felt I was now master of my fate.

Five days later I reached Prague and rushed straight to the Count's. Oh Heavens! Imagine my horror when the Porter informed me that he had departed with his wife for Paris three months previously and that he would in all probability spend another nine months there. Utterly abandoned, I wanted to sink into the ground. Eventually I managed to see the Chamberlain, told him who I was and what the Count had offered me in Vienna. He curtly informed me that he had had no orders to provide me with a salary, board or lodging; he did not doubt the truth of what I was saying but he would have to write to the Count first and that would take five, six or more weeks before he received an answer and in the meantime I would have to be patient.

Indeed, there was nothing else I could do. But how was I to survive? What little money I had was not enough. Then by chance I heard about a certain very good oboist in the service of Count Breda. Next morning I sought him out, told him of my embarrassment and asked him to do me a favour until the Count returned, but I was careful not to divulge the fact that I had shamefully run away from Vienna and the Prince. The good man took pity on me and told me to wait while he spoke to his master.

After a while, he returned and led me to his master who received me very kindly with the words, "Do not worry. Until you receive an answer from my very good friend Count N, I will provide you with free board and lodging in my house and so that you can earn something, I will ask you to write me six symphonies and two concertos for my virtuoso oboist to play. Here is something for you". It was twelve ducats, in cash. Now I was saved. I took thirty gulden from these ducats and gave them to the oboist, asking him to send them to my innkeeper in Vienna. This he did faithfully.

After about four weeks I had composed three symphonies and one oboe concerto whereupon the Count gave me twelve more ducats, forty gulden of which I despatched to Vienna as before.

Soon afterwards, just as I was busy composing one morning, Count Breda sent for me. How can I describe my shock when I saw Chamberlain Bremer standing in front of me with a police officer at his side, looking at me wordlessly with a sad and serious expression. The Count addressed me; "You have caused me considerable embarrassment by not disclosing the fact that you absconded from Vienna. Read this yourself". He handed me a decree signed by the then Governor of Prague, Count Wiepprick which enjoined Count Breda to deliver me up to the police and then account for the suspicion that he had enticed me away from the Prince. "No!" I cried, "No, no. Count Breda has nothing to do with my flight".

"Is that the truth?" asked the police officer. "As true as God lives" I replied. My statement was taken down and I confessed the whole story. My statement was read back to me, I approved and signed it together with the officer. As I followed the officer out, I promised the Count that I would send the

three symphonies and one oboe concerto, for which he had paid in advance, from Vienna. He did not accept my offer and this upset me more than anything.

The police officer took me into custody in the Town Hall in the Old City. My room was not unpleasant and the midday meal was very good but I had no appetite and was unable to swallow anything. My arrest lasted for three days after which I was taken back to Vienna in the company of Chamberlain Bremer, the police officer and two policemen.

On arrival I was locked into a side room at the gatekeeper's lodge and soon afterwards Bremer came on the Prince's orders to interrogate me about my flight. All my answers, which he wrote down, came down to the same thing, namely, that I had been partly attracted by the Count's promises and partly because I feared my creditors. Everything depended on freeing myself of the suspicion that I had wanted to cheat them and this I was able to do because at my request they all provided receipts. That completely changed my situation, for next day Bremer came again and announced that in the Prince's name he exonerated me from the suspicion of any dishonourable act against my creditors but that nevertheless my ungrateful behaviour towards him, my benefactor, could not go unpunished and so it was his Highness' order that I should remain under arrest for fourteen days in the gatekeeper's lodge and every fourth day would receive only bread and water.

Deeply touched, tears welled up in my eyes and I was barely able to express my thanks to the magnanimous Prince for this reprieve. Then, as I was sadly contemplating bread and water on the following day, Bremer came and took me to the Prince. Overcome with remorse and shame, I dared not look at him and burst into loud sobbing. The Prince remained silent until my whimpering died away. Then he said, "I see that your own feelings have tormented you enough. No further punishment is needed. You are acquitted. Maybe I can achieve more by showing mercy rather than harsh punishment which you yourself admit you deserved. You may go. Behave properly, then I shall forget the shame you have brought upon me and yourself."

I returned to my room. Healthy as I was, this whole episode had shaken me so badly that all night long I felt hot and cold. A high fever possessed my body and I was obliged to spend four weeks in bed during which I was nursed like a child. The Prince let it be known that he had long forgotten everything and that I should calm down and get better as soon as possible. He had also forbidden his staff, on pain of dismissal, to make me the slightest reproach.

I recovered my health and diligently studied and composed while the customary routine resumed in the Prince's household for the next two years. Finally the time came when the course my life took a radical change of direction.

Chapter 13

The orchestra is dismissed. Count Durazzo. My journey to Italy with Gluck. The Marini. My sojourn in Bologna. Farinelli. Nicolini and the blind beggar. Delegation. Pater Martini. A Fright. My hasty return to Vienna. My contest with Lolli.

The reigning duke of Sachsen-Hildburghausen, the great uncle of the Prince, my benefactor, died and his heir was a mere child of six or seven. The result was that the Prince was charged with the guardianship of the heir as well as the administration and governance of the dukedom which he could not nor would not refuse and which obliged him to move to Hildburghausen.

As an orchestra was already in residence there and as the Prince would have his hands full with organising the heir's education and running the administration, he was forced to dismiss the greater part of his own orchestra. But so as not to deprive the players of their living, he arranged for Count Durazzo³⁹, the then director of the Court Theatre to take us under contract for three years to play in

³⁹ Count Giacomo Durazzo (1717-94) Born in Genoa, he was the Genoese ambassador to Vienna 1749-52. He then entered the Imperial Service and was appointed *Intendant* of the Court Theatre, 1754-64. He was

the theatre orchestra as well as the Court orchestra for the same salary that we had received from the Prince.

Nobody was worse off with this arrangement than myself. It meant that I had to attend opera and ballet rehearsals from ten o'clock in the morning to two o'clock in the afternoon, evening performances in the theatre from half past six to ten o'clock, academy classes at the theatre every Friday and give concerts every other week. I was also under obligation to perform during Feast Days and Holidays at the Imperial Court.

As you might think, with all these arduous obligations I had no time to take private pupils or perform in private houses and thus my income was severely curtailed. At the same time the costs of quality items had risen enormously and there was no way I could neglect my dress when performing in front of the public or especially at the Imperial Court. My monthly salary of 37 gulden and 30 kreutzer all went on paying for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I could depend on nowhere else for meals apart from inns for who would have offered me anything at two or half past two? I therefore had to dig deeply into my own pocket to feed myself and on many a day I wasted a gulden without eating my fill.

Gluck had now been Kapellmeister at the Court and Theatre for two years with a salary of 2000 gulden. He had already taken a liking to me even when the Prince was there. I tried to ingratiate myself in his favour and managed to get him to treat me like a son. I then took my concerns to him and explained my situation as it really was, whereupon he agreed to help me out. The next day we went to see Count Durazzo. Gluck explained the situation and I asked either for a rise in salary or my dismissal. Gluck did not fail to support me to the utmost. At last the Count said to me; "My dear child, it is not in my power either to grant you an increase in pay or to dismiss you for I am bound by the terms of your contract. But I can dispense with your services for four days a week during which you are free to earn what you want and in this way life will be a little easier for you". I thanked his Excellency for his generosity in the most fulsome terms and after a few months I was earning well in excess of my official salary. I spent this money on buying fine clothes which pleased the Count so much that he offered me his patronage and invited me to dine at his table on several occasions. This made me redouble my efforts and soon I enjoyed the undivided attention of the Viennese public.

Fifteen months now passed when, one day, Gluck told me he had been invited to Bologna to compose an opera there and asked me whether I would like to accompany him thither but on the understanding that I would bear half the travelling costs and meet my daily expenses from my own pocket. He would obtain permission for my absence from the Count. "I would absolutely love to come" I replied with great enthusiasm which someone like Gluck, who knew my circumstances and my love of art, would have noted. "But", I added sadly, "I don't have the money". "Well, in that case" said Gluck curtly and turning away, "nothing can be done".

That same evening I happened to be dining with Herr Preiss, the then Court Agent and told him about Gluck's offer. "Upon my soul" he said, "go for it, take Gluck at his word!" "Yes" I replied with a shrug, "but where do I get the money from? Gluck will let me travel with him but I'll have to cover half the travelling costs". "Bah!" replied the good man – God rest his soul! – "I'll find a way. Here's a hundred ducats which you needn't pay back until your situation has improved. Come to lunch tomorrow. I'll invite Herr von Allstern and over a glass of Grännzinger (the best Austrian wine) I'll get him to lend you as much again. And for emergencies, I'll give you a bill of exchange for 600 gulden so altogether you'll have about 1500 gulden. All this should see you through and neither of us will press you for reimbursement. Go straight to Gluck tomorrow, set everything up and then come to lunch".

I thanked this noble man with tears of joy and next morning went straight to see Gluck. He was delighted, ordered a coach and together we went to see Count Durazzo. He not only granted me permission but gave me 50 ducats for the journey as a present as well as promising me a loan for six months from the theatre box office. Our departure was now set in two weeks time.

I rushed joyfully to lunch with Herr von Preiss where everything he had promised the day before was delivered. Shortly afterwards Count Durazzo invited Gluck and me to dinner and gave me an order for the payment of 225 gulden from the theatre box office in which was enclosed a note from the Empress to the effect that it was a gift for the journey and that my salary would continue to be paid during my absence. "If this is not enough" he continued, "then Kapellmeister Gluck will be happy to lend you some money against your salary". "I won't need it" I replied quickly. "Some good friends have already taken care of it". "*Tanto meglio*" said the Count.

Our departure was delayed for a few days on account of a certain Signora Marini who had spent the last two years as a *prima donna* in Prague and now wanted to return to her native city, Venice, together with her mother. Gluck had met her three years previously in Italy and was now good enough to postpone our departure for five days for her sake but on condition that they travel during the nights as well. She accepted this and so we set out from Vienna in two coaches with post horses. Gluck had tasked me with paying all the expenses of the journey and keeping an account. Signora Marini also asked me to do the same for her and gave me a well-filled purse of gold coins and indicated that she would replenish it when it was empty.

She was a very beautiful and spirited girl, about twenty-four years old, cheerful, witty and entertaining but her conduct was irreproachable. At our first lunch stop in Neustadt, she asked us to change places at each stop until we got to Venice so that we could enjoy each other's company so soon Gluck and then I alternated in travelling in her coach. Her mother, a cheerful, lively lady of about fifty, as relaxed as her daughter, travelled in our coach, sometimes with Gluck and sometimes with me and so time passed very pleasantly. Gluck was gallant and endeavoured to make himself pleasant whereas I tried to spoil everything as soon as we changed places and this little jealousy added a little spice to our journey. The girl reigned as sovereign lady and the Kapellmeister was Cupid – and this set the tone and mood. Gluck's solemn intention to travel day and night was soon forgotten. Considering the circumstances, we found it so much more pleasant to stay overnight in Graz, Laibach and Görz⁴⁰ than to keep pressing forward merely for the sake of covering distance.

On the seventh evening of our journey we arrived in Mestri. It had been our intention to spend the night there and next morning take a *peota* (a large, two-oared boat with space for six to ten people with luggage) across to Venice but signora Marini wouldn't hear of it and, perhaps spurred by the nearness of her native city with so many pleasant memories, persuaded us to cross that very evening which meant that we arrived in Venice shortly before midnight, late on Palm Sunday preceding Holy Week.⁴¹

Gluck decided to remain here for eight days. We were sorry that our stay coincided with Holy Week during which all the theatres were closed so that we heard no music except an oratorio *agli Incurabili*. It is never advisable to believe what you hear beforehand. Not only in Vienna but also during our journey from Signora Marini I had heard that the *Incurabili* and the *Pietà* had an orchestra of female players whose singing and orchestral playing surpassed all other orchestras in Italy. I couldn't wait to hear them – but what a disappointment! The Oratorio was a feeble piece of music, the violins remained out of tune for the whole work and when arias in B flat or E were sung, the violins were an eighth or a quarter tone too high. The tempi were also wrong, sometimes too slow, sometimes too fast, sometimes too *rubato*. Apart from two singers, one a pure soprano, the other a mellow contralto, nothing I heard was worthy of the slightest attention.

To make up for this music, I witnessed two festivities which excited my greatest admiration. One was the evening ceremony on Maundy Thursday when our Saviour is carried in procession to the grave. The other was the funeral of the Doge who had died two days before our arrival. On both occasions St Mark's square was illuminated by two torches, six feet high and as thick as one's arm, burning before each window of the palaces surrounding the square, affording a spectacular sight. On both

40 The modern Ljubljana and Gorizia.

41 Palm Sunday in 1763 was 27 March. The party therefore probably left Vienna seven days before on 19 March.

occasions solemn processions filed their way around this magnificent square so that it was difficult to tell whether the burial of Christ or that of the Doge was observed with the greater ceremony.

We departed for Bologna at night on the eve of Easter Sunday. At Whitsun a magnificent new opera house built of huge stone blocks was due to be opened to replace the one burnt to the ground the previous year. It had been paid for by the highest and richest members of the nobility. The director, Count Bevilacqua, had commissioned Metastasio to write a new opera, *Il Trionfo di Clelia*⁴² and Gluck to compose the music. The *primo uomo* was the famous castrato Mansoli, the *prima donna* Signora Girelli Aquilar who had adopted the name of her husband, a Spaniard and famous oboist who was certainly the equal of the world famous Besozzi. *Secondo uomo* was the young castrato Toschi who two years later was summoned to Vienna. The *seconda donna* was a beautiful young woman of seventeen who possessed a clear, pleasant voice but she was only a beginner. Her name escapes me. The *primo tenore* was the celebrated Giuseppe Tibaldi whom Gluck subsequently appointed to Vienna where he established his fame. The leader of the first violins was the reputed Luchini from Milan and that of the second violins was the equally renowned Spagnoletti from Cremona.

The orchestra consisted of some seventy players. Orchestras of this size in Italy were divided into two sections and the second section was directed by the well-known Kapellmeister Mazzoni. He was based in Bologna and was the Kapellmeister of the most renowned churches, monasteries and prelatures.

Count Bevilacqua, a very kind gentleman, welcomed us warmly. Gluck introduced me as his pupil. We had agreed beforehand that I would not reveal myself as a concert soloist until we had heard the best violinists perform.

Gluck told the Count that he wanted to hear the singers first so he arranged a concert at his house for the following afternoon where there would be nobody else but us three. I was delighted with Girelli, Mansoli and Tebaldi but especially by an aria in which Aquilar on the oboe accompanied his wife. I also heard Luchini and Spagnoletti each play a violin concerto "Now" said Gluck to me in private, "you have nothing to fear from these two wizards." I also thought so but replied "I thought they played well but in different ways".

Gluck now started to compose and as he had already done most of the work in Vienna, he was able to pass the first act to the copyists in ten days. He never worked in the afternoons, only mornings and evenings. After lunch we paid visits then repaired to a coffee shop where we usually remained until dinner.

One of our first visits was to the great Farinelli⁴³ who, as my readers will know, returned here after the death of his generous patron, the King of Spain. He was already an old man of about 80. He invited us a few times and entertained us royally – but no wonder, he was immensely wealthy. I reminded him of Mme Tesi and said I had lived in her house for many years and this piece of information went down well with him.

We also paid a visit to the world famous classical music dictator, Padre Martino⁴⁴. He was almost as old as Farinelli and both were bosom friends. Gluck had known him for many years and never passed

42 Metastasio's libretto had already been set to music by Hasse, Jommelli and Myslivecek among others before Gluck. His version was first performed at Bologna's Teatro Comunale on 14 May 1763. It was apparently well received and ran for 28 performances before disappearing entirely from the operatic repertoire. It was revived to very mixed reviews by the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in 2012.

⁴³ Carlo Broschi known as Farinelli (1705-82). Posterity owes a huge debt to this most celebrated castrato singer of his age because on returning from Madrid to Bologna in 1759 he brought with him the musical manuscripts of Domenico Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas, thus preserving them from what might have been oblivion after the latter's death in 1757. (Private communication from the Istituto Farinelli, Bologna). Farinelli was only 58 at the time of Dittersdorf's visit but to a 24 year old that was probably "old". Burney visited Farinelli on 25 August 1770 and wrote, "he (Farinelli) furnished me with all the particulars concerning Domenico Scarlatti I desired." Was he shown Scarlatti's scores, I wonder?

⁴⁴ Giovanni Battista Martini (1706-84) a Franciscan friar, hence his title. Although a composer of church music, much of it still in manuscript, he is better known as a musical historian and teacher of composition at the Accademia Filarmonica Bologna. Among his pupils were Grétry, Myslivecek, Mozart and J C Bach, making him the 18th century equivalent of Nadia Boulanger. His *Esemplare di Contrappunto* (1774/5) is his best known theoretical work. Dittersdorf refers to him as a dictator, possibly ironically, as he was known to have conservative views about music.

through Bologna without paying his respects to this *padre di tutti i maestri* as all Kapellmeisters still call him.

By chance Kapellmeister Mazzoni heard that I played the violin and after he had heard me play, he begged me to perform at a major church festival to be held at San Paolo for which he had composed the two Vespers and the High Mass. I was asked to play at the early High Mass to which I agreed.

Gluck and I went to the church on the eve of the festival to hear Mazzoni's first Vesper. The music was performed by a choir and instrumentalists of about a hundred people. It was a glorious setting but it seemed to me to be rather too merry and profane for a church, more like an *opera seria* than church music, the masterly fugues excepted. Between the psalms, Spagnoletti played a concerto by Tartini which I had studied a few years previously. The church was full of connoisseurs and music lovers and from their expressions one could see that the violinist was enjoying universal acclaim.

Gluck said to me, "well, tomorrow you can be sure of applause from your listeners because your composition and playing are much more modern".

It was already becoming known that at High Mass the next day a certain German violin virtuoso would be playing. As we came out of the church, we overheard two gentlemen talking to each other. "*Doman' mattina sentiremo un virtuoso tedesco*" to which the other replied, "*Temo, che si farà canzenar, dopo che abbiamo sentito quel bravo Spagnoletti*" (I fear he'll be made a fool of after we've heard Spagnoletti play). But next day when I played my concerto, I was not made a fool of as that gentleman had predicted. Gluck, Count Bevilaqua and Signor Mansoli all congratulated me on the applause I had earned from the listeners. Gluck told me that he had deliberately moved close to those two gentlemen of yesterday to overhear what they were saying. One of them said, "*Per Dio, quel ragazzo suona come un angelo*" (By God, that young man plays like an angel) while the other said, "*Come è mai possibile, che una tartaruga tedesca possa arrivare a tale perfezione?*" (How is it possible that a German tortoise can achieve such perfection?) Gluck then took the liberty to interrupt and tell the second one, "*Anch'io sono una tartaruga tedesca, ma con tutto questo ho l'onore di scrivere l'opera nuova per l'apertura del teatro restabilito*" (Excuse me, Sir. I too am a German tortoise but even so I have the honour of composing the new opera for the opening of the restored theatre.) The gentleman apologised and declared that from now on he had been cured of all his prejudice against the German nation.

Gluck had just finished telling me this when the Prior of the monastery approached me with two of his priests and thanked me for my efforts. He had noted, he said, from his *stalo* (confession box) the listeners' applause so might he be so bold as to ask me to play again at Vespers this afternoon? I refused but the good Prior insisted. Then Count Bevilaqua assured me that this was a mark of distinction with which no virtuoso had been honoured since Bologna had been founded and that it would cause a sensation in the city. I therefore consented. That evening the church was so full that many had to be turned away for lack of room. I played as well as I had that same morning.

After Vespers we were all entertained at the monastery – I, Gluck, Mazzoni and the two castratos Potenza and Nicolini. They laid on a Sardanapalian banquet consisting of the tastiest dishes that only Italy can produce. We indulged ourselves until midnight before going home in high spirits.

I must now relate an anecdote about Nicolini which I witnessed personally. He was a typical young castrato, lively, cocky, merry, garrulous and arrogant. He was wont to go around with his nose in the air rather than look where he was going. We were going round a corner into another street in which a blind beggar was squatting on the ground. Nicolini did not notice him and tripped and almost fell over his feet. In fury he shouted out "*Eh! Cane d'un orbo maladetto!*" (You damned blind dog!). The beggar, hearing his high-pitched voice, took him for a woman and answered in kind; "*Eh! Putana di strada. Perche strapazzi un povero orbo mendicante?*" (You street whore! Why curse a poor blind beggar?) We all burst out laughing but prevailed upon Nicolini for his maltreatment to take two lira from his pocket and press them into the beggar's hand, saying "Old man, as you've guessed who I am, here are two lira for charity". Feeling these coins in his hand, the beggar expressed his gratitude by putting his hands together with his crutch and saying "God bless you and may He have mercy on you so that like holy Mary Magdalene, you may be converted, abandon your shameful life and do

penance". This made us laugh ten times more. It was one of the funniest experiences of my life. The anecdote quickly spread throughout Bologna and from then on he was called Nicolini *la Santa Maddalena*.

It is a monastic custom in Italy that when somebody receives a gift from a monastery, it must be transported to the recipient's house by means of a device specially made for the purpose. What usually happens is that a man dressed in a black Spanish costume and a large wig is followed by two church wardens in surplices carrying the gift on a huge, silver presentation tray with two handles and covered with a damask cloth. Two lay brothers in their habits and white rochets bring up the rear. If the recipient's residence happens to be near the monastery, then the procession – note how vain monks can be! – makes many detours around the main squares and up and down streets and although every inhabitant knows that somebody is to receive a present, the front man has orders to explain to any enquirer the whys and wherefores of the presentation.

The next morning the host came and told me that a delegation from San Paolo had arrived and wished to see me. He added that I would have to tip them one scudo. I invited them in. Their leader delivered a speech lasting a quarter of an hour which contained little more than expressions of gratitude from the Prior and the whole monastery and whether I would be gracious enough, in view of their abject poverty (which I had not noticed at yesterday's banquet) to accept their little gift. The gift consisted of over twenty pounds of the most exquisite candied fruit and bonbons. There were also six pairs of Neapolitan stockings in white silk and six pairs in black silk, six Milanese handkerchiefs in double sided silk and twelve relics in various sizes of the finest filigree silver. I conveyed my thanks to the Prior and the whole monastery, gave the Demosthenes a scudo and, with much bowing and scraping, they took their leave.

That afternoon, just as we were going to the coffee shop, the venerable Padre Martino arrived to pay us a reciprocal visit. He asked me whether I would perform at an imminent festival in his church but he did not expect me to do so for nothing and hoped I would be satisfied with a fee of 12 doppio (double ducats). I replied that I would perform on condition that I would accept no fee whatsoever and that I would cherish the honour of playing for the Father of Music much more than any gold. The good man thanked me for my, as he put it, beautiful thought and after half an hour he left as he had come, supported on the arm of a lay brother and a crutch.

It soon became known in Bologna that Padre Martino had invited me to the first day of the church festival *per la visita della Madonna di San Luca*. They even knew that I had refused payment and had promised to play just for the greater glory of God.

The first of the three days dawned which began with the ceremony for the miraculous image of the Madonna said to have been painted by St Luke the Evangelist. We went to Vespers in the church. The music was by Padre Martino but what a gulf there was between this music and that of Mazzoni. I had never before heard such majestic, such sublime and uplifting church music. Even Caldara's⁴⁵ music could not hold a candle to it. The Amen of a psalm – I think it was the Magnificat – was a fugue in eight voices. My God! It was like an artistically woven tapestry. Imagine the effect of this magnificent fugue performed by 160 musicians of whom 80 were singers.

The following morning Gluck and I went to visit this venerable old man who had invited us to take chocolate with him. We expressed our astonishment at his marvellous work, the Vespers, which we had heard. "Maybe" he said, "yesterday's Vespers and today's High Mass will be my swan song for I am already aware of my failing body and soul". We expressed regret that we might never have another chance to hear the fugue in eight voices. "Well" said the kind old man, "I'll include the fugue in the Credo instead of the Amen as they share the same key and so your wish will be fulfilled".⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Antonio Caldara (1670-1736) Venetian born composer of operas and oratorios highly regarded at the time. He worked at ducal and royal courts in Italy, France and Spain before serving the Imperial court in Vienna where he remained until his death. There has recently been a renewed interest in his music.

⁴⁶ The Padre seems to have made a sympathetic impression on many of his visitors among whom was Burney on 22 August 1770 who subsequently wrote, "I never esteemed or loved a man more upon so short an acquaintance" but adding "he is very old and infirm, has a terrible cough and looks dreadful". But despite his gloomy remarks about his failing powers to Gluck and Dittersdorf in 1763, he lived for another 21 years.

At the Graduale I played my concerto to the best of my ability and it was a great success as I had spent the previous eight days practising it. Soon after the concert Gluck and I proceeded to the church where we heard the Credo and Amen at a distance. What beautiful new things we discovered in the fugue that we had missed yesterday. Drunk with joy we returned home to dine. After dinner the host appeared with a parcel wrapped in paper and said "Padre Martini has sent you a few pounds of chocolate". On the parcel his shaky hand had written *12 libre per il mio caro amico, il Cavagliere Gluck e 12 libre per il mio caro figliuolo, il Signor Carlo Ditters*.

The next morning the host came to my room and told me there was a chap downstairs who wanted to speak to me but he looked so slovenly and suspect that he had hesitated to admit him. But he had insisted that he wanted to speak to me. "I would advise you not to see him alone" he said, "as you can't trust everybody so I will send him up to you in the company of two of my house servants. Meanwhile lock the door and don't open up until you hear my voice". The host left, I locked the door and asked Gluck to come to my room. For my own safety, I took my two pistols, hid one of them under my dressing gown while Gluck concealed the other on his person.

After a while, there was a knock on my door and the host announced himself with the words "*E permesso?*". I unlocked the door and Gluck and I went to stand behind a table in the middle of the room. The host entered with his servants who stood in the doorway and behind them stood the untidy person who asked me whether I was the German virtuoso who had played yesterday at the Minorites. "Yes" I replied, "*e poi?*" (So?) while playfully revealing the pistol under my dressing gown. Gluck did the same. The man smiled, glanced round at the two servants in the doorway then said with a curious smile, "you needn't have worried. I may be badly dressed but I am a *galant'uomo*". "So, tell us your business" said the host. Without saying a word, he pulled a little box from his pocket to which was attached a note and laid both of them on the table. "What's that?" I asked. "I don't know but please read the note". I read the note in Italian with a deliberately indifferent expression on my face. "Please accept this little box as a token of the pleasure you afforded me at yesterday's concert at the church of the Minorites. Please sign the enclosed receipt". Inside the box was a beautiful gold watch. I signed the receipt which he took but refused the scudo that I offered and took his leave without telling me, despite my entreaties, the identity of the donor. "I have given my word" he said. "*son galant'uomo, e tanto basta*". And with that he left.

We wondered who could have sent the gift and eventually decided it might be from the Minorite Friars.

The next day we were invited to lunch by Farinelli and met many distinguished guests there. Imagine my surprise when I thought I recognised in one of the servants the same person who yesterday paid us a visit. After lunch I asked him some trivial questions and recognised his voice so now I knew the answer. Farinelli denied everything but in the end he was forced to confess but he did so with such delicacy that my expression of gratitude was waved aside, saying that I should think no more of it.

At last Gluck's opera was performed. It was well received even though it did not meet the composer's intentions. Despite the reputation of Italian orchestras, Gluck was dissatisfied. There had been seventeen rehearsals but the precision of the ensembles was well below the level that we were accustomed to in Vienna.

After the third performance we planned to return to Venice for the festivities of Ascension Day when four or five theatres would be putting on new operas and afterwards continue on to Milan, Florence and other Italian cities. But then we received letters from Count Durazzo ordering us back to Vienna because the coronation of the emperor Joseph II was planned to take place in early autumn in Frankfurt am Main so we had to give up our plans. But we made a trip to Parma to hear the opera *Catone in Utica* by Bach, the same Bach known in Germany as the London Bach⁴⁷. Some of the arias were excellent but the rest of the music was just carelessly dashed off in the Italian manner. In Parma we decided to return to Vienna by a different route, passing through Mantua, Klagenfurt,

⁴⁷ This would be Johann Christian Bach (1735-82) youngest son of J S Bach, known as the London Bach because he was appointed music director at the Kings Theatre in London in 1760 and was also music teacher to Queen Charlotte, consort of King George III.

Trient etc. We had scarcely arrived when we heard that the coronation had been postponed to the following year so I regretted having to leave Italy so soon for no reason.

While I was in Italy, the great violinist Lolli⁴⁸ came to Vienna for a few months and earned himself a great deal of money. My elder brother could hardly stop talking from the day I arrived back about the sensation his playing had been causing in Vienna. In answer to my question how he played, he gave me one of his sonatas that he had acquired and assured me that I could imitate his technique because it was the same in all his music with minor variations. I studied it and came to the same conclusion. "What is his adagio like?" I asked. "Nothing special" said my brother "and besides he spices it up with all manner of crazy ups and downs. Your friends pity you because most Viennese are saying 'our poor old Ditters is cast in the shade'. But I know for sure that if you work on it for eight days, you'll be able to imitate it". "God forbid!" I said. "I'll do just the opposite and try to play the adagio with feeling and expression".

The following morning Gluck and I went to Count Durazzo to announce our return. I asked the Count to spare me concert performances for a month because during my absence from Vienna I had sketched out some new concertos and I now wanted to work on them before appearing in public with new thoughts. "Well done, my son" said the Count. "I'll give you six weeks for you will have a hard task. Lolli has created an absolute sensation but I place my trust in you".

I locked myself away, feigned illness and studied from morning till evening. Then before four weeks had passed, I presented myself to the Count and said I was ready to appear in public. I was booked for the next concert at the theatre.

I played my new concerto, the first movement of which, *allegro*, did not present any insurmountable difficulties. In the following *adagio* I tried to imitate the *rubato* singing style of that excellent castrato Potenza whom I had heard many times in Bologna. But to demonstrate to my listeners that I was able to master difficulties, I had spiced up the finale with seemingly difficult but manageable passages. That surprised everybody so much that they applauded and with one voice demanded *Finale da capo! Finale da capo!* Encouraged by this applause, I played the finale again at greater speed with the greatest facility and to the last cadenza I added a capriccio, arpeggios in different keys and ended off with a double trill which nobody had ever heard me play before. In short, I had the satisfaction of dethroning Lolli and in Vienna the general opinion was that Lolli and Ditters excite astonishment but Ditters also plays from the heart.

I passed the rest of the summer and the following winter, besides my official duties, frequently in the company of the amiable Joseph Haydn. What music lover does not know the name and glorious works of this most excellent composer? We exchanged opinions in private with each other about every new work we heard, gave praise where it was due and blame where we thought appropriate.

I would advise every would-be composer to enter into an agreement with a colleague, without envy or resentment and do what Haydn and I did in the spirit of enquiry. I can assure him that he will profit from well-meaning observations free of prejudice. He will not only learn to appreciate many an inspired passage but will also learn how to carefully avoid those rocks on which this or that composer has come to grief. But this is nothing new. It is well-known that criticism - I mean genuine, disinterested criticism from real experts - of all the arts and sciences has brought inestimable benefits and will always continue to do so.

Chapter 14.

Out of pocket at the Coronation of Joseph II. A Misunderstanding between Count Spork and me. The Bishop of Grosswardein. My Appointment.

⁴⁸ Antonio Lolli (ca 1725-1802) the foremost violinist of his time who led the life of a touring virtuoso in various European countries including a period in St Petersburg at the invitation of the Empress Catherine II. From 1758 to 1774 he was the solo violinist at the court of the Duke of Württemberg in Stuttgart.

The date of Joseph II's coronation was approaching. Count Durazzo set out for Frankfurt and ordered Gluck, the castrato Quadagni, myself and twenty other members of the Imperial orchestra to accompany him to this major event. The first two received 600 gulden for travel expenses and a *per diem* allowance of 6 gulden. I and the twenty others however only received half that amount. One can well imagine that with the costs of the journey and the increased prices of food and drink attendant on such events, we would hardly be able to paint the town red. In fact, we would be out of pocket.

In my capacity as Imperial Court virtuoso, as my passport proclaimed, I now had to perform in Frankfurt, firstly at the Römer⁴⁹ and secondly in the Emperor's private apartments, each time during meals, so, wishing to show my respect towards the Imperial Court I purchased two magnificent costumes for 700 gulden in the hope that I would be favoured with a generous sweetener, as the Office of Paymaster had given me to understand. But, as is the way of the world, he who deserves most receives least. Gluck and Quadagni received another 300 each, in addition to their daily allowance, on their return to Vienna whereas I, poor devil, had to make do with 50 ducats. The honour of being the titular virtuoso at Germany's most exalted ceremony cost me 400 and something ducats. Even Count Durazzo was outraged when he heard about it but he was rich enough to present me with 50 ducats from his own pocket.

My contract was due to expire in a few months but just as a new one had been agreed whereby I would receive a yearly salary of 1000 gulden for performing at the theatre and at Court, when required, as well being the leading violinist at the Italian Opera, the Count informed me, three days later, that he had been appointed Imperial ambassador to Venice but that he would strongly recommend his successor, Count Wenzel Spork, on his arrival from Prague, to respect the terms of the agreement made orally between us.

Count Spork arrived two weeks later and took over the directorship. I went to see him and he granted me an audience. He was lying motionlessly on a sofa when I entered. "Listen" he began, "I know that his contract is about to expire. Does he now wish to renew at the same salary as before?"⁵⁰ His way of addressing me made my blood boil. "I beg your Excellency's pardon" I said, "but I do not know why you address me in this way. I have frequently had the honour of dining with your predecessor and other privy councillors and nobody has addressed me in this manner. I am not accustomed to such disrespect and I take exception". The Count was taken aback and, stroking his chin, replied in a somewhat comical tone of voice, "Well, well. What a proud young man we have here! Anyway, no matter. So, you want a new contract?"

"I can no longer work for my previous pittance". The Count offered a little more but it was well short of the thousand that had been agreed. I told Count Durazzo who said "when he has heard you play, I'm sure he'll understand. But if he doesn't, then come with me to Venice and I'll give you 200 ducats and free board and lodging". But I knew that neither the ambassador nor even his staff were permitted to have any contacts with native Venetians because it infringed state policy so I declined the offer in all modesty.

In order to increase both the Count's desire and that of the Viennese public to hear me perform, I dreamed up the following trick. I knew that next Friday it would be my turn to play at the theatre so I decided to take sick leave for at least four weeks. In order to gain time to make a fair copy and practise a few concertos I had sketched out. But I would run the risk of being caught out if I feigned a normal illness so I decided on a dislocated shoulder. I knew I could rely on the loyalty of my servant and the discretion of my barber so I remained at home and when anybody called, I sprayed my room with camphor and placed a cushion under my dressing gown over my right shoulder. Nobody doubted that I had not had an accident.

Barely three weeks later I was ready. My self-imposed house arrest was getting me down so I started going out. My first visit was to Count Spork whom I had no trouble in convincing that I still could not

⁴⁹ The Frankfurt City Hall. The coronation of Joseph II as Holy Roman Emperor took place on 3 April 1764.

⁵⁰ In 18th century German it was the custom of superiors to address inferiors somewhat disparagingly in the third person. Dittersdorf took offence at this.

perform for another two weeks and this he gladly accepted. At last the evening of my performance arrived and every seat was taken in the theatre. My concerto was well received and I had to repeat the final allegro which I did with increased tempo and variations. There was universal applause. Next morning Count Spork summoned me. "I see that I shall have to increase my offer" he said. He offered 700 gulden, then 800 gulden. I refused. "Well, I can't and won't offer anymore". "As your Excellency wishes" I replied, bowing and withdrawing.

At about this time the Bishop of Grosswardein⁵¹ came to Vienna. He was a member of the renowned Patachich family of Croatia who, like most of the Hungarian magnates and nobles had been summoned to the parliament at Pressburg⁵². He heard me play at court, summoned me and told me that not only was he a keen music lover but that he also had an orchestra. His music director, Michael Haydn, a brother of Joseph Haydn, was moving to Salzburg and he now offered me his post at a yearly salary of 1200 gulden with free board and lodging as well as payment, board and livery for my servant. I replied that I would have accepted his offer on the spot if it were not for the fact that I was currently in negotiations with the theatre management but at the same time, I assured him that if these negotiations should fail, I would be at his disposal. He told me that he would be in Vienna for three days during which he would need to know my decision so I promised to inform him before he left.

On the third day I went to see Count Spork. After a long discussion he increased his offer to 900 gulden, but I was adamant. "I am very sorry" I said, "that I am forced to abandon my native city for such a trifle". "Well" he retorted, "so you can't claim that I have driven you away, I will be reasonable and add another 50 gulden". "Even if your Excellency" I replied somewhat abruptly, "were to offer me 999 gulden and 59 kreutzer with one kreutzer short, I would not accept".

He: (incensed). My word! This little lad has all the qualities of a virtuoso but with a generous dash of impertinence.

Me: (unmoved). Would your Excellency have the goodness to inform me of your decision today?

He: Today?

Me: Yes, your Excellency.

He: Today is not convenient. Get out of my sight and do not come again until you are summoned.

I bowed, withdrew and went straight to the inn where the Bishop of Grosswardein was staying. I signed the contract with him and promised him that I would arrive in Pressburg at the beginning of next month with all my belongings whereupon he pressed one hundred ducats into my hand as an advance payment.

That evening, after I had performed my second new concerto with the same success as the first one, Count Spork beckoned me to his box. "Although your discourteous answer offended me" he said, "I am prepared to overlook it and will now meet your demand for one thousand gulden". I explained the recent change in my circumstances and although it pained him, he realised that my impetuous demand had not been intended to offend him and kindly invited me to dine with him the following day. After the table had been cleared, he took me aside to the window and said, "if it doesn't work out for you in Hungary, you will be welcome back here with a salary of a thousand gulden. I also notice from the *Pas de Deux* you have composed for Turchi and Paganina that you have a talent for ballet music so I shall commission four ballets a year from you for an extra 100 ducats. I am sorry to lose you but my hands are tied by the Court and I have to comply. For that reason, I had to dismiss all the members of the Hildburghausen orchestra who wanted either an increase or dismissal."

⁵¹ Now Oradea, Romania. The Bishop was Adam Patachich, Bishop of Grosswardein from 1759 to 1776.

⁵² Now Bratislava, capital of Slovakia.

I was surprised at the Count's conciliatory tone of voice after he had previously treated me so brusquely. "I apologise, your Excellency" I told him, "if my audacity offended you; I was not aware of your generous heart". "And I did not recognise your musical ability and your strong character. It is for the best that we forget what has happened between us. In me you will always find a man who has your best interests at heart".

Whoever would have thought that we would part on such good terms!

Chapter 15

Arrival in Pressburg. Journey to Prague. Pichel.

I arrived happily in Pressburg at the agreed time. At our very first meeting the Bishop said, "Your arrival has encouraged me to indulge my favourite hobby, as far as I am able to and I can see no reason why I shouldn't do so, given my income of 80,000 Fl⁵³. I therefore intend to spend 16,000 Fl. on my orchestra. Here's a list of the names of the members of my orchestra and here is a list of names of those I wish to engage. Please carry this out and to this end you will travel to Prague and Vienna at my expense together with my steward who will draw up the contracts".

In Prague I consulted Herr Strohbach, first violinist at the Italian Opera for his advice. He told me he wanted to send a young man to me whom he could recommend as a good orchestral player and knew well and who would serve me just as well as he had served him.

The young man came next morning and made an enormous impression on me at first sight. His name was Pichel⁵⁴. He not only offered to go with me as a violinist but also arranged auditions for the other names on the list at the *Collegium Musicum* at the Carmelites. Apart from Pichel and Fuchs, who played both violin concertos very well, I also heard a certain Ungericht who was not only a good fiddle player but also a bass singer. There was also Herr Salza, a very good traverse flautist and two fine horn players, Oliva and Pauer. I engaged them all.

I soon realised at the first performance that it was a very good orchestra so I secretly sent for my violin and scores. When I had heard them all, I said; "Gentlemen. You have played for me so now it is only fair that I should play for you". I opened the score of a new symphony, conducted it myself and played a concerto and a sonata. Pichel persuaded me to play in public and was kind enough to make all the arrangements during the short time I had, one day in fact, and as everybody helped me without pay I made a net profit of 418 Fl. from which I paid 28 for a dinner for the musicians.

In Vienna I engaged the cellist Wenzel Himmelbauer, later to become very popular and also the double bass player Pichelberger. But I had less success with the famous harpsichordist and organist Father Michael of the Minorites because of his obligations to the Order which was only settled by the intervention of the Bishop with the Provincial. My new recruits arrived at the appointed time and the Bishop was more than satisfied with my choices and the agreed emoluments.

While I was engaged in the business of auditioning and recruiting, the Bishop appointed Herr Renner, an excellent tenor whom Bonno had trained. He arrived in Grosswardein in August after we had arrived there in April. Everything was now set up and ready.

Chapter 16

⁵³ Florins. The gulden and the florin refer to the same currency. Dittersdorf sometimes uses one, sometimes the other.

⁵⁴ Vaclav Pichl (1741-1805) Bohemian born violinist and composer, although not quite as prolific as Dittersdorf. He was appointed music director to the Austrian governor of Lombardy from 1777-96 until Napoleon's army invaded. He is said to have died of a stroke while playing a violin concerto at the Palais Lobkowitz in Vienna.

I become director of the orchestra⁵⁵. My first public appearance. Renner. Ungericht. Father Michael. Stadler etc. My first Cantata. Building a theatre. My Oratorio *Isaac*. My brief affair with the daughter of a noble *cassae perceptor*.

After our arrival the Bishop summoned all the musicians in Grosswardein including those at the cathedral together with the new recruits to his banqueting hall where he formally introduced me as their director of the orchestra and requested that I be obeyed without demur. At the same time he gave me the authority to dismiss anyone who neglected his duties or otherwise acted improperly without referring the matter to himself. "I also authorise my director" he continued, "to settle any disputes which may arise amongst you according to his own judgement and that his decision be respected as if it were my own. Should any matter be referred to me for a decision, then it must be through him who will then communicate my decision".

This was a very extensive grant of authority which, in certain circumstances might be open to abuse to the detriment of the rights of any member of the orchestra, but at the same time it was very necessary as musicians are frequently prone to grumbling, arrogance and unruly behaviour and enjoy cocking a snook at authority.

After the Bishop had left, I addressed the gathering with these words. "Gentlemen! Apart from Herr Pichel, I am the youngest of you all but you should have no fear that I will abuse the powers that have been invested in me. I have served twelve years at a much bigger Court than this one here and have learnt how to conduct myself in the service of my superiors. I therefore ask you to live in peace with each other. At Court, nothing is more envied and hated by servants, both high and low, than the orchestra because they think all musicians are thoroughly idle and do not earn their keep. But they do not understand the time and effort it takes to attain standards of musical performance which would earn them an honourable salary. We must therefore work together and demonstrate that we are worthy of each other. I give you my word of honour that if any one of you suffers the slightest, undeserved disrespect, even from the highest Komitat-officer⁵⁶, I shall not rest until complete satisfaction has been obtained. Finally, I ask you to follow my exact instructions when I am *à la tête* of the orchestra and assure you that otherwise you will find in me a true friend and brother".

Everybody assured me of their cooperation and compliance and loyally kept their word.

The Bishop gave me eight days to prepare for the first concert. During this time I had desks and benches made because I wanted to introduce the Viennese custom of seated players facing the audience. Sundays and Tuesdays were Academy days when the all the clergy, imperial officers and Grosswardein's nobility attended performances followed by a reception with the Bishop.

The orchestra consisted of 34 players of whom 9 were servants dressed in livery, one a valet, one a confectioner and 7 were cathedral musicians who received grants from the Bishop which left 5000 gulden in cash for extras.

The Bishop was present at the first rehearsal when we played though a new symphony of mine with parts for trumpets and timpani. I then stood up and said, "Gentlemen! I wish to make some observations which concern only the weaker ones amongst us. I have become aware of various shortcomings during this rehearsal which I shall not tolerate. Firstly, some of you are out of tune; secondly, you have ignored the signs *forte* and *piano*; thirdly, some of you have played too quickly, some too slowly and finally some of you have committed the inexcusable error of ignoring the rests. I hope that when we go through it again, each one of us will recognise our mistakes and correct them. But should my general observations not bear fruit, then you will only have yourselves to

⁵⁵ Kapelldirektor.

⁵⁶ The Kingdom of Hungary was divided into several *Komitats* during the Habsburg era, roughly equivalent to English counties. An officer of the *Komitat* was therefore a senior civil servant.

blame if in future I correct you in public. So now, tune up again and – *da capo!*”. The symphony was repeated and this time went well. “Bravo!”, I said, “that’s as it always should be if I, you and all of us wish to honour his Excellency, our gracious master. That’s all for today”.

The orchestra dispersed but the Bishop beckoned me to follow him into a room. “Thank you” he said, “for your firm handling of my orchestra. With every passing day I am more and more delighted that you have joined us. Here is a little token of my pleasure”. He sent for the receipt I had signed in Vienna for the 100 ducat advance and tore it into little pieces. I seized the Bishop’s hand and kissed it. “Your Excellency is most generous today so I may ask a further favour?”. The Bishop was taken aback before finally asking me what my wish might be. “That your Excellency” I said, “address me informally as *Du* as I was accustomed to be addressed by my former master the Prince of Hildburghausen who was a father-figure for me. You also treat me in a fatherly way which is why I beg this favour”. “Well” said the Bishop after a pause, “if you (*Du*) so wish, then so be it. And if you wish to have me as a father, then you will permit me to have you as a son” - and with that he wiped the tears from his eyes.

The good man was very soft-hearted and if he could make somebody happy, then it was never without tears. But above all it was when hearing music performed with feeling and expression that tears flowed down his venerable cheeks. But he was not the slightest soft-hearted when it came to dealing with Court matters; here he was strict and resolute and I could give many examples.

At last the excellent tenor Renner arrived with his family. His beautiful delivery, his impeccable Italian, his expressive voice and vocal control marked him out as one of the greatest of singers. His register was enormous and he was able to sing falsetto in a quite natural way.

Apart from him and Ungericht, a couple of castrati, a soprano and a contralto had also been engaged. One of them was a good cellist and the other a good violinist so the Bishop supplemented their cathedral pay with an extra amount plus board and lodging.

There were twelve solo players and four singers in our orchestra; myself, Fuchs and Pichel for the violin, Pater Michael for the keyboard, Pohl and Stadler for the oboe, Fournier for the clarinet, Satza for the flute, Himmelbauer for the cello, Pichelberger for the double bass and Oliva and Pauer for the horn. They all had to be prepared to perform as soloists as and when I directed.

Already in September I began to think about the Bishop’s Name-day which fell at the end of December. I consulted Pichel who was not only a skilled Latinist but also had a gift for poetry and wrote fine Latin verse. We decided to put together a laudatory cantata for four voices and choir. I had to choose Latin because apart from the Bishop, myself and two clerics, nobody understood Italian but all the men in Grosswardein knew Latin and some ladies as well. Pichel got to work and when he had completed the text of this Song of Praise, I showed it to the Bishop and declared my intentions. It was decided to perform the cantata, which was planned to last for two hours, on the eve, and in place of, the Academy day. The orchestra was enlarged and framed with decorative motifs which the Bishop designed and skilfully carried out.

I finished composing the music in five weeks. But I realised that on the evening of the Name-day there had to be a chamber music concert, so while the copyist was working on the Latin cantata, I also composed two large-scale new symphonies for the beginning and end and another one for the middle with obligato parts for wind instruments as well as a new violin concerto for myself to perform. Finally I selected one of Metastasio’s short Italian cantata texts for solo voice (it had been written for the name-day of Emperor Charles VII) in which the word *Augusto* occurs a few times for which I substituted *Adamo*, the Bishop’s baptismal name and composed the music for Renner to sing, not forgetting to exploit his vocal skills. I then made a fair copy, sent it secretly to Pest and had 200 copies made and bound, one of which in purple (the colour of Bishops) and richly decorated with gold-leaf. I received them back in eight days and carefully made no mention of them.

The evening arrived. The arrangement of the orchestra and especially the smart uniforms worn by the players which I had ordered with the Bishop’s permission made a great impression and the numerous Hungarian nobles expressed their appreciation. Although the music for the cantata was not up to much – it was my first attempt at a major vocal work – at least I learnt some lessons for

the future by ignoring unconsidered and inappropriate passages of the text which in this work I had set without rhyme or reason.

I expressed my dissatisfaction of the misfit between the music and the words to Pichel so he then provided another text for the arias and choruses more appropriate for the church without changing a note of my music. They thus became motets which were in turn performed in the cathedral.

The next evening was when I had planned to surprise the Bishop. The first bars of the symphony told him it was a new work. Pater Michael played one of his own wonderful compositions. The Bishop's face beamed with pleasure. Then it was Renner's turn. I gave the agreed signal whereupon the steward appeared with a silver tray on which was a copy of the Italian cantata bound in purple which he presented to the Bishop and the remaining copies to each of the nobles. We had hardly begun before tears of joy glistened in the Bishop's eyes. He was beside himself with joy and utterly amazed to hear all this new music the whole evening. He rose and thanked me in the most profuse terms. And so ended the ceremony.

After a year it turned out that of the 16,000 Fl. budgeted for the orchestra, there was a surplus of 1400 Fl. so I conceived the idea of setting up a small theatre in the palace⁵⁷. Plans and estimates were submitted by the Bishop's architect, Neumann, and the Bishop himself happily approved everything as the costs for the undertaking and the four yearly performances did not exceed the original surplus.

The Bishop's Name-day coincided with the last days of Advent during which ungodly plays, operas and comedies were prohibited by the Court so I chose Metastasio's beautiful oratorio *Isacco figura del Redentore*. As Pichel had an insufficient command of Italian, the Bishop himself undertook to translate it into Latin. I advised him to treat the recitatives freely but the arias strictly metrical. As soon as he had finished each scene, he called me in, read it out and then modified, improved, and polished it as was deemed necessary until after four weeks the work was so well accomplished that the original poet would certainly have agreed that it faithfully reflected his original text.

While the Bishop was working on the translation, I did not want to remain idle so I set to work on a major concerto for eleven instruments whereby in the first movement, *allegro*, each soloist would play a solo passage followed in turn by three, five, seven and nine players until finally all players came together, ending in a cadenza which again called for the players to enter one by one to finish in full strength. In the *Adagio*, the solo violin was given a mellifluous song-like melody accompanied in turns by the other ten instruments, initially four, then six and then ten, sometimes playing imitative variations and sometimes sustained, richly harmonic chords while the *ripieno* orchestra accompanied throughout in *pizzicato*. This *adagio* seemed to fall asleep at the end in a solemn, richly harmonised melody but was suddenly woken up by a fiery and brilliant *tempo di minuetto* with twelve Alternations (nowadays wrongly referred to as trios) in all related keys. The twelfth alternation was played by all eleven instruments ending in a cadenza, and, after a lively capriccio, in double stopped trills on nine different consecutive notes.⁵⁸

We secretly rehearsed this concerto at length and, as I wanted to surprise the Bishop, I forbade the orchestra to make any mention of it. I had barely finished before the Bishop gave me his text so I began working hard on the Oratorio. In the meantime, Neumann was also not idle so we finished our allotted tasks at the same time and were able to start rehearsals in the theatre.

My *Isaac* was performed on the eve of the Name-day. Proof that it was well received was provided by the fact that it was always performed every Sunday during Lent for the next four years to full congregations. The actors, Renner, Mlle. Nicolini, the castrato who played Sara, Ungericht and even the boy who played the angel all performed their parts brilliantly. The set reflected the poet's intention, namely, a grove on one side of which stood Abraham's house. Even the costumes were

⁵⁷ The Bishop's palace was built between 1762 and 1777 so Dittersdorf would have witnessed progress on its construction. It was confiscated from the church after World War 2 by the Romanian Communist Party but since 2003 it has once more been restored to the church. It is adjacent to the cathedral and is currently a museum.

⁵⁸ *Mit einem neunfachen Sexttriller*. I am indebted to Michael Lorenz for elucidation of this phrase. Coleridge's version has "closed with a shake in sixths played by nine instruments".

faithful copies of ancient garments. After each performance, the Bishop presented me with his favourite snuff-box which contained a few dozen *Kremnitzer*⁵⁹.

Now that we had the theatre, I considered putting on more shows. I asked the Bishop whether he would permit us to produce comedies, especially during Carnival time. "Why not?" he said, "as long as there are no dubious innuendos."

Among the Bishop's cooks there happened to be a certain Sicca. He had spent some years in Italy and possessed an extraordinary acting talent. When he saw us constructing a theatre, he approached me and said, "anytime you want to put on a comedy and need a fool, I'm at your service. I'm not musical but I've got a good ear". He sang some Italian extracts from *opere buffe* he had seen in Italy in such an amusing way that I laughed out loud. He also cracked jokes in German and performed theatrical skits, sometimes as a clown or a puppet or similar such comic characters as were fashionable at the time, all with such *élan* that I wondered why he had not become an actor. Then he let me into his secret; he had once left his profession to join a group of Strolling Players but their promiscuous and scandalous behaviour had disgusted him to such a degree that he had abandoned the stage and returned to his profession. You can well imagine the pleasure I had in finding such an accomplished actor at hand.

For the coming Carnival, I put together something from the burlesques I had seen at Schlosshof by the Piloti troupe consisting of short songs and produced it on the first day of Carnival. Mlle Nicolini played her part brilliantly and the cook Sicca managed to move even the most humourless to laughter. The audience was so partial to this piece that they looked forward to it with great anticipation every Sunday that the theatre offered a spectacle.

For the Bishop's birthday I fashioned a piece from two old traditional plays, *Frau Sybilla doesn't drink wine* and the *Realm of the Dead* which was repeated on the following carnival day. On the Monday after the Bishop gave a ball for his staff to which he invited the Grosswardein nobility. Now comes an episode in my life which I think I will pass over lightly.

So, to be brief, I made the acquaintance of a certain Fräulein Furkowics, the daughter of the General-Perceptor⁶⁰, a slim and charming person, and fell in love with her. On her father's death she hoped to inherit 20,000 gulden but it was not the gulden that made me love her but her cheerful demeanour. I confessed my love for her without ceremony and at the next ball a few days later, she reciprocated. The same thing happened to Pichel with a certain Fräulein Samogy. We confided in each other and sighed love duets together. The best thing was that both girls had long been friends with each other and both were equally forward in proclaiming their conquests. They had both been boarders at the Ursuline school in Pest and had enjoyed unbroken friendship.

After languishing for over three months in the hope that my beautiful girl would not turn me down, I finally came up with a serious proposal of marriage, adding that if one day I decided to leave Grosswardein, I would most certainly find just as good a posting in Vienna. She assured me with a thousand joys in her heart that she would fulfil my desire but she feared that her father would present difficulties. Like most Hungarians, she said, he hated Germans and, in accordance with his noble rank, had selected a boring young nobleman whom she had already rejected. This young man owned a small estate which yielded five to six hundred gulden, but, she added, with my mother's legacy and what I hope to inherit, he thinks we can manage adequately. I would advise you to go to the Bishop before my father gives his word to Lengyel. It might help, for my father would certainly not go against the Bishop's word.

So the next morning I presented my case to the Bishop. "Are you sure she's the right girl for you?" he asked. "Absolutely" I replied. "Well, in that case I will assist your suit. But first allow me, as father and Bishop, to ask you some questions". He then sought to make me think very carefully about my intentions in a very kind and sensible way. Then he asked, "otherwise, have you any other concerns?"

Me: Her father, like many Hungarians, can't stand Germans.

⁵⁹ See note 9

⁶⁰ A Hungarian finance official, usually bearing the Latin title *cassae perceptor*.

Him: Oh, I'll have a quiet word with him.

Me: He also wants to betroth the girl to a nobleman, although his income is only 500 Fl. at the most.

Him: Then her father would be a poor *cassae perceptor* if he didn't realise that your income is as much again. (After a pause). Right, I'll deal with the matter. Stay here. You can decide for yourself whether I am clever enough to arrange a match for you".

The Bishop rang the bell, ordered Furkowics to appear and when he came, the Bishop presented my suit with dignity and courtesy.

"Alas! Alas! Woe is me!" cried the old hypocrite. "If only Your Excellency had mentioned this two weeks ago, I would have given my daughter to this worthy gentleman (*virio egregio* was the term this deceitful scoundrel used) with the greatest pleasure. But now it is too late. Exactly two weeks ago today, I promised my daughter to Herr von Lengyel. Your Excellency will appreciate that I cannot go back on my word and I am inconsolable"

Then the old dissembler turned to me and said, also in Latin⁶¹, "You wicked man! Couldn't you have opened your mouth and revealed your intentions all the time you were coming and going in our house? Now look where your silence has landed me, in my Lord's bad books because of my refusal".

"You could put matters to right if you refused Herr Lengyel" I replied. (I wanted to spare his feelings by not actually accusing him of lying when he said he had "given his word"). "What!" he replied, "Refuse? Listen" he continued proudly, "You must know that every Hungarian, when he gives his word *sub fide nobili* must keep it, otherwise he has no right to be a Hungarian nobleman". "But" interrupted the Bishop, "what if your daughter disagrees?". "Oh, she won't if she doesn't want to brand her father a liar and be disinherited. Your Excellency is doubtless familiar with the laws of Hungary".

He began to whine and continued cravenly, "Please, Your Excellency, do not let me suffer and grant me the chance to continue to earn my keep" and at this point the grovelling hypocrite fell to his knees. The Bishop stopped him and said coldly, "Stop this nonsense otherwise I shall consider his behaviour a mere charade. He knows as well as I do and everybody else with common sense that family matters do not form part of an officer's duties. He is the father of his child. I cannot and will not interfere in this matter" – and he was dismissed.

We stood and stared at each other for over a minute. At last the Bishop said with a bitter smile, "so here we are, his Excellency the Bishop of Grosswardein and his distinguished music director with disappointment written all over their faces!".

"Your Excellency may well laugh" I said, "but I do not find his insults so amusing. Did you hear how he laid emphasis on a Hungarian *Nobleman*?". "Indeed I did but please don't take it amiss when I say that you should have thought twice before getting involved with this girl. Hungarian laws clearly state that if a child contracts a marriage contrary to the will of her noble parents, then they have the right to repudiate and disinherit her. Let me give you some fatherly advice" he continued. "With your art, your figure, your good character and your earnings potential, you may have the pick of a hundred girls who are much richer and prettier. And as a Bishop, I would advise you to submit to Divine Providence. Who knows if this marriage would have been for the best? It seems – and indeed I am convinced – that Divine Providence had a hand in this. But I see that you are not receptive to my good advice. So promise me one thing – for today, calm down".

I promised, took my leave and went straight to Pichel. "My God" he cried, "what's happened? You look dreadful". "It's all over. I've been turned down" and then I told him the whole story. "Oh my God", he sighed. "That means a similar fate could befall me sooner or later". "What would you do in that case?" I asked. "Well" he replied after a pause, "what else but take it philosophically and accept my fate". "What a counsel of despair!" I said petulantly. "I came to seek comfort and not be palmed off with your heartless philosophy".

⁶¹ The use of Latin was widespread in Hungary when communicating with non-Hungarians. Latin was used in the Hungarian parliament until 1846. Leigh Fermor records a conversation he had in Latin with a Hungarian monk at a monastery in Romania as late as 1934.

I rushed back to my room but a few minutes later Pichel came. "Come, let's go for a walk. I'd like to hear all the details and then perhaps I can offer some good advice". I was reluctant to go but he insisted so eventually I went and I have to say that what this kind and sensible young man said to me was rather more successful in restoring my equanimity than the Bishop's wise observations. At dinner I was more cheerful than the Bishop might have supposed and his astonishment was evident. I confessed to him that in addition to his fatherly admonitions, Pichel played a large part in calming me down. "Then" said the Bishop, "he has my thanks too. But as nothing is better than a distraction to cure you of your present mood, I'll give you three months leave to go to Vienna. But promise me you'll return afterwards. In addition, I'll provide horses as far as Pest and cover your travel expenses from here to Vienna and, of course, back again".

I took advantage of this leave and amused myself royally in Vienna, completely overcoming my passion.

There was an excellent troupe of Italian *opera buffa* performers in Vienna and one piece they put on, *Amore in Musica*, pleased me very much. I bought the printed libretto to translate it into German. Soon after my return to Grosswardein – where, I should add in passing, I brought my youngest sister⁶², a sixteen year old girl who possessed a clear if somewhat weak voice, though good enough for our theatre – I translated this *opera buffa*, set it to new music and produced it in our theatre.

Five years now passed with many a pleasant diversion among which hunting, especially on swampy ground was my favourite pastime but to which pleasure, unfortunately, I owe, to a large part, my present lameness.

Then suddenly all these pleasures came to an abrupt end.

Chapter 17

Scandalous denunciation sent to Maria Theresa. The Bishop's woes. The orchestra is dispersed. The story of Pichel's marriage

The Bishop was himself not only a friend of the military but was actively encouraged to be so by the great Empress Maria Theresa. She said to him during an audience "You will very much oblige me if you cultivate good relations with your garrison in Grosswardein". Her wish was sufficient for the Bishop to show the utmost respect to the garrison, from the Commander to the lowest ranks. Who would have thought that this would eventually lead to the disbanding and end of the orchestra?

It was not an unusual practice at that time in Hungary to relocate garrisons and accordingly, the regiment stationed in Grosswardein was moved elsewhere to be replaced by the Neukleinhold regiment. Its Colonel-in-Chief was a Prince of the Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst⁶³ family, a 27 year old gentleman who was a great music lover and theatre-goer and above all a very keen dancer. It was therefore not surprising that the Bishop showed not only all the respect due to a man of his standing but also sought in all possible ways to gratify his tastes for music, theatre and dancing. When the Prince heard our music, he assured the Bishop on his honour that he had never come across such a well equipped orchestra at any imperial court apart from Brunswick, Munich, Mannheim and Stuttgart. He was just as impressed when he heard our opera *Amore in Musica*. He invited me to dine the following afternoon and told me that he had an equerry who not only had a

⁶² She was Maria Anna Johanna, youngest of Dittersdorf's ten siblings. Her year of birth is given as 1743 which would make her 22 in 1765 when her brother was appointed to Grosswardein. She later married Paul Friedrich Gamsberg, chancellor at the court of Count Philipp Gotthard von Schaffgotsch.

⁶³ A very distinguished Franconian family of statesmen, prelates and warriors including Chlodwig, German Chancellor 1894-1900. I visited the imposing 16th century family castle some 50 kms west of Nuremberg in 1985 and was shown the piano which Liszt played during his many visits there.

passable tenor voice but also had a talent for the theatre and that if I ever wanted to offer him a part, he would be at my service.

Another member of the regiment was Lieutenant Count Strasoldo who had a fine tenor voice and was well-versed in music as was the regimental Quartermaster, Herr von Wreden, a good actor and bass singer. Finally, there was Countess Josephe, Lieutenant-Colonel Count Figueumont's daughter who was willing to enter our theatre to reciprocate the kindnesses, her father said, which the Bishop had shown the garrison. She was very musical, had a pleasant voice and was an outstanding beauty. You can well imagine that I took full advantage of all these offers which resulted in a standard of perfection that I never saw surpassed in my subsequent visits to many other provincial theatres in Graz, Pest, Pressburg and Brünn etc.

I have to admit quite openly that my time in Grosswardein and my constant attempts at theatrical compositions equipped me with skills which in my adult life have contributed to many a sensational success.

Of course I did not neglect to organise constant rehearsals for our actors to keep our admirable Prince amused and for this reason the Bishop also gave a number of balls and shows, not only during Carnival time but also during the summer months. Only during Advent and Lent was the popular *isaak* performed. Grosswardein was thus transformed into a place which appealed to every lover of seemly entertainment.

One evening when a ball was to be held at the Bishop's residence, the Prince secretly organised a masquerade to surprise the Bishop. It took the form of a Peasant's Wedding, elegantly performed by his officers and the ladies of Grosswardein.

On the occasion of the Prince's birthday (I think it was during summer), he invited the Bishop eight days before the event to a dinner for twenty four guests and informed him that on the day in question he had decided to host a ball for the Grosswardein nobility at the Town Hall because his own quarters were too small. As the Bishop now wanted to prepare an unexpected treat for the Prince in return for his recent masquerade, he turned to me for advice. I suggested a Turkish Entry. It was approved and a procession accompanied by Turkish music wound its way from the Bishop's residence across the town's main square to the Town Hall.

But now behold the malice whereby such an innocent event was shamelessly painted in such dark colours!

The Bishop had a secret and vindictive enemy among the cathedral canons who was utterly incensed over a matter which the Bishop had nothing to do with. But first it is necessary to mention that Hungarian bishops are not elected by cathedral canons as is usually the case in other dioceses but the King of Hungary has the sole right to appoint and install bishops and deans. After the death of the previous dean the Empress, as Queen of Hungary, appointed in his place a certain Count Kolonics from one of Hungary's most respectable families. The said canon had had designs on this post for himself but when he was disappointed, he became utterly convinced that the Bishop had recommended Kolonics to the Empress and so he had been passed over; hence his hatred of the Bishop. So what did this unworthy man do? He approached one of the Empress's favourites and through her informed the monarch that the Bishop not only maintained a theatre but that comedies were performed there during the prohibited periods of Advent and Lent; and also, that balls were held throughout the year including masked balls and indeed he had ordered a procession of fifty disguised people from his own court to proceed in public across the market square to the accompaniment of loud music and this and various other manifestations had greatly scandalised the clergy.

Abominable man! He knew the Empress would never permit comedies or operas to be performed privately or in public during these holy weeks. But church music, namely oratorios, were allowed. Therefore the first accusation was a lie because *Isaak* was an oratorio. He also knew that the Empress had prohibited masks so he therefore used the word disguises to make her think that masks were being used. It was also totally false that the clergy had been scandalised because apart from

the informer, all the canons had attended our theatrical performances and far from being angered, they were highly entertained.

What were the consequences of this denunciation? The Bishop received a private letter from the Empress's Cabinet-Secretary, Baron von Pichler, which read as follows;

*Sub rosa*⁶⁴ I write to inform your Excellency that the following accusations have been brought to the attention of Her Imperial Majesty, namely, that at the theatre in the Bishop's court during Advent and Lent comedies are performed which are strictly forbidden in all royal and imperial lands. Furthermore, that at the Bishop's court throughout the year, not only are masked balls held but that a whole troupe of masked persons accompanied by loud music marched from the Bishop's court through the town across the main square thereby scandalising the Grosswardein clergy. Her Imperial Majesty may therefore despatch a commission from Vienna to investigate the matter. But your Excellency can prevent this shame by removing the cause of offence, the sooner the better. If your Excellency will undertake to do so of his own accord, then I shall arrange for Her Imperial Majesty to cancel the investigation....etc

Imperturbable as he normally was, this letter upset the Bishop so much that after lunch he locked himself alone in his room for four hours. Eventually he called me in and asked me in a very dispirited tone of voice, "Will you come with me tomorrow to Belleniess?" (a small estate belonging to the diocese with a pleasant little house). "I am at your service" I replied. "Tomorrow morning at six o'clock sharp we shall leave" he said and as the clock struck six, we were sitting in the coach. We had travelled nearly a mile and still the Bishop had not uttered a single word. At last the following conversation took place.

Me: Is your Excellency not feeling well?

Him: No, my dear Karl, I am not feeling well but in spirit, not in body.

Me: May I be so bold as to enquire the reason?

Him: I brought you along to share my troubles with you. (Here he showed me Baron Pichler's letter) Read this.

Me: (after I had read the letter three times). What ungodly slander! What a pack of lies!

Him: Lies you say. But isn't it true that there were performances in my theatre during Advent and Lent?

Me: *Distinguo!* – comedies, tragedies, dramas and all non-religious works are strictly forbidden at those times but oratorios are allowed. In the middle of Lent I myself played in the orchestra during a performance of Bonno's *Isaak* in the presence of every member of the imperial Court and the highest aristocracy.

Him: Well, that may be so. But it is not a lie that I gave a ball during which there was a masquerade of a Peasant's Wedding and that I organised a public procession with Turkish masks.

Me: the accusation of a masquerade was a despicable lie. Masks are prohibited in all royal and imperial territories without exception but reasonable disguises such as wearing a domino, a peasant's or national dress are allowed as long as the face is uncovered. I myself have appeared at many a grand ball dressed as a *Nobili Veneziano*, a Dutch peasant or wearing a domino or in Spanish national dress. As one person appeared in our masquerade dressed as a peasant and another in a national dress and neither covered their faces with a mask, then this was no infringement of the Court order and so no blame whatsoever attaches to your Excellency.

(He bit his lip and remained silent).

Me: How will your Excellency reply to Baron Pichler?

Him: I have already replied.

Me: Presumably saying that it is a false denunciation?

Him: No, on the contrary.

⁶⁴ In confidence

Me: What?

Him: I thanked him for his well-meant gesture and decided on the spot to remove the cause of the offence by paying off not only the theatre and dancing staff but also dismissing most of the orchestra.

Me: Your Excellency must destroy this letter forthwith.

Him: It has already gone. I sent it yesterday evening to Vienna by fast relay.

Me: Oh dear! Forgive me, but I fear your Excellency acted too quickly.

Him: yes, unfortunately I acted too quickly. If only I had summoned you yesterday before I wrote this ill-fated letter but now it is too late. As you will see, nothing can now be done.

Me: (shrugging my shoulders) Indeed, nothing can be done. It is a crying shame that our wonderful orchestra is now to be dismissed.

Him: A crying shame! Let us no longer talk about it.

At three o'clock we arrived at Belleniess. After dinner the Bishop said, "Come to me in an hour. I will then tell you my decision according to which you will be required to act".

I came and the following dialogue took place.

Him: I am minded to stay here until my orchestra is completely disbanded because I simply could not bear to see such good people dismissed. But I wish to retain you, Pater Michael and the two horn players.

Me: Your Excellency should not take offence but what would I do without an orchestra?

Him: Stay with me as my friend until I die, with the same salary and conditions and comfort me.

Me: (after a pause). Your Excellency will surely understand that without an orchestra I would then have to bury my talents as a violinist and composer. I would therefore like to establish myself in some other place or court to my liking.

Him: Your intention is so praiseworthy that it would be a sin for me to discourage you. So try your luck in the world, you will not fail to find somewhere to settle. But if – God forbid! – an accident should befall you on a journey, a broken hand or arm, say, then come to me; you will draw your present salary for as long as I live and I shall see to it that you will not want after my death. Come to my room at eleven o'clock tomorrow and I will give you my instructions for the orchestra.

When I came on the following day, the Bishop gave me a sheaf of hand-written papers and said, "here is a list of the people I am dismissing. Here is an order to the steward to pay each dismissed person within three days their quarterly salary, normally due in five weeks, in cash as well as three months pay in lieu of travel expenses. Here is an order to my secretary to furnish each person with a leaving certificate and testimonial of good conduct on this form, to be returned to me for signature. Here is an order to my equerry to provide you with horses and conveyances to Pest and here is a little note to my steward to order the cook Peter Hassmann and his assistant cook and servant to provide you with sufficient victuals and wine for the six day journey to Pest so that you will be adequately supplied with food and drink. And one more thing. Do not allow anyone to come here to take his leave of me for that would only rub salt in my wounds. Only you, my son, only you do I wish to see here again in Belleniess".

He continued, "I will grant each dismissed person enough time to make arrangements for his departure but I would much prefer if everybody wished to leave on one and the same day, especially as I have provided for supplies and facilities to Pest. Early tomorrow morning you will go to Grosswardein, carry out my instructions and before you go, come and see me again". I promised to do so, then asked whether I should inform the steward why the orchestra was to be disbanded. "Certainly" said the Bishop, "and not only the steward but the whole town should know for their own sakes that they are leaving my service with no blame attached".

One can imagine the blow to the whole of Grosswardein that my sad news caused. The disbanded orchestra and the residents of Grosswardein were deeply disappointed, firstly, because they were losing such an admirable employer and secondly because all the shows and entertainments in which anybody could participate would now come to an end, ensuring that Grosswardein would revert to its former cultural desert. Nobody was more upset than my dear friend Pichel. On the way back to

Grosswardein, I thought about his love affair and hatched a plan, the success of which would have enormous consequences for the long term.

On the evening of my return, without saying a word to Pichel, I approached a Canon of the cathedral who, I knew, was a close friend of Herr von Samogy, the father of Pichel's beloved. I soon managed to win this worthy clergyman over in Pichel's interest and he promised to play his part. I told him that time was of the essence so we agreed that he would invite Samogy to lunch tomorrow and I would join them.

During the meal the Canon plied his old friend with several glasses of the finest Tokay wine which put him in an excellent mood. The Canon skilfully took advantage and obtained Samogy's consent to marry his daughter to Pichel. Full of joy at this turn of events, I said to Herr von Samogy, "you are doubtless acquainted with the old proverb *Quo cito facit, bis facit*⁶⁵. Why don't we fulfil the marriage promise today?". Samogy spoke good German and at least did not share his nation's hatred of ours. "That's fine by me" he said, "I am satisfied". "Bravo" said the Canon. "We'll celebrate the engagement at my house this evening and I'll prepare a tasty supper". "Good" said the old gentleman. "Listen" I interrupted, "Let's surprise the young bridal couple. Please be good enough not to breathe a word to your daughter but just bring her along to supper with the Reverend Father. I will do the same for Pichel". My idea was found pleasing and we agreed on a few more details to make our intentions that much clearer.

On my return home I went to see Pichel and suggested a walk. He agreed and said, "I am at your service until seven o'clock when I must leave as I've promised to meet Caton". (his girlfriend). During the walk he bewailed his fate. I pretended to sympathise and said roughly the same things he had said to me when I was in a similar desperate situation. On the way back I deliberately led him, as if by chance, past the Canon's house. As agreed, the Canon was standing, as if by chance, at his window. We greeted him. He thanked us and called down "Where are you going?". "Home" I said. "Is it true" he continued, "what the whole town is talking about?". "I'm afraid so" I replied. "Well, come up for a while and tell me more". We went up and I told him everything. Pichel became nervous as seven o'clock was approaching and he gave signs of wanting to leave when all of a sudden Samogy and his daughter entered.

"It was such a nice day today" he said, "that I couldn't resist taking a walk with my daughter and paying your Reverence a visit". "Good" said the Canon. "As we are in such great company, I thought we'd have supper together". We accepted the invitation whereupon the Canon rang the bell and ordered his cook to prepare a meal for five persons.

During the meal various topics of conversation were aired and then our host unobtrusively mentioned a certain marriage he knew about. "Apropos" interrupted old Samogy on cue, "did you know that my daughter is a bride, too?". "You're joking" said the Canon. "Not at all" replied the old man, "my daughter's a bride as sure as my name is Samogy". Pichel and Caton went deathly pale. "Well, who's the groom?" asked the Canon. "Guess!" The Canon mentioned the names of six or seven young noblemen in or near Grosswardein and deliberately paused after each name. As none of them were, the Canon said with feigned impatience, "why should I rack my brains any longer! It could be anybody".

"Well then, I'll have to name the groom myself" said Samogy. "It is....it is....none other than.....our Pichel here!". The lovers stared at the old gentleman speechlessly. "By God" he said, "I think you doubt the truth!" and quickly standing up he went over and joined their hands together. "You have my consent and my fatherly blessing".

It would be superfluous to describe the universal sentiments which one can imagine anyway. When the old gentleman had regained his seat, he said, "dear children, I am not minded to give you an elaborate wedding. The money would be better spent by giving it to you. I'd also prefer if you had a quiet wedding and would like the Bishop to dispense with the banns". "I'll arrange that" I interrupted.

⁶⁵ This Latin tag is usually written *Bis dat qui cito dat*. He gives twice who gives promptly.

The Canon then ordered a few bottles of vintage Tokay and we remained happily at table until midnight.

The next morning I summoned all dismissed members of the orchestra and after discussions we all agreed to depart in ten days time. I also wrote to the Bishop, informed him that we would all leave in ten days and asked on what day I could come to Belleniess to take my leave. At the same time I told him about Pichel's engagement to Samogy's daughter and asked him in the name of the bride's father to dispense with the banns on account of our imminent departure. The Bishop replied that he would expect me next Saturday evening and that I should bring Pichel, his bride and her father as he wanted to marry them himself. Imagine the father's joy when he heard of the honour the Bishop had accorded him and his daughter.

On Saturday we travelled to Belleniess. The next morning the Bishop celebrated mass in his private chapel after which the marriage ceremony took place. The Bishop invited the bridal couple and me to lunch. We sat down and when the couple picked up their serviettes, each one found a roll of 50 ducats. On one roll the Bishop had written in his own hand "A little contribution towards tableware" and on the other "For kitchen utensils". They stood up and kissed the Bishop's hand. The Bishop kept his guests until six o'clock before giving Pichel his marriage certificate and bidding him and the others farewell – but he asked me to stay behind.

One can imagine how touching our final leave-taking was. I will not begin to describe it but will only say that after he had requested me to keep him informed of my future vicissitudes, he presented me with a silken purse, saying "this is to defray your travelling expenses". I opened my mouth to express my thanks but he stopped me by raising his clasped hands to heaven in prayer after which he gave me his episcopal blessing, ending with the words *descendat super te et maneat semper* and then without a backward glance hurried into his bedroom.

I was so overcome that I had to rush outside into the fresh air to recover. Even today, thinking about that sad event stirs the deepest feelings in me.

We all left Grosswardein on the appointed day. Our journey to Pest was of course very enjoyable in such a large company. I, my sister, Pichel and his young wife all travelled in one coach. Seven days later we arrived in Pest. The group then dispersed but Pichel and I decided to remain in Pest for a few days and then to proceed to Vienna together. We shared the cost of a comfortable coach and travelled to Vienna.

Chapter 18

Return to Vienna. Herr von Blanc and the Trieste Factories. My trip to Venice. A lucky storm. My affair with a prima ballerina.

As I knew many people in Vienna, it was easy for me to find four pupils for Pichel who each paid him three ducats a month. This gave him a guaranteed income of twelve ducats, not counting additional income from private concerts which I helped to arrange for him so that he and his young wife would not starve.

I decided to spend the summer in Vienna before starting out for the wider world in early autumn.

A few days after my return, I went to call on Count Spork who renewed his offer to me that had fallen through before my departure for Grosswardein. But I turned it down because of my forthcoming travels and mentioned my friend Pichel. By a stroke of luck, the position of first violin at the German Theatre had fallen vacant so the Count appointed Pichel. The salary was only 450 florins but Pichel gladly accepted it. It kept him occupied during the evenings leaving him whole days free to take on pupils. I thus had the pleasure of seeing my best friend adequately provided for with an annual income of 1050 gulden.

My old friend, Herr von Blanc, a government official in Troppau⁶⁶, had come unexpectedly to Vienna on his way to Trieste on the orders of the Empress to inspect factories and he invited me to join him.

⁶⁶ Now called Opava, Czech Republic.

As his business there would last for at least three weeks, I decided to take a trip to Venice to visit my previous employer Count Durazzo. There was such a fair wind behind the ship that we reached Venice in 13 hours but to my great frustration the Count was not there, having just left with his wife for Milan. Ascension Day was already past. Of the four operas advertised, three had sunk without trace and only one remained, eking out a miserable existence. I went to see it but found it so feeble that I had no desire to see it twice nor even bother to describe it.

The Count's absence, my frustration at not seeing a decent opera and finally, for foreigners, the almost unbearable stench of the lagoons in summer made my time there so weary and loathsome that on the fourth evening I decided to embark for Trieste again. This time the wind was unfavourable and on the following day developed into a minor storm which drove us many miles out to sea. But who would have thought that this contrary wind, instead of causing me anxiety or annoyance, actually delighted me, allowing me to embark on an affair.

Among the passengers in the cabin was a beautiful girl. She was a prima ballerina, Venetian by birth, about 18 or 19 with large, black, fiery eyes. I simply had to gaze into them – I couldn't help it – and once I had done so, I was smitten. That was simply how my love affair began with this attractive, mischievous girl the minute I set foot on the ship. Besides a servant, she was also accompanied by a *mother* as they call an elderly lady in Italy who is paid to pretend to be the actual mother of a young lady in social situations but in private is just a lady's maid. The fact that she was on her way to Vienna as a prima ballerina facilitated our acquaintance so I offered her my devoted services in the city of my birth and, as she said it this was her first visit to Germany, she had the amazing kindness to accept my offer; indeed, she was generous enough to confess that she felt herself lucky to have found a friend in whom she could place at first sight the greatest confidence.

Resist who can! In scarcely two hours we had progressed further in our relationship than more conventional people, less accustomed to such forward behaviour, do in two months. At least we looked like brother and sister and which brother wouldn't have been proud of having such a beautiful one! She had a lovely face and a beautifully proportioned body and her cheerful, irrepressible and artless temperament, enhanced by her Venetian dialect proved so irresistible that I had no problem in claiming the liberties of kinship. I deliberately withhold her name because, like her talent, it subsequently became very well known.

The next day, as the wind increased to storm force and the ship rolled from side to side and the girl was in danger of falling over, I took her lovingly in my arms and held her tighter and tighter while the shy creature snuggled up to me so closely that I challenge anybody else to remain unmoved.

The storm had driven us so far off course that it took us four days to reach Trieste. It was then my most urgent priority to arrange for her to stay at the same inn as Blanc and myself. She agreed to this and, what was more, allowed herself to be persuaded to stay a further three days in Trieste, thus enabling us to continue on dry land what we had so pleasurably begun at sea. To see her as much and as often as possible, we lunched and dined with each other every day. While Blanc served his Empress in the factories, I served my Queen at home. She asked me to arrange for a comfortable coach so next day I found one and agreed a price. But I cunningly made her believe that it would only be ready in six days so she would have to bide her time until then. Those six days passed like six hours in the tumult of passion – but I draw a veil over the details.

She went on ahead of us to Vienna while I followed eight days later with Blanc after he had finished his factory business. How vehemently I cursed all the factories in the world! I just couldn't wait to see that gorgeous creature again. We arrived quite late in Vienna but I couldn't rest until I had found out that very same evening where she was staying. She was indescribably thrilled to see me sooner than she had expected and we had supper together.

About ten days after my arrival she appeared on stage for the first time in a new ballet and not only her figure but also her extraordinary talent was greeted by the public with the wildest enthusiasm. No other singer or dancer had ever received such rapturous applause. Those who have never experienced it cannot imagine the bliss of knowing that you are enjoying the favours of such a girl, whose charms were heightened by her revealing theatrical costume, whose body was worthy to be

sculpted by Pygmalion, whose beautiful and expressive face was still further enhanced by an endless variety of facial expressions and whose every movement was slavered over by an army of fops and dandies as well as by honest and upright youths and men young and old. Who can experience that ecstasy of being able to say proudly to oneself; See! That girl for whom lechers would give decorations and medals to possess, for whom spendthrifts would squander fortune after fortune to sleep with and for whom even the most confirmed bachelor might reconsider his vow of chastity – that girl is *yours*!

I beg the reader's indulgence if my pale face still glows at the memory, if now in my sixtieth year I paint that dream of youth in such vivid colours. Yes, I was foolish, I was culpable – but condemn me if you have the heart.

It was utterly impossible for me to keep my affair a secret, despite my intentions. I therefore confided in one of my most respectable friends in the expectation that he would heartily congratulate me and perhaps even envy me. Imagine my astonishment when this worthy friend (why should I not name this honest man, my guardian angel, Herr von Demuth?) listened to my confession with disapproval and gave me a heart-to-heart talking to. "Shame on you Ditters! You are now thirty years old at an age when you should be devoting yourself wholly to your travels and your art and now in the prime of your artistic career you commit the uttermost folly by chasing a girl like that, putting your welfare, health and reputation at risk. Take my advice; tear yourself away from the arms of that seductive creature and rid yourself of this foolish passion. Leave and find yourself a suitable court somewhere which will offer you a secure income, then marry a decent girl and become a father. If you don't like my advice, then we are no longer on speaking terms".

Much as these words shook me to the core and my feelings revolted against them, on mature reflection I became convinced of my worthy friend's advice – may he rest in peace. His few but emphatic words engraved themselves in my soul, the scales fell from my eyes and I never saw the Siren again.

About 18 months later I heard from my friend that the dancer had had an affair with a very rich and prominent Count N N from a very distinguished family. This Count had ruined himself on account of her and was now forced to walk instead of ride in his splendid carriage and was even reduced to living off the charity of his fellow aristocrats. The matter had come to the attention of the Empress who unexpectedly ordered the police one night to arrest this *signora prima ballerina* and deport her with her money, trinkets and jewellery back to Italy.

Chapter 19

Count Lamberg. The Prince Bishop of Breslau. My Appointment. Stag Hunting. I become *Eques Aureatus*. Frederick II in Rosswalde. Count Hoditz. Affable exchanges with the Crown Prince. I am appointed Chief Forest Ranger.

During my trip to Trieste I had made the acquaintance of Count Lamberg, president of the Imperial Duchy of Silesia. He had come to Vienna from his estates near Laibach in order to proceed to his other possession in Troppau and I went to call on him. After he had listened to my travel plans, he said "why not make your first stop at Troppau and come with me? You can then continue on to Warsaw, Danzig, Hamburg, the Netherlands, England and France and then back to the courts of the Papal States and so on".

His suggestion appealed to me so four days later I set off with him in his coach.

Being wealthy and without children, he was able to spend huge sums of money in Troppau which nobody else could rival. He constantly gave banquets, receptions and concerts. There was also a certain Count Chorinsky who owned estates in Austrian and Prussian Silesia and who also had a very small but good orchestra which, together with other musicians in Troppau I succeeded in slightly supplementing.

Soon afterwards the Prince Bishop of Breslau⁶⁷, then residing in his diocese at Johannisberg⁶⁸ in Austrian Silesia, arrived at Troppau to pay a visit to the head of the Province. At a concert given in his honour, he generously complimented me on my performance and my compositions and three days later I dined with him. He was of a talkative nature and as a keen music lover he spent most of the meal talking to me and skilfully eliciting details of my previous career and plans for the future. He confided to me that when he resided in Breslau in better days he had kept a large orchestra and had employed various castrati including the famous Quadagni.⁶⁹

Many readers will be familiar from printed broadsheets how and why the Prince Bishop of Breslau fell into disfavour with King Frederick II. But these broadsheets were published in Prussian territories and paint too black a picture. I therefore do not think it superfluous to describe what happened straight from the mouth of Count Lamberg.

The Prince Bishop belonged to the respectable family of Count Schaffgotsch. His father, the supreme head and viceroy of Silesia when it was part of Austria, resigned when Frederick II annexed Silesia in 1740 and with the King's permission retired to his extensive estates in Warmbrunn where he lived for many years. The King was astute enough to remain on cordial terms with the leading Silesian families and their subjects, mainly Catholics and developed a close friendship with the Prince Bishop's son, a church prelate, appointing him first coadjutor and then after the death of Cardinal Sinzendorf, Bishop of Breslau, an incumbency which included the titles of Prince of Neisse and Duke of Grottkau. The King was on such friendly terms with the Bishop that every year he invited him to Potsdam for a few months. This familiarity lasted without a break for many years right up to the beginning of the Seven Years War. But after the King's army, sure of victory had marched into Bohemia, defeated the imperial troops at Prague and besieged it, they then marched on into Austria and were in turn defeated at Kolin. The fortunes of war were such that the Austrians not only forced the Prussians out of Bohemia but also penetrated into the heart of Silesia and recaptured Breslau after a pitched battle. Everybody, even the King, thought that Breslau was lost and gone for ever. All the Silesian Catholic clergy and their subjects, who had always been loyal to the empire because of their religion, now rejoiced greatly. The Prince Bishop too gave unmistakeable, if somewhat premature signs of his joy.

However, the military authorities in Breslau had long been suspicious of the Prince Bishop's previous friendship with the King and advised him to retreat to Rome until the war was over. While there, the fortunes of war turned yet again so he moved to Nikolsburg in Moravia to await the end of the war. Here he wrote a letter to the King in which he begged for reconciliation. But the King's famous reply accused him of ingratitude and of being a disloyal traitor whose presence he could no longer tolerate in his territories and consigned him to shame and ignominy⁷⁰. The Prince Bishop appealed to the Imperial Court to mediate whereupon the King relented and permitted him to return to Silesia.

But as there had never been a case when the King had ever forgiven anybody who had once fallen into disfavour with him, the Prince Bishop had no hope of reconciliation. At the border he was refused onward passage to Breslau and directed to Oppeln, a wretched little town in Upper Silesia.⁷¹ Here he had to make do with a couple of squalid rooms in the Franciscan monastery for want of any other quarters. Although he was not officially a prisoner of state, in actual fact he was not much better than one. He was able to draw his full income in Prussian Silesia for the first quarter, then

⁶⁷ Breslau is now the Polish city of Wrocław. The Prince Bishop was Philipp Gotthard von Schaffgotsch, 1716-95. Educated by the Jesuits in Rome, he was one of Dittersdorf's most loyal patrons. The palace where he was born in Warmbrunn, now Cieplice, was rebuilt in the years 1784-8 and is now used by the Wrocław Polytechnic.

⁶⁸ The castle is now called Janský Vrch in Javorník in the Czech Republic.

⁶⁹ Gaetano Quadagni (1728-92).

⁷⁰ In private, the King expressed himself even more strongly. "Fucking Schaffgotsch has betrayed me in the unworthiest way". See MacDonogh *Frederick the Great*, (1999), page 270.

⁷¹ Oppeln is now Opole in Lower Silesia, some 50 miles south of Wrocław.

only half for the second quarter, further reduced by half for the third quarter and finally totally confiscated. His episcopal authority was also undermined to such an extent that he could no longer appoint a priest without authorisation from a government minister.

Suffering so much vexation and indignity and without hope of relief while the King was still alive, he renounced his income, abandoned all his splendid possessions and fled to imperial Silesia where he had now been living nigh on two years on the income from his property there, amounting to 13000 to 14000 gulden whereas before it had been 100,000 gulden.

Returning to Troppau from some festivities at the estate of the well-known Count Hoditz⁷² in Rosswalde, I found the Prince Bishop's Confessor, Padre Pintus, who had been sent by the Prince to enquire whether I might like to spend the coming winter in Johannisberg, for a generous fee, to act as a sort of David to Saul whose harp-playing comforted the King in his dejected moods. The Prince, he told me, didn't have an orchestra but he had a few servants and a couple of secretaries who were musical so a scratch orchestra of about 8 players could be formed but without wind instruments. He was also authorised to offer me free board and lodging in the castle, expenses for my servants and a monthly fee of 25 ducats - but I had to decide within three days. During this time I thought about it – and committed myself to remain in Johannisberg for seven months from 1 November 1769 to the end of May 1770.

I cannot pass on without mentioning an event at around this time which caused me to give up my travel plans and which indeed had a decisive influence on the course of my life. In September the Prince Bishop organised a three day stag hunt to which he invited not only Count Larisch (Count Hoditz's son-in-law) and the government official von Blanc whom I have already mentioned but also myself. I was given one of the best shot guns and was fortunate enough on the very first day to bag seven royal stags, two roebuck and a couple of foxes. The next morning at dawn we mounted our horses and rode for five hours up into the high mountains to our hunting ground. The hunt lasted well into the evening and we spent the night in a hunting lodge there. There were about 50 of us and while we all camped around the fire tended by the hunters, I spent most of the night talking to the head huntsman and his fellow huntsmen. At Schlosshof I had picked up the rudiments of hunting and forestry partly through experience and partly through reading and mixing with the head huntsman there and later I had taken part in big and small game hunting in Grosswardein and so I became the object of a certain degree of admiration which grew into amazement. On the third day the hunt moved into lower-lying woodland and I managed to bring down several deer and foxes with lucky shots.

When the Prince started to question each guest at table what he had bagged and it came to my turn, the head huntsman interrupted and described my heroic deeds in the most flattering terms, adding, "Your Highness may be assured that not only I but all the princely foresters and huntsmen would be prepared to swear that this gentleman possesses all the abilities to discharge any hunting and forestry post at any Court".

These words were not spoken in vain and in due course resulted in my being appointed to a position which demanded a knowledge of forestry and caused me to settle here for good as I shall later explain.

That same day the conversation turned to my journey with Gluck and the Prince asked me about his Chevalier-title and whether he was a nobleman. I explained everything whereupon the Prince became pensive and withdrew from our company. After supper he asked me if I had composed masses and Italian arias and when I replied that I had, he requested me to kindly send him in

⁷² Albert Joseph von Hoditz (1706-78) was a wealthy landowner, officer and Freemason whose estate was situated near what is now Osoblaha in the Czech Republic. He spent enormous sums on creating an elaborate park filled with temples, arbours, fountains, lakes and statues as was not uncommon at the time (see Nymphenburg Park in Munich). There was also a private brothel for the Count's exclusive use. He was friendly with King Frederick II who visited his estate on two occasions and who paid him a pension and provided a house in Potsdam. Unusually for the time, his body was publicly cremated on his estate as was that of his wife who had died 26 years earlier. Nothing remains of the park today.

Johannisberg one of my best masses, an Italian aria, a violin concerto and a symphony, all in full score. I did not fail to do so as soon as possible from Troppau without making any charge for the copying. The Prince replied that he had received my scores but as I had forgotten to add the cost of copying, he enclosed a little something – it was 20 ducats. He also informed me that on the last day of October horses and a carriage would arrive in Troppau to bring me to Johannisberg.

When I arrived, I found the whole situation for a musician in such a piteous state that the orchestra of ten players, myself included, sickened me. But what to do? After a month's intensive practice and improvements, I just about managed to bring ourselves up to a point where we might perform without audiences shuddering in horror.

On the morning of New Year's Day I joined Padre Pintus to offer our usual congratulations to the Prince. Imagine my surprise when at my entrance he produced from his desk a parchment folded into four and handed it to me with the words, "dear Ditters, I have been authorised by Rome to give this to you as a new year's gift". And it was – a deed from Rome signed by Cardinal Archinto awarding me a Knighthood of the Golden Spur after due scrutiny of my submitted compositions. The Prince then took out of a small box the cross attached to a red ribbon and hung it on me, saying, "now you are as good a knight as Gluck and, as *Eques Aureatus ac Sacrii Pilatii et aulae Lateranensis Comes*, when you are in Rome you have the same rights as every true-born knight to enter the Papal palace and attend all public functions". Imagine my rush of joy at the hands of this kind Prince who had received all these credentials two weeks ago but had kept it secret to surprise me for the new year.

But despite all these proofs of favour and the friendly and welcoming reception with which the Prince honoured me, the sheer monotony of life at Johannisberg wore me down and I longed for the end of May when I would be free again for my summer travels. But unexpectedly I received an invitation from Count Hoditz to come to Rosswalde which I could not refuse so I was therefore forced to postpone my travels until the autumn.

The reason for the invitation was King Frederick II's visit to the Count. The King had got to know him during the Seven Years War and esteemed him highly as a philosopher. Emperor Joseph II had visited the King in Neisse in 1769 and as the latter had promised a return visit the following summer at Mährisch-Neustadt near Olmütz⁷³, he wrote to the Count expressing the wish to arrange his route so as to overnight at Rosswalde on the way there as well as on the way back. The Count now invited me to help out with the various spectacles he was preparing so two weeks before the King's arrival, I appeared and carried out the worthy man's ingenious plans as best I could.

Precisely on the appointed day at four o'clock in the afternoon the King arrived in Rosswalde with his retinue, the Crown Prince, Prince Frederick August and Prince Leopold von Braunschweig (later destined to drown in the river Oder at Frankfurt⁷⁴) and General Lentulus.

Soon after their arrival the King agreed to the Count's proposal for a walk in the park. During the walk he was surprised by an unexpected theatrical event, a ballet representing the transformation of Daphne into a laurel tree, a Druid's feast and especially by a miniature town which delighted him. He retired to bed at sundown but his retinue stayed up.

On either side of the Chinese garden which the Count had very attractively illuminated were two grottos marked *Austrian Grotto* and *Prussian Grotto*. To the Count's question, in which of the two grottos the Crown Prince would like to hear a concert, he replied, "today I have the pleasure of being in Austria so I would be very happy to hear a concert in the Austrian grotto". And so it happened.

The orchestra was not too bad as I had merged the two small orchestras belonging to Counts Hoditz and Chorinsky. When the Prince entered, one of my symphonies began followed by me playing a concerto. The Crown Prince then approached me with the words. "your name and talent are already familiar to me as I have a number of pieces by you. I'm delighted to make your acquaintance in person". Later he asked me to play something for him and after I had played him a sonata with as

⁷³ Now known as Unicev near Olomouc, Czech Republic.

⁷⁴ On 27 April 1785, during the flooding of the river Oder as he attempted to cross over by canoe which capsized in mid-stream. A seven metre high memorial, erected in 1787 was removed in 1945.

much care and enthusiasm as I could muster, he paid me so many compliments that modesty forbids me to repeat them. One must be acquainted with the gentleman to know how kind and courteous he can be to artists he esteems.

Very early the next morning the King and his suite left for Neustadt and a few days later returned for lunch at Rosswalde. After the meal the Crown Prince sent for me and enquired what events were planned for them. I told him but he asked me to give a concert instead so he could listen to me. I played for him three times. Afterwards Count Hoditz emerged from the King's apartment and suggested the Prince might like to see some spectacles but he demurred because, as he said, the King had set the time of departure for two o'clock the next morning. Finally he turned to me, took me aside and politely honoured me with questions about art and famous artists. When I told him of my travel plans, he said in the most pleasant manner, "do not pass by Berlin without stopping. I shall try to make your stay as pleasant as possible".

The King demonstrated great generosity towards the Count. He was presented with a large, square golden snuffbox studded with diamonds and adorned with the King's portrait. Inside was a folded quarto sheet signed by the King which read;

Our Finance Minister will pay at sight 10,000⁷⁵ taler to Count Albrecht Hoditz. Frederick.

I stayed another two days in Rosswalde before returning to Johannesburg to make serious plans for my travels to begin in October. My first call would be Berlin where I had been so kindly invited by the Crown Prince. But destiny intervened and it was not to be.

One day the provincial first minister, Baron Zedlitz, a distant relation of the Prince Bishop, invited me and after some polite small talk told me that the Prince desired to keep me in his service for life. I declined on the grounds that during the Prince's lifetime I would be spending the prime of my life without the comfort of knowing that I would be provided for in old age. "But you will be provided for" he retorted. "The Prince wishes to appoint you Forest Ranger⁷⁶ for the Silesian province of Neisse. He has already obtained a written testimonial from the Chief Huntsman and all the other huntsmen of your abilities in forestry and hunting and the Cathedral Chapter is prepared to approve your appointment". Herewith he produced a document which stated quite clearly that the Cathedral Chapter intended to recognise my appointment which included the assurance that I would retain my post even after the Bishop's demise as the following clause made clear; "We confirm that after the decease of the temporal Prince Bishop, he (Dittersdorf) will remain committed to us until he is transferred to the succeeding Bishop". The salary offered was handsome, 600 Fl. plus 900 Fl. tree subsidy⁷⁷, together 1500 Fl. I was also assured of first claim to the post of First Minister⁷⁸ in the bishopric which would improve my position many times over as well as my entitlement to free board and lodging.

All this was wonderful. But the wretched state of the Prince's orchestra, if one can dignify a handful of people with that word, was the only thing which made it impossible for me to accept. But then it was explained to me that half of my previous salary of 1200 Fl. would form part of the Prince's estate revenue and the other half would increase to 900 Fl. as a result of an increase in wood prices and this total of 1500 Fl. the Prince would be prepared to spend on improving the orchestra, together with the sum of 1900 Fl. which he had earmarked to create a small stud and revive the zoo. He also intended to transfer members of his staff who were not musical to the provincial government and replace them with those who were musical. This reassured me and gave me grounds for hope.

Doubts and inclinations now battled within me. We therefore went to the Prince and discussed each point in detail and after everything had been clarified, I formally signed the offer of service with

⁷⁵ According to Rittmann (1975), a Prussian taler was worth two-thirds of a gulden.

⁷⁶ Forstmeister.

⁷⁷ Stammgeld. A fee paid to foresters for each tree trunk felled.

⁷⁸ Amtshauptmann. A senior civil servant responsible for financial, fiscal and legal matters.

profound gratitude and finally renounced my travel plans. Next day I received my certificate of appointment and confirmation of my emoluments. Both were soon afterwards confirmed by the Dean and Chapter in Breslau. Not long after that I swore an oath of loyalty in the presence of the provincial government and assembled huntsmen. The First Minister introduced me as their chief and they were required to swear an oath of obedience. And so I became the Forest Ranger of the Silesian province of Neisse.

Chapter 20

The Oval Theatre in the Tower. My oratorio *Davide*. My comic opera *Il Viaggiatore Americano*. Demoiselle Nicolini. My respectable marriage.

Although I began to make immediate preparations, it still took some time before I could bring the orchestra up to a tolerable standard. Including myself, it consisted of 17 players, 11 of whom were salaried employees while the others were members of the household. But I was itching to realise one of my ideas which was to set up a theatre and I couldn't rest until I had done so. Now it was only a question of finding a suitable place.

There was nothing I could do with the old, ruined castle. The inscription "Johann Turso, Bishop of Breslau, rescued this castle from the ravages of time from his own pocket, dedicated it to John the Baptist and gave it the name Johannes in the year of our Lord 1509" suggested that a castle that had to be saved in those days from the ravages of time, which had probably been built in the ninth or tenth century, offered little scope for my plans. But where there is a will, there is a way.

Right next to the castle stood a tall, massive, oval-shaped tower about 8 klafter in diameter on which I set my sights. All I had to do was to remove the floor of the other rooms and construct an oval hall. The Prince thought the project feasible and called for an estimate of the cost which turned out to be very reasonable. All the necessary materials were available in abundance on the Bishop's estates and as his subjects were obliged to work without pay on castle building projects, the Prince only had to pay the skilled artisans. In short, the project went ahead at full speed and by the middle of autumn it was ready. The acoustic was so perfect that I would advise any man of rank who maintains an orchestra to construct a hall of similar size, height and shape. He will find such halls reduce echo.

A theatre was now installed and I made arrangements to recruit personnel. My close friend Pichel in Vienna sent me Renner, recently widowed, and his daughter as well as Ungericht who happened to be at a loose end. The Prince was not only pleased for me to bring my sister but also allocated her a room in the castle and a place at his dinner table.

I now had a troupe again of which I could be proud. Padre Pintus was a good Italian poet and for Lent he wrote me the text of a fine oratorio, *Davide* and for 1 May the libretto of a comic opera, *Il Viaggiatore Americano*. During her time here, Mlle. Nicolini had matured musically and physically and acquired such exquisite manners that she was universally admired. She gave a masterly performance in the role of David. And what role she played in my own life, the reader is about to find out.

I should really be starting a new chapter at this point because I am about to describe an important event in my life. But this time passion and infatuation played no part. This was such a gentle, almost bourgeois affair that I can safely describe it as part of the normal course of events.

I gave Nicolini daily music lessons, so – did I fall in love with her? Well, I suppose so, if you like. But that is not what I wanted to say. It was more the case that I had so many opportunities to observe her finer points and her steadfast character that I definitely decided to propose marriage to her but before doing so I gave myself sufficient time to consider whether we could live happily with each other. Once I had made up my mind, I proposed to her one morning during a lesson, adding that she

could take time to think about it, even for a year. She replied that she did not need any time at all to think about it but her stepfather, Herr Renner, would first have to give his consent. But this presented not the slightest difficulty. I went to the Prince's quarters, solemnly pledged my word in his presence and that of my intended and the matter was settled in no time. The Prince was prepared to dispense with the banns and marry us on the following Sunday. But I refused the dispensation and all urgency out of a sense of honour and propriety for me and my bride and announced a seven month betrothal, whereupon the Prince and especially his sister-in-law, Countess Schaffgotsch, who happened to be staying at the castle, expressed their satisfaction, admitted my bride permanently to their dinner table – and kissed her on the lips.

On 3 March the following year – that was how long I had waited honourably and dutifully since the previous July – I was married by the Prince in his private chapel. He allocated me five rooms for all of us and presented me with a letter of entitlement according to which all the fittings and furniture became my own property.⁷⁹

Chapter 21

Florian Gassmann⁸⁰ becomes Kapellmeister on horseback. He tries to play a trick on me. Malicious origin of my oratorio *Esther*.

A year after my marriage I went on a visit to Vienna. Among the many calls I made on friends and benefactors was one to Florian Gassmann to congratulate him on his appointment, during my absence, as Imperial and Court Kapellmeister. (Gluck had been retired at his own request on a pension of 2000 Fl.) “Do you know” he said, “I was appointed Court Kapellmeister on horseback”. “How come?” I asked. “The Emperor always makes up his own mind when it comes to appointments and frequently does the opposite of what others advise or suggest. My predecessor, Ritter, died at 8 o'clock. The Emperor was informed at 10 o'clock. At 11 o'clock he went riding in the Augarten. Quite by chance I met him in the Graben. He rode past me for ten paces then stopped and called back to me ‘I've got news for you. Ritter is dead’. When I replied that I knew that an hour ago, he said testily, ‘yes, but you haven't heard the real news; *you* are the new Kapellmeister in his place’ and with that, he rode off”.

For Lent just passed, Gassmann had composed an oratorio to a Metastasio text, *Betulia Liberata*, for the benefit of the Society of Musicians' Widows which had been performed by a 200-strong orchestra. I had been told of the great success it had achieved so I asked him whether I could look at the score. He gave it to me and for a few hours I sat down and examined it carefully and discovered many fine things in it. Gassmann paid me a return visit and when he saw and examined some of my own vocal scores on my desk, he said many kind things about them but, somehow, they did not ring true. But while we were in the mood of swapping mutual congratulations and I wanted to return his compliments, I said, “if I had known when your oratorio was to be performed, I would have spared no cost in coming from Silesia to Vienna just to hear such a masterpiece”. “Yes” replied Gassmann, “but it's entirely up to you if you want to give yourself even greater pleasure by composing an oratorio for the benefit of the Widows and performing it yourself here”.

⁷⁹ The castle at Javornik is now a Czech national cultural monument under the name Jansky Vrch and is open to the public for part of the year. Guided tours take you through Dittersdorf's music room and the chapel where he was married. His marriage to Nicolina Trink, of Hungarian origin, seems to have been happy. Three sons and two daughters were born to them and she survived him.

⁸⁰ Florian Gassmann (1729-74) Bohemian born composer of 21 operas, 32 symphonies, 37 string quartets and 5 Masses, (among other works) nowadays rarely performed. A small selection can be heard on YouTube including a fascinating fugue from a quartet in E minor. Was Beethoven thinking of this when he composed the *allegro molto* movement of the C major quartet op. 59/3? The similarity is striking.

"What on earth do you mean?" I replied. "Me? Composing an oratorio for Vienna? You are expecting too much of me, after Hasse, after you, and performing it myself?"

"Yes" said Gassmann, "so that we can compete with each other".

But he said this with such an air of mock despondency that I thought he was joking. I was piqued and said nothing. But he misunderstood, thinking he had snubbed me. "Of course" he said after a pause, "it needs a bit of courage to take it on but anyway, as you wish, if you feel you can't....." "For heaven's sake!" I interrupted, irritated beyond measure, "it's not that. Of course I can and I'll take you at your word. You have offered me an oratorio and I thank you for the honour – I give you my word – I shall compose one".

"Bravo" replied Gassmann, oddly moved and amicable. "That's the spirit. I'll send you Metastasio's works", "I've already got them" I interrupted, "or those of Apostolo Zeno for you to choose". "These too I know and also that polyphonic choruses are always effective and as there are too few such choruses in the oratorios suggested, I shall ask a good friend of mine, a good Italian and a good poet, to write the text and I shall compose the music by next Advent and perform it here myself".

"You must give me your word of honour" he said, "as I must inform the Emperor to protect my reputation". This I did and we parted.

That same day I went to see Pichel and told him everything and what I had undertaken. "I wouldn't trust Gassmann if I were you" he warned me. He's a trickster. He's set a trap for you".

"The devil!" I replied. "I'll go back to him now and break it off".

"Don't do that. I know your talent well enough to have grounds for believing that you will succeed".

"But how do you know he is not being straight with me?" I asked. "Because I once showed him some of your scores from your Grosswardein days and he rejected the lot of them".

"So he wants to play tricks on me?"

"He can't if you come here yourself and conduct your own oratorio".

"But allotting roles to singers...."

"Take my advice. While here take the chance to hear the best singers and choose the ones you like and write especially for them. Pay special attention to the choruses which will have a great effect here and I bet you'll frustrate both him and his diabolic intentions".

I went to every opera and noted down the names of the best singers, their techniques and vocal compasses and that made it easy to select the best of them and write for them individually.

On my return to Silesia, Padre Pintus wrote the text of an oratorio based on the Biblical story of Esther. It took me four weeks to complete the score. I had the parts copied for our orchestra and rehearsed it at Johannisberg a few times. I did not trust my instincts nor did I wish to expose myself to accusations of vanity so I invited genuine experts from Breslau and other nearby places, even including musicians from the Prince's orchestra to give me their opinions freely and frankly if they considered a passage here and there not to their liking. I worked long and hard on the score to forestall any objections but neither I nor any of my competent – and incompetent – judges had reason to change one single note.

Six weeks before the performance, I sent the score to Vienna, promising that I would arrive eight days before the first performance there. The Prince was extremely keen to hear oratorio performed in Vienna by 200 musicians but the terms of the peace treaty forbade him to appear in public at Court or any temporary imperial residence so he very much regretted not being able to attend. But when it was pointed out to him that nothing prevented him from appearing in Vienna incognito under another name and title and, furthermore, as the Pope, as Bishop of Rome, could also travel as a vicar, dean or archpriest, he took advantage of this loop-hole, donned a simple priestly garment and travelled as the Dean of Weidenau of his parish. He took me in his carriage which I meant I saved on travelling expenses.

We arrived in Vienna on the appointed day, having travelled day and night. We arrived at seven o'clock in the morning and at ten I went to see Count Spork who was just arranging the first rehearsal in his private quarters. Three major rehearsals were held in the theatre during the next few days. The Count was kind enough to allow the Dean of Weidenau to attend both the rehearsals

and the final dress rehearsals in a theatre box which was a significant concession because in Vienna it is not customary for either the nobility or the public to be present at rehearsals.

Emperor Joseph attended all rehearsals. Pichel told me on the evening of the first rehearsal which had been held that morning that the Emperor had remarked to his chamber musicians, "Gassmann wanted to play a trick on Ditters but Ditters cleverly turned the tables on him; I much prefer his oratorio to those of Hasse or Gassmann".

My oratorio received its first performance on the last day of Advent and the second on the following Tuesday⁸¹. I will say no more than that the Society of Widows benefited from a sum of 1450 Fl. after deduction of all expenses whereas it only received 530 Fl. from Gassmann's work.

Six weeks after I had returned to Johannisberg, Pichel wrote to me with the news that Gassmann had died two weeks previously⁸² and the Emperor, against all expectations and despite the numerous candidates for the 300 ducats a year salary, had not appointed a successor. It seemed, wrote Pichel, that he was merely waiting for me to apply and so I should do so forthwith.

I wrote back to say that in Johannisberg I already had a higher income and had hopes of earning even more so I would not apply, but only if the Emperor insisted would I obey the supreme command.

I don't know whether Pichel had been secretly charged with sounding me out but later I heard that the Emperor had learned about my refusal. "What a conceited man!" he is supposed to have said. "Not only is a salary of 300 ducats not enough but he wants me to offer him the job on a silver plate. Well, he can go to hell". Bonno was appointed, much to the Emperor's advantage for Bonno had been retired on a pension of 800 Fl. Thus the salary that now fell due was shared equally between Gassmann's widow and Salieri⁸³ whom the Emperor appointed to his chamber music group.

I now come to the most important event in my life, my elevation to the Nobility.

Chapter 22

My elevation to the Nobility and promotion to Amtshauptmann. Lolli in Johannisburg. Anecdotes about the castrato Quadagni in Venice.

The Amtshauptmann of Freienwaldau⁸⁴, Cajetan von Beerenberg, died in 1773.

The Prince immediately sent for me and graciously offered me the now vacant post. "But one thing" he said, "you must be ennobled otherwise it won't do. There has been a basic law in the Bishopric of Breslau since time immemorial, which no Prince Bishop can ignore, especially as his duties concern charitable foundations and in Breslau the maintenance of a household appropriate to his rank. This law obliges him to support noblemen without means who serve him as Pages or Courtiers as well as to provide their children with an education appropriate to their rank. According to this basic law, nobody can be appointed Amtshauptmann who is not a nobleman. If you can get yourself ennobled, then the post is yours – but on one condition, that you sign an undertaking never to leave my service for any reason as long as I live. In exchange, I will give you a written assurance that I shall never dismiss you from your post against your will or reduce or restrict your emoluments. Consult an

⁸¹ The first performance of *Esther* took place at the Kärntnerthor theatre Vienna on 19 December 1773. (O E Deutsch 1966). Commercial recordings are available and can be downloaded. Like much of Dittersdorf's religious music, it harks back to the baroque style. *Esther* has a lively overture with a fast allegro, Handelian in style.

⁸² On 21 January 1774 aged 45, apparently from injuries he had earlier sustained in a road accident in Italy.

⁸³ Antonio Salieri (1750-1825) perhaps best known nowadays for his relationship with Mozart but he was a major figure in Viennese musical life of his time, director of the Italian opera, Kapellmeister to the Habsburg Court and teacher of Beethoven, Schubert and Liszt.

⁸⁴ Now Jeseník, Czech Republic.

experienced agent in Vienna and if you succeed, I'll gladly pay one third of the usual Court fee and any other costs".

In Vienna I was assured that if I could satisfy the Court with proof of my family, my post, my income and my moral character, then there would be no objection. As I was able to supply the credentials, I shortly received my Charter of Nobility as Carl von Dittersdorf together with a flattering note from Maria Theresa who graciously consented to reduce the court fee by half. Including the commission of 50 ducats to my agent, Herr von Hoffmann, the whole affair cost me no more than 1100 gulden for which the Prince reimbursed me 400 Fl. as promised.

So now I was confirmed in office as the Amtshauptmann of Freienwaldau, took the oath of office and received confirmation from the Dean and Chapter in Breslau and was formally installed on 4 November 1773. But as the Prince requested my permanent presence in Johannisberg, it was agreed that my official duties would be discharged by the local Councillor⁸⁵ in return for a reasonable share of my salary. Renner was appointed headmaster of the Johannisberg school with an income of 700 Fl. as well as receiving a supplement as Court Singer, setting him up for life. At the same time my sister married the Court Chancellor von Gambsberg.

Our concerts and shows continued in Johannisberg and our orchestra was deservedly considered the best in both Prussian and Austrian Silesia. The result was that a variety of itinerant musicians sent letters or appeared in person and demanded to be heard. But the Prince had ordered me to politely decline all offers on the grounds that the budget for the orchestra was too small to allow extra costs. The Prince could not afford to pay for visiting musicians so he had to sacrifice the pleasure of hearing them. Serious and sensible musicians understood this but there was nevertheless a multitude of vagabonds who accused me of being a ruthless man who refused to permit anyone access to the Prince. I ignored such malicious accusations and consoled myself that I was doing my duty.

Among these itinerant musicians was one Rüsche, a flautist, who had the brilliant idea of passing himself off as the composer Vanhal⁸⁶, later to enjoy much popular acclaim. He came to Johannisberg as "Vanhal" but as the real Vanhal, like myself and Pleyel, had been pupils of Joseph Haydn, I knew for sure that he had never held a flute to his mouth in his life and could certainly not play the instrument. I admitted him to my presence and gave him a tongue-lashing for his impudence and told him that if he persisted in playing such tricks, I would denounce him in the press as a windbag and an imposter. He slunk away with his tail between his legs. One can well imagine that the effrontery of such people increases with distance and they would then hardly be disposed to speak well of me. The carved faces of heroes can be as easily disfigured and contorted as the moral character of an honest man by such scoundrels who abuse the art.

The great violinist Lolli⁸⁷ once came to Johannisberg. He told me and the Prince, whom I had arranged to surprise us in my room, that he had deliberately made a detour of six or seven miles from Freudental to make my acquaintance and pay homage to the eminent Prince and connoisseur of the arts, but not to perform. He was a handsome and sophisticated man and despite his great gifts, kind, modest and good-natured. No wonder that the Prince became very fond of him. He invited him to dine, gave him a guest room in the castle and ordered that same evening a performance of my opera *Lo Sposo Purlato* which later, under the title *Der gefoppte Bräutigam* (The Mocked Bridegroom) was well received in Vienna, Graz, Prague, Dresden, Weimar and many other places.

Lolli had only wanted to stay one day but the Prince prevailed upon him to delay his departure by a day so he complied with the utmost deference. Just after the end of a symphony during an evening

⁸⁵ Kammerrat

⁸⁶ Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739-1813). A prolific Bohemian born composer forming part of the rich musical culture of late 18th century Vienna. Of his 132 symphonies, only 51 have been published, the rest remaining in MS. The musical triumvirate of Haydn-Mozart-Beethoven has sadly overshadowed Vanhal's achievements which, judging from what little of his music I have heard, deserve wider currency.

⁸⁷ Antonio Lolli (1725-1802) a touring violin virtuoso who held Court posts in Stuttgart and at Empress Catherine the Great's Court in St Petersburg. Some 8 violin concertos of his are extant.

concert, he sought the Prince's permission to play a concerto which, together with a sonata preceding the last symphony was so brilliantly performed that he fully lived up to his great reputation. In fact, he liked being in Johannisberg so much that he kept postponing his departure until he had spent 14 days here during which, apart from opera performance days, he demonstrated his art and excelled even himself to reward us for our attentions. His knowledge of the world and his refined manners, which distinguished him so advantageously from so many other musicians, formed the basis of a close friendship between us.

Among the many stories he regaled us with, two were of great interest. I would very much have liked to relate them here, one about the fate of somebody in Venice and his fear of imminent execution. But this would be too much of a digression and besides, the story is well known, so, for the benefit of arrogant musicians, I will tell the other story about the famous castrato Quadagni in Venice which I have not read elsewhere and which deserves to be better known.

Quadagni had a dispute with the impresario of an opera of great interest to the Venetian public in which he had already sung three times in all his glory as a singer and actor so in order to annoy him, he thought up a practical joke aimed at ruining the opera's success. In his fourth appearance he sung and acted worse than a schoolboy but the audience did not react, thinking he was indisposed. The impresario however revealed the real reason. At the fifth appearance, Quadagni sung even worse than before but after the first act, two delegates from the audience approached him and told him the audience could not tolerate his behaviour so would he kindly do his duty and sing properly. He merely laughed arrogantly in their faces and in the second act sang atrociously. The delegates approached him again; the audience *ordered* him to sing properly in the third act otherwise there would be unpleasant consequences. "I despise such threats" said the arrogant singer. "No power on earth will force me to do anything against my will". So instead of singing, he now started howling and instead of acting, he stood stock still.

One might have thought that the audience would have chased him off the stage under a barrage of rotten apples and lemons as usually happens but against all expectations, they remained calm. But when Quadagni left the theatre still in his costume, covered by a coat and was about to step into his gondola, four heavily disguised figures seized him, blindfolded him and dragged him off in a *peota*. He eventually found himself in a simple but clean room with a bed. Two of the disguised figures remained with him. After a while, some others arrived with a table of food. The castrato, hungry as he was, nonchalantly sat down and was about to eat. "Don't touch it, Sir" said a man in a Domino mask, "except on one condition, first you sing, then you eat, otherwise not". Quadagni refused, the table was removed and the others left.

The same thing happened the next morning. Quadagni did not sing and the food was removed once more. This went on for two days. But on the third day a delicious soup was brought in and the starved man could no longer resist. "Rather than starve to death" he cried out, "I'll sing". "Sir, that is not sufficient" said the man in the mask. "You must sing well, even brilliantly, and also act otherwise we will take away the food again". What to do? Quadagni gave up and sang and acted as he had never done so before.

"Bravo! Bravissimo!" cried the assembled company, still disguised, and applauded wildly. The man in the mask joined him at the table and both ate their fill.

"Now, my dear friend" said the masked man, "it's time you found out to whom you have had the honour of demonstrating your art within these modest walls. I am.....who do you think?"

Quadagni rose to his feet out of respect. "Maybe *Il serenissimo duca*?"

"His obedient servant, the Executioner".

Mocking laughter broke out, the men removed their disguises and the shocked castrato found himself surrounded by executioners and he hung his head in shame.

"As you see, the illustrious Senate has now given satisfaction to the audience you so grossly insulted. You are now free to go. A gondola awaits you in front of my house to take you home. But I have been ordered to warn you that you must fulfil your obligations at future performances otherwise the Senate will punish you a second time much more severely". Quadagni returned home, a reformed

character and from that time on he was courteous and modest, something not typical of castrati in general. Audiences forgave him and soon he was once again their favourite singer.

Meanwhile Lolli took his leave after 14 days. Seven months later he wrote to me from St Petersburg that he had been engaged at a salary of 4000 roubles. Three years later he received permission from the Empress to travel for a year and he arrived at Johannisberg by way of Neisse to visit the Prince but was in such a hurry that he wanted to leave the next day – but in the end he stayed five days. He confessed to me that he had no desire to return to Russia so in order to take formal and honourable leave of the Empress he had asked a close friend, a doctor, to furnish him with a certificate to the effect that the Russian climate was bad for his chest and would inevitable bring about his early death. But this story was invented according to the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*.⁸⁸ What happened was that he had taken offence when the Empress had made Giardini play the solo part in his concertos instead of himself and this caused him to offer his resignation whereupon he was sent to Siberia.

However, I must do him justice that if he may have been rather arrogant towards his superiors, he was in essence a very courteous and modest man and excellent company. Unlike his fellow countrymen, he would speak his mind. He admitted that he used to be an inveterate gambler and that had gambled away three quarters of his fortune but that now he was quite cured of his addiction. In fact he showed me in secret bills of exchange and cash to the value of 10,000 gulden and after his tours to Vienna, Paris, London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Berlin and the Papal States, he planned to deposit all his earnings in a secure state bank and live off the interest. But what became of him and where he is now I cannot say.⁸⁹

Chapter 23

The orchestra in Johannisberg is disbanded. I am in a tight spot but I evade a trap set for me.

The War of the Bavarian Succession⁹⁰, which broke out at around this time between Austria and Prussia, forced the Prince to disband the orchestra but with the assurance that after peace had been restored, he would take everyone back into his service provided they accepted the same salary as before.

As I had nothing more to do with the orchestra, I and my family moved to Freienwaldau and conscientiously took over my duties as Amtshauptmann. The Prince did not feel safe near enemy lines so he moved to Brünn and he was right to do so because General Kirchheim, who had been ordered to defend the Principality of Neisse from the Prussians with 3000 men could not prevent them from occupying Johannisberg and thus making themselves masters of the greater part of the Principality as far as the mountain ranges of Freienwaldau and Zuckmäntel. It was impossible to dislodge them from Johannisberg because the territory of Glatz to their rear was unoccupied.

Fear of an enemy attack on Freienwaldau did not concern me because General Lövenöhr had a strong force to protect us and it was always possible that if the armies of the King and Prince Heinrich succeeded in Bohemia and advanced from there by way of Troppau, they would withdraw

⁸⁸ The *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* was first published in 1798 so it is possible Dittersdorf read it a year before his death. I have not as yet been able to confirm the story about Siberia by consulting this article which appeared in the 1798 edition but according to Ritzarov (2006) Lolli worked at the Russian Court from 1774 to 1777 and again from 1780 to 1784.

⁸⁹ Dittersdorf has the admirable trait of always finding something positive to say about those he met but others were less impressed. Burney met Lolli in London and wrote "owing to the eccentricity of his style of composition and execution, he was regarded as a madman by most of the audience. In his freaks, nothing can be imagined so wild, difficult, grotesque and even ridiculous as his compositions and performance".

⁹⁰ The war lasted from July 1778 to May 1779. The Elector of Bavaria, Maximilian Joseph, had died without issue so Emperor Joseph II laid claim to the territory but was opposed by the Saxons and Prussians.

from our area for fear of being cut off. But I frequently had cause to regret that I had not sought to try my luck by travelling but had instead committed myself to the Prince Bishop and a post which in time of war brought so much responsibility, troubles and hardship. It is no small task for a senior civil servant responsible for an area which, although not maintaining a large army, still involves dealing with a thousand problems of transport and supply as well as being exposed any minute to the risk of enemy attack. Here is one small example which at least shows what measures I was forced to take against the enemy in this difficult situation.

Before the war started, the Prince had sold a large amount of firewood to the Prussian merchant Tasso in Neisse with the approval of the Imperial Court on condition that the wood be floated downstream to Neisse in the spring. The war had scarcely begun when the Prince received an order from the Court prohibiting the wood from being floated on pain of confiscation. As General Stutterheim, commander of the Third Army had taken control of Troppau, the buyer of the wood now came to me in Freienwaldau with the money and the intention to float it off downstream but I showed him the Court Order and refused his request. Undeterred, he hurried over to Troppau, appealed to General Stutterheim and eight days later brought me the following ultimatum.

The Amtshauptmann of Freyenwaldau, Herr von Dittersdorf, is hereby ordered on presentation of this note to allow the merchant Tasso to float the wood in question downstream to Neisse; failure to do so will result in the execution of this order by force of arms.

v. Stutterheim.

I was not intimidated by this order, categorically forbade the float, retained the order and sent the messenger away empty-handed. At the same time I informed the Landeshauptmann⁹¹, who had sought refuge here with his family, of my decision. "What do you think?" he asked me. "I shall send a copy to the officer commanding our military outpost here and the original to Duke Albert, Chief of Staff of the Moravian army, telling him of my refusal and requesting sufficient protective reinforcements. "Good" he said, "those are my thoughts too". In two hours I had written both reports and had them countersigned by the Landeshauptmann. We sent one by a courier to the Duke's HQ between Moravia and Bohemia and the other to the Commanding Officer. Eight days later I received a reply from His Royal Highness in which he generously praised our action and promised us protection. Barely eight days after that reinforcements arrived; an infantry regiment, five squadrons of Hussars, a Dragoon regiment, three Irregular Battalions and two Croat Battalions. But we also received a solemn warning that we must maintain the strictest neutrality and that every Imperial officer sent to our area was under instruction to monitor us carefully and report the slightest infringement to the authorities. Although we knew that nobody would be able to find fault with us, it was nevertheless an unpleasant feeling to know that every officer had been ordered to eavesdrop on us.

Now and again traps were set for me into which I might have fallen if I had been naïve enough. I give one example.

A Prussian Lieutenant-Colonel by the name of von Scholten had occupied Johannisberg castle with his battalion. With some cannons and a couple of howitzers he had barricaded himself in the castle, armed himself to the teeth, helped himself to the Prince's revenues, laid waste towns, villages, parishes and monasteries and entrenched himself, knowing that he was covered from the rear. As he had five infantry battalions and ten cavalry regiments at his disposal in the neighbourhood, he made several attempts to reach Freiwaldau to occupy the Meister Heights. But both passes leading there, the Setzdorf and Sandhügel, were so narrow and easily defended with a handful of men that he had to withdraw every time. He would very much have liked to occupy our area with its small town and 27 villages, but as he could not capture it by force, he resorted to what was, it must be

⁹¹ Head of the regional government to whom Dittersdorf reported.

said, a simple trick. An official from Johannisberg, authorised to act as a go-between, gave me a hand-written note as follows;

I burn with desire to make the acquaintance of a gentleman whose outstanding musical talent I have long revered because I myself am a passionate music-lover. To savour this pleasure I invite you tomorrow at noon to dine⁹² with me at Johannisberg where you will be welcomed with open arms.
Your devoted friend and servant
The Honourable von Scholten
Royal Prussian Lieutenant Colonel.

After reading the note, this was the answer I gave to the official. "If you once again have the audacity to bring me such a note from the enemy, I shall have you tied up⁹³ and delivered to the Imperial Commander-in-Chief. Tell Lieutenant Colonel Scholten that I have no desire to deliver myself into the hands of the enemy as a hostage for the sake of a soup and an open-armed reception. Now go!". I enclosed the note in a report of the incident to the General who replied with a kind letter praising my response.

Our blockade lasted until peace was restored. The Imperial troops on the two passes were alerted every two weeks but that was purely to keep them occupied to protect the Heights and prevent them from attacking Prussian supply convoys which had to pass within two miles of Zuckmäntel every two weeks. General Wunsch once attempted to attack Lövenöhr's corps in Zuckmäntel with 20,000 men, if not to defeat them, at least to try and dislodge them from the Heights but, rapid and determined as his assault was, he failed because of a chance turn of events which misled even him, a renowned and experienced veteran of the Seven Years War. But to relate that here would take too long.

Chapter 24

The orchestra at Johannisberg is reconstituted. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. My conversation with Emperor Joseph. The Court Kapellmeister Greybig. My German operas.

After the Peace of Teschen the Prince remained for a while in Brünn so that the castle could be repaired after the enemy had destroyed large parts of it. After his return some members of the orchestra who had been dismissed before the war were immediately reinstated and others recruited so that by the beginning of winter the orchestra was reconstituted. But the Prince was unwilling to reinstate theatrical personnel because restoring the premises ruined by the enemy would have been too costly.

I still resided in Freiwaldau but the Prince constantly demanded my presence so I had to go to Johannisberg and sometimes spend 8 to 14 days there. I had become indispensable to him. My official duties suffered so, as before, a local Councillor took them over and I returned to Johannisberg again. Here I bought a plot, built a house and laid out a beautiful garden but which used up all my money so that I had to borrow nearly 5000 gulden.⁹⁴

⁹² The officer specified a *Soldatensuppe*, a thick broth of haricot beans, sour cream, Debrecen sausage, red wine, tomato ketchup and bayleaf. (Coleridge simply translates "potluck")

⁹³ *Krummschliessen*. A military punishment common in the 17th and 18th centuries whereby the miscreant was chained to a wall and bent double with the left (or right) hand tied to the right (or left) ankle. Coleridge misunderstands this point.

⁹⁴ The house is now the town museum with a section devoted to Dittersdorf. It is situated at Nádražní 160 in Javorník.

For many years the Society of Musicians' Widows in Vienna had asked me to compose an oratorio to raise funds for them. I finally decided to do so and after Lent in 1786 I conducted my *Giobbe* or Job. The Viennese press covered the event in great detail but it is unseemly for me to say more except to mention that the first two performances yielded a net surplus of 1700 gulden.

While I was in Vienna this time I met seven visiting violin virtuosi who had come to try their luck and unexpectedly all met up. The best of them were Jarnowich, Frenzel the father and a certain S who specialised in double-stopping and arpeggios which he worked to death, with clumsy bowing techniques and violations of the rules of musical composition, thereby setting the teeth of genuine experts on edge.

Three years previously I had had the idea of composing symphonies based on episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* so when I arrived in Vienna I had already composed 12 of them. In order to defray travel expenses to Vienna, I set up a business which I feel obliged to describe further because of its extraordinary circumstances.

I had publicly announced a performance of six of my symphonies in the concert hall of the Imperial Augarten by special permission of Emperor Joseph which a certain Herr von Bourguignon had arranged. Entry tickets cost two gulden and Baron von Swieten himself had undertaken to sell a hundred of them. But on the appointed day there was bad weather, unlikely to clear, so my subscribers asked me to postpone the event. I went to the police to cancel the event and request a postponement but I was told that I needed a new Cabinet dispensation which, if necessary, I could obtain today. "Just go straight to the so-called Inspection corridor at Court", the Chief Constable said. "The middle door leads to the Emperor's private office. On the right is a little room for the Emperor's bodyguards. Ask for Herr von Bourguignon who will arrange for permission and maybe the Emperor himself will see you". "All the better" I said and hurried post-haste to Court.

I knew that you had to address the Emperor briefly, clearly and boldly without deference so I determined to act accordingly. The bodyguard announced me to Herr von B. but the Emperor himself came out instead and the following dialogue ensued.

Emperor: Aha! Who have we here? What do you want from me?

Me: From Your Majesty I want nothing.

Emperor: How so?

Me: The matter is far too trifling to concern Your Majesty. I just wanted to speak to Herr von Bourguignon.

Emperor: (humorously) well, if it's not a secret, I'll tell Bourguignon myself.

Me: Oh, that's not necessary. Your Majesty can decide and that will suit me.

Emperor: Come in. (he led me into a side room). So, what's it about?

Me: The Chief Constable has sent me here.

Emperor: Oho! The Chief Constable? What have you done? In trouble with the Chastity Commission⁹⁵ perhaps?

Me: Oh, the police would have found a place for me there and now I wouldn't have.....

Emperor: Now, spill the beans.

Me: My subscribers want me to postpone my concert in the Augarten because of bad weather. The Chief Constable cannot authorise this without the Court's permission. That's why I'm here.

Emperor: (going to the door). Listen Bourguignon. Write a few lines to the Chief Constable that I permit Dittersdorf to postpone his music in the Augarten for as long as he wants. *A propos*, I very much enjoyed your oratorio *Job* and I've had the score copied out for me. You don't mind do you?

Me: I am doubly gratified, also to have earned the applause of such an undoubted expert as Your Majesty.

⁹⁵ The Chastity Commission (*Keuschheitskommission*) was established in 1752 by the Empress Maria Theresa to "raise public morals". Its officers mercilessly persecuted Vienna's estimated 10,000 prostitutes with public humiliation or exile to distant parts of the empire as well as meting out severe punishments to adulterers and homosexuals. Prostitutes caught with their clients were forced to marry them. Casanova was, predictably, a victim.

Emperor; (coldly) I cannot stand flattery. I only want the truth.
 Me: Even better – for the truth is what I have spoken.
 Emperor: (after a pause) Have you heard these foreign violin virtuosi?
 Me: All seven of them.
 Emperor: Well, as you yourself are such a violin virtuoso....
 Me: Was perhaps but no longer.
 Emperor: Why not?
 Me: Because I haven't been playing for some years now.
 Emperor: But you are still a *judex competens*. Which of the seven is the best?
 Me: (with a shrug) I don't like praising one at the expense of the others. I'll just say that each one has his good points.
 Emperor: Spoken like a modest virtuoso! But I want to know exactly which one you liked best.
 Me: Jarnowich.
 Emperor: So, what was good about him?
 Me: He produces a beautiful sound from his instrument, has clean passage-work, plays his Allegros accurately and in his Adagios produces an excellent singing tone; just a few affectations here and there.
 Emperor: But not like that idiotic show-off Lolli....
 Me: Best of all, he plays calmly without grimacing. In a word, he plays to the head and to the heart.
 Emperor: Just like Dittersdorf once played! Good, I'm pleased you share my opinion. What do you think of S? Tell me straight.
 Me: Your Majesty commands me to be frank so I will say that his discordant and cacophonous double-stopping and arpeggios is a source of boredom and disgust.
 Emperor: *Bravissimo!* That's exactly what I think but Greybig still supports him and is always arguing with me. But today I'll silence him by telling him I have appointed you as my referee and that you have borne out what I have always maintained. That'll teach him, the clown. Ha ha!
 Me: (respectfully) God forbid that Your Majesty gets me into trouble with Greybig. I'd sooner be his friend than his enemy.
 Emperor: (laughing) You are not afraid of that clown, are you?
 Me: Very much! When he finds out that I don't share his opinions, he'll judge me even more harshly than he does Haydn and Mozart.
 Emperor: He's already done so.
 Me: Oh dear
 Emperor: It's not as bad as you may think. Do you want to know?
 Me: I'm curious.
 Emperor: He said that as a violinist you are like a good preacher more at home in the Old Testament than in the New Testament.
 Me: He's being satirical.
 Emperor: But about your music he said it is like a well chosen meal, exquisitely served up. The food is tasty and you can help yourself to generous portions without risking indigestion. I think Greybig is absolutely correct⁹⁶.
 Me: Your Majesty is too kind.
 Emperor: Doing justice to somebody is not just mere kindness. Are you still employed in Silesia?
 Me: Yes, Your Majesty.
 Emperor: What as?
 Me: *Amtshauptmann* and Government Official.
 Emperor: What sort of things are you concerned with?
 Me: *Publica, Politica et Iudicialia*.
 Emperor: (seriously) Really? Are you a fit and proper person to occupy such a post?
 Me: I have already spent thirteen years in the post without interruption.

⁹⁶ Those familiar with Dittersdorf's instrumental music way well concur!

Emperor: I am pleased to hear it but where on earth did you acquire the knowledge to do your job?

Me: It would have been an utter disgrace if I, Viennese born and bred, had learnt nothing more than just how to play the violin and compose.

Emperor: (very serious) Hmm, your answers are very much to the point.

Me: (very respectfully) I was taught that I had to answer Your Majesty briefly, concisely, frankly and to the point. I beg your pardon if I have failed.

Emperor: (more affably) You were taught correctly. (After a pause, then in a genial mood) Have you heard Mozart play?

Me: Three times already.

Emperor: How do you like his playing?

Me: As every knowledgeable person *must!*

Emperor: Have you also heard Clementi?

Me: Also.

Emperor: Some prefer him to Mozart, Greybig *à la tête*. What's your opinion? Tell me straight.

Me: Clementi's playing is artistic, Mozart's is artistic and tasteful.

Emperor: That's just what I think. It seems we have learnt from the same book.

Me: We have – from the great book of experience.

Emperor: What would you say about Mozart's compositions?

Me: He is indisputedly one of the greatest geniuses and I have yet to encounter a composer who possesses such a wealth of ideas. I wish he were not so prodigal with them. Listeners can scarcely catch their breath; they have no time to savour a beautiful idea when along comes another one, even more wonderful, which supersedes the one before and so it goes on so that in the end you can no longer remember any of them.

Emperor: They say in his operas he has one fault about which singers frequently complain – he drowns them out with his accompaniment.

Me: I'm surprised. It is possible to arrange the harmony and accompaniment without ruining the vocal line.

Emperor: You are a master of that as I have noted in your oratorios *Esther* and *Job*. What do you think of Haydn's compositions?

Me: I haven't heard any of his operas.

Emperor: You haven't missed anything. They are just like Mozart's. But what do you think of his chamber music?

Me: It causes sensations the world over – and deservedly so.

Emperor: Don't you think he is sometimes a bit too humorous?⁹⁷

Me: He has the ability to be humorous but without detriment to the music.

Emperor: You are right. (Pause) A while ago I drew a comparison between Mozart and Haydn. I now ask you to draw your comparison to see whether it agrees with mine.

Me: (after a pause). Would Your Majesty allow me to first ask you a question?

Emperor: Go ahead.

Me: What sort of comparison would you draw between Klopstock and Gellert?⁹⁸

Emperor: Well, both are great poets but you have to read Klopstock's works more than once to appreciate all their beauties but Gellert's beauties can be discerned all at once.

Me: Your Majesty now has my answer.

⁹⁷ The Emperor's word, *tändeln*, can mean to trifle or dilly-dally. I think he might have been referring to Haydn's musical jokes such as those in, for example, his symphonies 45, 60 and 94. If so, then jokey, light-hearted, even flippant might be alternative translations. Coleridge prefers "playful".

⁹⁸ Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803) Leading representative of German classical literature noted for his biblical tragedies, his Odes and his epic masterpiece *Der Messias*. Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-69), a favourite writer and moralist of 18th century protestant Germany. His works include poetry, comedies, novels and literary treatises. Lieder singers may know Beethoven's setting of his *Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur*/God's Glory divined in Nature, opus 48.

Emperor: So, Mozart is to be compared with Klopstock and Haydn with Gellert?

Me: That's at least what I think.

Emperor: Good. Now you have given me one more stick with which to beat Greybig.

Me: May I be so bold as to ask Your Majesty's comparison?

Emperor: Immediately. I compare Mozart's music to a gold snuff-box made in Paris and Haydn's to one made in London. (Going to the door) Are you ready, Bourguignon? (He gave him a letter for me). I am delighted to have got to know you better. You are quite different from what others have said about you.

Me: How so?

Emperor: They said you were an egotist who never gave any player or composer the slightest credit. This made me want to interrogate you and now I am pleased that I have discovered exactly the opposite. Certain people – one has recently departed this life – I can now take to task. Here is the permission to stage your concerts in the Augarten whenever you want. Adieu! (He went into his private office and I went to the Police.

The Emperor mentioned the name Greybig and liked to make fun of his comic self-importance so I will regale my readers with just one story about him to bring him into focus.

One evening the Emperor went to the Marinelli theatre in Leopoldstadt, a Viennese suburb. Punch as a nightwatchman sang a very funny aria. It pleased the Emperor so much that he had it copied out and, as he had a fine bass voice, sang it himself with his chamber music group. He repeated it a few times, each time with more and more of Punch's buffoonery and tricks. "So, what do you think?" he once asked Greybig. "Did I sing just like Punch?". "Oh! Oh! Oh!" said Greybig with his usual enthusiasm, "Upon my soul! Your Majesty is Punch in person". The Emperor laughed out loud. "My dear Greybig" he said at last, "You are indeed a rude scoundrel. You call me Punch in the presence of my orchestra". "Oh! Oh! Oh!" said Greybig. "I didn't mean it like that. It just slipped out without thinking. I beg your pardon". "Well", replied the Emperor, "you are forgiven. You know there are certain people one can never take seriously". "You mean fools?" "Exactly" replied the Emperor. "I have often called you a clown but now you have taken revenge on me. But it makes no difference. I am Punch only so long as I sing. You however will always be a clown *per omnia saecula saeculorum*". When the weather cleared, I performed my first six Ovid symphonies in the Augarten and the last ones in the theatre eight days later. After deducting the considerable costs – besides the copyists I had to pay the 40 members of the orchestra – I was left with three times the cost of my journey there and back.

I was about to pack up my belongings when the actor Stephani the Younger, who was also manager of the German Opera house, asked me on behalf of the management to compose a German opera for the usual fee of 100 ducats. I agreed, Stephani provided the text and six months later my *Doktor und Apotheker* was performed. At the management's request I composed two more German operas and an Italian one over a period of seven months. My three German operas, *Doktor und Apotheker*, *Betrug durch Aberglauben* and *Liebe im Narrenhaus* were well received, *alle stelle* as the Italians say but my Italian opera *Democrito* was a flop.⁹⁹

Before I returned to Silesia in February 1787 I went to the Emperor to thank him. We had a similar conversation only that this time he sought my views about the Italian opera I had seen in Vienna. I told him frankly, praised what I liked and criticised what I didn't. "I think I have a good knowledge of

⁹⁹ The term German Opera is also known as *Singspiel*, an opera with spoken dialogue rather than recitative of which one of the best known is Mozart's *Entführung aus dem Serail*/Abduction from the Seraglio. *Doktor und Apotheker* (Doctor and Apothecary) is by far the best known of Dittersdorf's Singspiele and was first performed in Vienna on 11 July 1786, reportedly earning more plaudits than Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* which had been premiered two months previously. It was also performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London in 1788, albeit in an arrangement by J Storace "with music adapted from Ditters". *Betrug und Aberglauben* (Deception and Superstition) was first performed on 3 October 1786 and *Liebe im Narrenhaus* (Love in the Madhouse) on 12 April 1787. *Democrito* seems to have completely disappeared from the record.

music” he said among other things, “because my judgements are always in tune with yours. When are you leaving?”

Me: The day after tomorrow.

Emperor: (after thinking for a while and pacing back and fore) Can you postpone your departure for eight days?

Me: If Your Majesty commands.

Emperor: Good. Do that. Next Saturday I’ll arrange for your *Apotheker* to be repeated and I think the public would appreciate it if you conducted it yourself once more and announced on the advertisement that you will take your leave of the public by conducting it one last time.

Me: As Your Majesty commands.

Emperor: So, that’s now fixed. I myself will attend and will see you again. Adieu for the time being.

I arranged everything and my opera was performed. The next morning Herr von Horwarth, the accountant for all the theatres gave me a roll of 200 ducats on behalf of the Emperor who generously presented me with all the takings of the performance. On Horwarth’s advice, I hurried to the Emperor just before he was going to Mass to express my gratitude. He kindly received me, conversed with me for more than half an hour and said many flattering things about my serious and comic styles and dismissed me with the words, “Come to Vienna as often as you wish and your business allows. Visit me every time. I shall always be pleased to see you especially as we share the same opinions about music”.¹⁰⁰

Chapter 25

Hard Times in Johannisberg. First signs of gout. My conversation with King Friedrich Wilhelm in Breslau.

On my return to Johannisberg I paid off a goodly part of my debts with the money earned in Vienna but at the Princely Court I encountered far-reaching changes. It had been decided to separate the Bishop’s estates in Austrian Silesia from those in Prussian Silesia and after the Prince Bishop’s death, to transfer them to a religious foundation. But to prevent the estates from neglect during the Bishop’s lifetime, the Imperial Estates director, Baron Kaschnitz, had been appointed as administrator. He took up his post in 1785 and granted the Prince a yearly stipend of 14,000 Fl. as well as consistorial and other fees. Officials swore an oath to the Emperor and their incomes were reduced. I lost a considerable amount, my salary being cut from 2700 Fl. to only 1800 Fl.

While I was in Vienna, the Prince quarrelled with the administration and lodged a complaint with the Court but he was the victim of an appalling injustice....but I shall keep my thoughts to myself. Suffice it to say, the result was that the Prince, instead of receiving his original 14,000 Fl. now received a mere 4000 Fl. a year – an unprecedented reduction. I abstain from making any comment on the matter despite the bitterness in my heart. But that is what happens when – but I must hold my tongue.

The death of King Friedrich II¹⁰¹ occurred soon after this unfortunate verdict for the Prince. He wrote to his successor, Friedrich Wilhelm, asking to be reinstated in his Breslau diocese. The King was not disinclined and referred the matter to Breslau to advise him on how best to proceed. The authorities produced a most servile report in which they said that the Bishop’s reinstatement in itself would present no difficulty but as the revenue from the Bishop’s estates had been appropriated for various state necessities, then his Royal Majesty is kindly requested to identify another source of revenue. It was perfectly obvious that the Breslau authorities did not want to relinquish their administration of

¹⁰⁰ The Emperor had barely three years to live, dying in February 1790 at the age of 48. There is no record of their ever having met again.

¹⁰¹ On 17 August 1786.

the estates – easy to guess why! – and so their wishes prevailed. The King's decision was communicated thus;

...that the reinstatement of the Prince Bishop in the Royal Prussian dominions cannot be acceded to but so that he may not be dismissed from the Royal Throne without some compensation, he is granted a yearly contribution from the sequestered estates in Prussian Silesia equal to that from his estates in Austrian Silesia.

The Prussians, of course, were perfectly aware that this amount was no more than 4000 Fl. so with the income from the estates on our side, the Prince's yearly income was, *in omni et toto* 8000 gulden. The good man was thus forced to economise and some of the higher paid members of the orchestra were dismissed.

Since the orchestra was established in Johannisberg, many amateurs had been trained, both men and women and these included Baroness von Zedlitz, daughter of the late Provincial Governor and the two Baronesses von Tauber who had become very good singers. Many of the previous musicians had been found civil employment and there were also two government officials, von Böhm and Richter as well as a number of the sons and daughters of citizens who were useful for the choir. They all performed without a fee in order to give pleasure to our forlorn Prince, so our orchestra was able to survive. I also did not let up until I had formed a theatrical group, not in the castle but in the municipal firing range. to which the Prince contributed a few hundred gulden from his private purse kept for emergencies.

In order to raise funds to continue our opera performances, I had the idea of giving concerts and charging for entry for the benefit of the municipal Poorhouse and the whole parish. The Superintendent of the Poor Law, a magistrate, and two guards, both solid citizens, collected the money at the box office. After deduction of all costs, the Poorhouse was well provided for. The accounts at year end showed that not only had their needs been met but a surplus of 400 to 500 gulden had been achieved. During this time I also put the finishing touches to several operas, together with those performed in Vienna, all of which received performances in many German venues. But the first signs of an ailment crept up on me which has plagued me ever since. A pain gradually made itself felt in my feet which the Prince's doctor diagnosed as an indication of approaching gout. The cause was as follows.

In the late autumn of 1788 a messenger from General Prince Hohenlohe, future governor of Breslau, arrived with the news that the King wished to dine with him on the occasion of a review of the troops and also attend a concert, to arrange which I was requested to come forthwith to Breslau. Despite my indisposition, I set off that same evening, travelled through the night and arrived in Breslau at ten o'clock the next morning. A cold north wind and rain troubled me so much that a severe pain began to affect my left foot. I did not pay much attention to it and reported to the Prince on arrival who then invited me to lunch during which we discussed the arrangements. Two days later the King arrived and the concert was held that same evening.

Immediately after the first symphony the King approached me and said, "I am much obliged to Prince Hohenlohe that he has so pleasantly surprised me with your presence. I would be glad to hear you play after so many years".

"May it please Your Majesty, but I have not played in public for eight years".

"Well" said the King, "I hope you will do me the favour".

I played and the Monarch was kind enough to say that I played even better than I did ten years ago. He also asked for my four new symphonies, said many complimentary things about them and, with a very courteous nod, took his leave.

At three o'clock the next day I was summoned to the King. "I thank you for yesterday's entertainment and for the four symphonies that the Prince has presented me with in your name".

Me: I hope that Your Majesty's orchestra will perform them to even greater effect.

King: My orchestra is quite good.

Me: So I have heard.

King: I wish you would come to Berlin to convince yourself.

Me: Next year I shall be at Your Majesty's disposition.

King: You wrote some fine, witty music in your *Apotheker*. I enjoyed hearing it in Berlin a few times.

Me: It was my first attempt in the genre.

King: Where do you get all your ideas from?

Me: If I am lucky to have any, they come of their own accord but if I have to work at them, then it's no good.

King: That seems to be the case with K.

Me: Maybe he wrote so much that he has now run out of ideas.

King: I don't think so. His music reveals a degree of *sterilité*. But there's no greater eulogist than himself.¹⁰²

Me: Music is in safe hands when such an illustrious monarch as yourself possesses such informed expertise.

King: I wouldn't say I was an expert but certainly a music lover.¹⁰³

Everybody knew that King Friedrich Wilhelm liked talking about music. I managed to get him to talk even more eloquently with my questions and answers. I told him suitable anecdotes as wittily as I could which made him roar with laughter. I spent more than one and a half hours with him before he dismissed me with the kindest words and reminded me of my promise to come to Berlin.

In the anteroom I met his private secretary, Rietz. "You have spent a long time with His Majesty" he told me, "and have driven away his bad mood today". "Bad mood?" I asked. "The King", he continued, "was very annoyed at this morning's muster parade and ordered some of the staff officers to be confined to barracks. He usually remains in a bad mood all day but judging from his laughter, it sounds as if you have put him in a good mood. When he laughs, everything is forgotten". The he added, "the King has authorised me to present you with a little memento for yesterday's entertainment and symphonies".

It was a magnificent diamond ring of *aqua prima*, worth 300 ducats.

"Oh" I said, "be so kind as to allow me to thank His Majesty in person".

"The King wished to spare you that which is why he asked *me* to give it to you. But I shall thank him on your behalf".

After the King left, I stayed on in Breslau for a few days, enjoying the good life with Prince Hohenlohe and at a number of other addresses in the city. But that cold night journey followed by long days of luxurious indulgence brought on Dr Stolle's diagnosis earlier than expected. On the fourth day I suffered an attack of gout which confined me to bed. For nine days I endured that pain which only those who have suffered from this dreadful condition know and which others cannot imagine. I had to be taken slowly back to Johannisberg in an invalid-carriage as if in a hearse and when I arrived I was again confined to my bed where I languished for five weeks. For a long time I had to hobble about on a stick before I recovered the use of my feet again.¹⁰⁴

During the winter I made preparations for my journey to Berlin by composing six new symphonies and when I heard that the Hereditary Stadhouder of Holland, the King's sister, was planning to come to Berlin at the end of July and that elaborate festivities were being prepared, I decided to choose this as the most auspicious time to come.

¹⁰² The King, or maybe Dittersdorf, does not reveal the identity of K. It could be Johann Christoph Kühnau (1735-1805), a noted hymnologist but my guess would be Johann Philipp Kirnberger (1721-83), music director to Princess Anna Amalia, sister of Frederick the Great. Kirnberger was more of a musicologist and theoretician of music which might be why the King makes reference to his *sterilité*.

¹⁰³ The King in question, Friedrich Wilhelm II, nephew of Frederick the Great, reigned from 1786 to 1797. He was a competent cellist. Beethoven dedicated his two cello sonatas opus 5 to him and Mozart wrote three quartets (K575, K589 and K590) for him although they were not formally dedicated to him.

¹⁰⁴ In Dittersdorf's variety of German, a foot is not distinguished from a leg (both are *Fuß*). He uses the word podagra which I am informed refers to an "acute gouty arthritis at the base of the big toe".

Chapter 26

My journey to Berlin. Reichardt. Professor Engel. The King introduces me to the Queen. My oratorio *Job* is performed in the Opera House. The operas *Medea* and *Protesilao*. Madame Rietz. Theatrical debates. My expectations in Berlin are exceeded.

I took my eldest son to Berlin, partly to acquaint him with the wider world and partly to introduce him to new music, opera and drama. He was then a 15 year old who showed signs of becoming a composer.

The King had gone to meet his sister at the frontier and the entire royal Court had just come to Potsdam. I was advised to write to the King to enquire when I could come to Potsdam but received the answer that I should remain in Berlin until the King would grant me an audience soon after his arrival.

In the meantime I asked Herr Lippert, who had sung the role of Sichel in my *Apotheker* and whom I met here, to introduce me to the royal Kapellmeister Herr Reichardt¹⁰⁵. He was pleased to receive me, treated me very politely and amicably and offered to introduce me to all manner of people. That same evening he took me to meet the King's minister Struensee¹⁰⁶ who invited me to dine not just that evening but I was honoured to be invited to lunch and dinner there more than ten times during my stay.

Reichardt had set Goethe's play *Claudine von Villa Bella*¹⁰⁷ to music for the forthcoming festivities. The noted scholar Professor Engel, director of the German Theatre, allowed me to attend a rehearsal. The music was most attractive. During the rehearsal, Professor Engel joined me in the stalls and the following conversation took place, parts of which may not be without interest.

Engel: Do you know this piece?

Me: Reichardt gave me the text yesterday and I read it through today.

Engel: If only *you* took the trouble to set it to music.

Me: I would never do that.

Engel: Why not?

Me: For many reasons.

Engel: Really? Would you be kind enough to tell me why?

Me: I will give you one reason but no others. I am loath to imitate what others do, least of all such a distinguished man as Herr Reichardt. Musical tournaments are not to my taste and I have no desire to unsaddle anybody.

Engel: Your modesty is praiseworthy but the public are the losers.

Me: The public would not lose anything as far as this piece is concerned because I know that my music would not go down well. I am really sorry that Herr Reichardt has gone to such trouble and composed such beautiful music for this piece.

Engel: Do you mean the orchestra?

Me: Not at all. They are doing their duty.

Engel: The singers?

Me: They even more so.

Engel: So it can only be Reichardt's music which you don't like. You can say what you want.

¹⁰⁵ Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814). Royal Kapellmeister to Frederick the Great from 1775 and his successor until 1791 when illness intervened. He was dismissed in 1794 for showing too much enthusiasm for the French Revolution. Enormously prolific, his output included some 1500 songs, many of them settings of Goethe with whom he was closely acquainted until his republican sympathies led to an estrangement.

¹⁰⁶ Carl August von Struensee (1735-1804) economist and banker, Minister of Customs and Excise.

¹⁰⁷ "Thematically, scenically and atmospherically rich and varied, lyrical, humorous and with a lucid plot....and the most complex stage action in any of Goethe's plays, with musical settings by Seckendorff, Reichardt and Schubert, it deserves to be better known and more often performed than it is". (Boyle, 1992).

Me: Forgive me. The music, as I have said, is so beautiful that I would envy the composer if it were not contrary to my way of thinking.

Engel: Maybe it has something to do with the poet?

I shrugged my shoulders.

Engel: Well, I think I know something about drama and so far I have discovered no fault in this piece. But perhaps you are more perspicacious than me. Pray tell me whether you have found any.

Me: I would wish that everything I have written or will write would be as faultless as this one.

Engel: Well, that's beyond me. You praise the poetry and the music, find no fault with the singers or orchestra but still think the piece will meet with no success.

Me: Unfortunately that is so. But please bear with me until my prediction comes true.¹⁰⁸

I cannot praise Herr Reichardt's kindness and solicitude towards me too highly. He was sensitive to all my wishes, devoted much of his time to me and suggested ten places where I might be invited to lunch or supper so, not to miss any, I was obliged to note them down on my slate. On one of these evenings I was taken to meet Madame Rietz, the King's woman friend¹⁰⁹ and later Countess Lichtenau. She received me warmly and told me she had been ordered by the King to accompany me in her box at all performances in the opera house. She also invited me to lunch or supper every time I came to Charlottenburg.

The King arrived two days later and Reichardt informed me straight away that the King would speak to me at the concert the next evening. He called for me and together we travelled in a royal coach to the Court. Our entry was announced to the King who approached me and kindly engaged me in conversation on many topics. One of the things he said was that he had ordered a performance of, among other pieces, my *Doktor und Apotheker* at the Charlottenburg theatre and that he would be much obliged if I were to take it upon myself to conduct it. As the whole Court began to assemble, he said with condescending friendliness, "Come, let me introduce you to my sister and the Queen". They politely received me and said many kind things.

Of the six symphonies I had sent the King before my arrival in Berlin, one was performed at the beginning and one at the end of the concert. Admittance to all these concerts I attended was a special privilege for me because nobody else was allowed apart from specially invited courtiers. Besides the Court singers and instrumentalists I also heard Princess Friederike, the King's daughter from his first marriage and later Duchess of York¹¹⁰ as well as Princess von Oranien play the fortepiano, the latter rather better than one might expect from such high-born people. The royal musicians, especially the cellist Düport, the Bassoonist Ritter and the horn players Balza (since deceased) and Thürschmid and others achieved the highest standards one would expect from masters of their art. Without eulogising them all, I will simply say that they were entirely worthy members of the royal orchestra.

After I had spent ten or twelve tumultuous days in Berlin, I thought I would organise a performance of my oratorio *Job* for my own benefit before the departure of the Hereditary Stadthouder. Reichardt approved my plan, told me how to go about it and offered me all assistance. On his advice I wrote to the King asking for permission to hire the Court singers and orchestra and suggested two venues, the Garrison Church or the Schloss Church. The King replied the next day granting me

¹⁰⁸ Dittersdorf's ambivalence towards Reichardt's music is interesting. So little of Reichardt's music is recorded but YouTube offers a small selection of songs and a *Concerto a Tre* for flute, oboe, bassoon and string orchestra. It is a curious work, consisting of alternating string passages with solo *ritornelli* which would have sounded old-fashioned at the time. The harmony is unadventurous, the counterpoint elementary and there is no sense of musical development. It reminds one of the naïve painting genre. Dittersdorf did not wish to offend a man who had received him so warmly at the Prussian Court so, ever the diplomat, he conceded its beauty but admitted that it was not to his *Denkungsart*, his way of thinking. The inference is that he thought it inferior to his own music. Posterity seems largely to agree.

¹⁰⁹ *Freundin*. Actually she was the King's mistress.

¹¹⁰ She married Prince Frederick, Duke of York, second son of King George III in 1791 and spent the rest of her life in Weybridge, Surrey, dying in 1820. There is a monument to her memory in the town.

permission and the use of the orchestra but said he would prefer it if I chose the National theatre rather than the two churches.

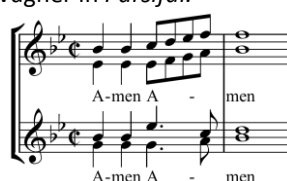
But this theatre was in many respects not big enough to realise my plans so I made bold to write to the King again asking for permission to perform my oratorio in the Royal Opera House. The good King replied that although he had never before granted anyone permission, nor would he do so ever again apart from myself, he would accede to my request and referred me to the *Directeur des Spectacles*, Baron von der Reck whom he had already ordered to give me every assistance.

While I was busy with the preparations with Reichardt's generous assistance, I went to hear the two great Italian operas *Medea* and *Protesilao*, each one twice. I suppose the reader may be curious to know what I thought of them. I will just say for now that both operas had already been performed a year ago and were now being repeated.

The first, *Medea*, had been composed by Herr Naumann¹¹¹, Kapellmeister at the Electoral Court of Saxony. The music was worthy of Naumann – mastery and artistry abundantly evident – but although the composer might have wanted a shorter libretto, the opera still lasted a full six hours. This was an unforgivable error on the part of the librettist who did neither himself nor the audience any favours by subjecting them to such boredom, annoyance and weariness as well as doing scant justice to the composer. Who can possibly listen to six hours of non-stop music, even if it came from the Gods of Olympus? Curious as I was to hear the work, my patience was exhausted after four hours and the last two hours were a torment. I felt as if I were at a wedding breakfast of a rich burgher at which, after consuming twenty courses, suddenly ten more roast dishes were served up. Towards the end I noticed signs of exhaustion and listlessness among the singers and orchestral players and even in such a praiseworthy ensemble, wrong notes which seemed to be due, not to any lack of skill but to sheer revulsion and distaste.

Mme Todi and Signor Concialini, who sang the leading roles, were outstanding. Despite my misgivings, the choruses were sung very well in impeccable Italian. The *Maitre de Ballet*, Herr Lauchery, had distinguished himself by his inventive choreography and all the dancers, among whom only the names of Demoiselle Redtwein (now Mme Cloose) and Demoiselle Meroni I can now recall, were masters of their art. Herr Verona's sets demonstrated his enormous talent, especially in the ballet where the Sibyl vouchsafes Medea a look into the future – the whole ballet was danced behind a veil which was drawn like a curtain over the backdrop so that one viewed the ballet through a thin haze. However, other effects, such as the oxen ploughing the fields and breathing fire from their nostrils were so ridiculous that they would have been out of place even in a Puppet theatre. The dragon guarding the Golden Fleece was a most pathetic sight. Concialini, playing Jason who had to slay the dragon, committed the folly of striking its cardboard belly with the flat of his sword, sounding just like the taps which those comic carousel knights during the bacchanalia at Schlosshof received from the stuffed satyrs. I was so disgusted that I forgot myself and started booing. Mme Rietz turned round and said in her thick Berlin accent, "I too think it's ghastly.

¹¹¹ Johann Gottlieb Naumann (1741-1801) Saxon born, he spent his early years in Italy. His career took him to Stockholm to help King Gustavus III set up the opera house there, Copenhagen as a guest conductor and finally to the Court of Saxony in Dresden as Kapellmeister. He composed some 24 operas (opera seria) and is remembered nowadays for composing the so-called Dresden Amen, used later by Mendelssohn and by Wagner in *Parsifal*.



Tomorrow I'll tell him what a reputable judge thought of it and I'm sure he'll change his act. He's my house friend and listens to my advice".¹¹²

Now to the second opera, *Protesilao*.

The remarkable thing about this opera is that the music of the first act was by Reichardt and the second by Naumann. Everybody in Berlin knew this and thought it was a competition deliberately instigated by the King. But actually the situation was as follows. After Naumann had produced his *Medea* the previous year, the King made enquiries whether he planned to remain in Berlin for another three months during which he might compose the music for *Protesilao* which would be performed on the occasion of the birthday of the reigning Queen. Naumann let the King know that he would be happy to remain in Berlin but that in three months he would only be able to complete half the opera.

Was Naumann playing tricks? Or was his creativity at a low ebb? I find both puzzling. I personally would have satisfied the King's wishes in two months without the slightest effort. I did so in 1786; from the beginning of January to the end of October I wrote five full-scale works, *Job*, *Apotheker*, *Betrug durch Aberglauben*, *Democrito* and *Die Liebe im Narrenhause*. If, like Naumann, I had wanted six months to compose each work, I would have needed three and a half years instead of ten months. Anyway, the King let himself be persuaded and both Kapellmeister worked together as ordered. For the sake of impartiality, they drew lots as to which act they would set and thus Reichardt took on the first act and Naumann the second. When the latter had still not completed the second act, it was thought that Reichardt finished it for him and delivered it sealed and signed. Afterwards, Naumann revised the first act and the whole opera was performed in Berlin a few years later. I cannot comment on the peculiarity of this arrangement because I know nothing about it.

As for the libretto, I will only say that it complemented Calzabigi's¹¹³ *Orfeo* which Gluck set to music, thereby making musical history.

Before the opera began, Madame Rietz said, "I'm curious to know which setting you will prefer'. 'That, Madame" I replied, "is a question I am reluctant to answer because it always means praising one at the expense of the other". "But I must tell you" she said, "that the King himself has asked me for your opinion and I do not doubt that you will be kind enough to gratify him".

Now the gun was really pointed at my head. However, the opera was as lengthy as the other one, thus giving me time to think up an excuse. "Now" said Madame Rietz after the performance was over, "What do you think?".

Me: Reichardt's music is stormy and lively whereas Naumann's is calm and moderate. Both have discharged their duties and done justice to the words".

Mme Rietz: All well and good. But presumably you find one more to your taste than the other?

Me: Not really. It would be premature of me to say that Reichardt is better in the stormy and Naumann in the calmer music because it only seems to be the case.

Mme Rietz: What do you mean by *seems*? Isn't it really the case?

Me: No, Madame. Let us suppose it had been the other way round and each had taken on a different act, would you have known beforehand which composer had set which act?¹¹⁴

Mme Rietz: I admire your discretion but that will not satisfy the King.

Me: I am sorry but I cannot help it. But if both composers had been set the same work, it would have been easier to judge and I could have given my opinion without fear or favour. But you must understand that otherwise my opinion would be premature and presumptuous and I would be guilty of an inexcusable bias.

¹¹² When Mme Rietz, Countess Lichtenau, read this, she took offence. In 1808 she wrote, "Dittersdorf praised my hospitality but did me a disservice in presenting me to the world in this barbarous dialect (*Pöbeldialekt*). In fact I have never spoken like that".

¹¹³ Ranieri Calzabigi (1714-95). Italian poet and librettist who provided the libretti for three of Gluck's so-called "reform" operas, *Orfeo ed Eurydice* (1762), *Alceste* (1767) and *Paride ed Elena* (1770)

¹¹⁴ Literally *wer kann vorher wissen, ob beide Komponisten nicht gleich gut gearbeitet hätten*/how could you know beforehand whether both composers would have worked equally well?

Mme Rietz: (smiling) I see that you are not easily embarrassed because you know how to extricate yourself from tricky situations.

Next day I travelled with Reichardt in a royal coach to Charlottenburg¹¹⁵ where we had been invited to lunch and supper by the afore-mentioned King's favourite. I was told that whenever I dined at Charlottenburg, the King would provide and Madame Rietz had been appointed the Lady of the House. This was a distinction the King rarely granted to others. I found her seated on a couch with a girl of about twelve and in front of her stood a five or six year old boy. "This is my daughter by the King, Countess von der Mark" she said, 'and this is my son by my husband". Soon afterwards two important gentlemen, the King's great favourites, joined us, one of whom was very well known. We strolled in the gardens for a while before the nine of us partook of a meal in an arbour by the Spree river. Eight servants in royal livery waited on us and the dinner service was of solid silver. The royal kitchen and cellar had been ordered to serve us as if the King himself were present.

An Italian opera buffa, *Il Falegname*, was performed in the Charlottenburg theatre but so badly that I wondered how on earth the whole Court was able to sit through three hours of this sorry effort, sung so atrociously.

After the opera, we supped in the King's favourite rooms whenever he was in residence. I was struck by the beauty and evidence of exquisite taste I saw here. There is nothing else in the world which surpasses the magnificence of these state rooms. It was past midnight when Reichardt and I returned to Berlin accompanied by two royal grooms with torches.

The day was now approaching for the performance of my *Apotheker*, to be followed by my *Job* in Charlottenburg. Four days before I had to settle a dispute between Madame Baranius and Demoiselle Hellmuth, neither of whom were willing to give up the role of Rosalie. Knowing the importance theatre people attach to such things, the passions and emotions aroused, the factions and cliques battling it out in theatres and coffee houses, one can well imagine the uproar this dispute gave rise to. Engel sided with Hellmuth who had taken over Baranius' usual role when she was indisposed but Baranius asserted the ancient right of possession and had most of the cast on her side. I was chosen to mediate and, as one might expect, decided in favour of justice and beauty. My decision was generally applauded and my popularity soared.¹¹⁶

At her request, I took her through her part and suggested several improvements to her singing, declamation and acting which she quickly adopted. She played her role with twice as much wit as usual, as was observed in the first rehearsal. This prompted the accomplished actress Madame Unzelmann to ask me for the same favour, for nothing escapes the notice of a person like her.

The theatre in the Orangery was small and the new theatre built for the King was not yet ready so the orchestra had to be reduced to thirty-six players. M. Vachon, the first violinist and leader of the Court orchestra, with whom I was on the friendliest terms, selected the players and my opera was exceptionally well performed. Apart from a few minor slips between choir and orchestra at cadences, I had nothing to criticise. After the rehearsal, the orchestra asked me whether I was satisfied with them. "Gentlemen" I said, "only if you are satisfied with my conducting". This prompted Vachon to say, "*Voilà ce qu'on appelle diriger l'orchestre, sans faire tant de bruit et des grimasses inutiles qui ne servent qu'à barbouiller l'orchestre!*".

As I was satisfied with one rehearsal, I decided to cancel the second one on the next day. Although they all liked the idea, they still asked for one more rehearsal to be on the safe side, so I agreed.

During the performance everybody was fired up with enthusiasm and my satisfaction knew no bounds. Between the first and second acts, the King approached us and said;

"You've made many changes for the better to your opera".

"Not one note" I replied.

"Impossible" said the King.

¹¹⁵ Charlottenburg palace, completed in 1713, was the official residence of the Prussian monarchy although Frederick the Great preferred his own palace, Sanssouci, in Potsdam. The palace was badly damaged in 1943 and risked demolition but was finally saved and restored. It is now open to the public.

¹¹⁶ Original – *Ich war ein charmanter Mann*.

"On my honour!"

"I have heard this opera eight times" he continued, "but today it sounds fresher and more elegant than ever. Why is that?"

"I have to thank your Majesty's incomparable orchestra" I said.

"And your conducting" added the King. He then turned to Vachon and said,

"*M. de Dittersdorf est très content de vous*".

"Ah, Sire" said Vachon, "*sous sa direction nous sommes prêts de le suivre au milieu de l'enfer*".

I cannot pass on without mentioning a little anecdote during the performance. As I said, the performance took place in the Orangery so it was decided to use the gardener's house as a dressing room for the cast. In order to prevent outsiders from intruding, guards were posted at every door used by the players to go on stage. Before the opera began, the theatre director took the cast past the guards who then received strict orders to bar everybody except the cast and other authorised personnel. In the second act, Lippert, singing the role of the medical orderly Sichel, has to dress up as a woman, passed the guards as a man but wanted to return as a woman. "Get back, you shameless strumpet!" yelled the guard and threatened to strike him in the ribs with the butt of his rifle. "Get the hell out of here! We don't need rubbish like you. Go, *allons*". Fortunately the director overheard and intervened. The ungainly actor pulled a face, stroked his moustache and muttered, "Blind and stupid. What was he thinking? A client just escaped from a whorehouse?".

I now come to the performance of my *Job* – but with a delay. All my soloists were ready except Mme Todi who excused herself on the grounds that her chest had suffered from the rehearsals and four performances *di quell'opere eterne*, those endless operas which she quite rightly called them, so that she felt she could not summon up the necessary energy to do justice to my oratorio. Demoiselle Niclas, lead singer of the Margrave of Schwedt, willingly took over and sang excellently.

The manager of the opera house, Herr Gasparini, had no current opera in production so he rearranged the stage into a ballroom in which I placed the set from *Protesilao* which consisted of a magnificent gallery rising gently in a series of steps, stairs and balustrades offering a great *coup d'oeil*. The gallery was decorated with gilded foliage on a white background and perfectly matched the ballroom. It was also large enough to comfortably accommodate more than 300 of the cast. I placed about 80 of them *à plein pied* and the other orchestral players in groups, one above the other on the gallery in a symmetrical pattern, offering a veritable feast for the eyes. I also organised the lighting very effectively; fifteen chandeliers, three with 24 and the others with 18 and 12 candles each; another hundred or so on tables and wall lights between each box in the auditorium with two candles each. The effect was indeed stupendous, but needed 94 pounds of wax candles. The good Reichardt organised the choirs of 80 singers as well as other musicians, apart from the Court orchestra, and did the job so well that my oratorio was performed with an orchestra of some 230 players.

Two rehearsals were needed to bring everything to perfection. But what a shock I got on the eve of the performance when I worked out the total costs. Although I did not have to pay the players of the Court orchestra and a large number of singers, I was still responsible for the rest of the orchestra and the choirs. Each member received one taler for the rehearsal and two for the performance. My expenses were thus;

Orchestra	480 Reichstaler
Copying	230 "
Wax candles	80 "
Ushers, cashier, gratuities, miscellaneous costs, newspaper printers, notices	70 "
	===
	860 "

altogether equivalent to 1290 Fl.

Imagine how nervous I was because it was always uncertain as to how big or small an audience I would attract. I had long since given up any hope of profit; my worry was that I might sustain a loss. But fate smiled on me. Despite my enormous outgoings, I managed to pocket a tidy sum in answer to many good wishes from home. After deducting my travelling expenses and costs in Berlin, altogether 785 Fl. I made a net profit of 2675 gulden from a gross income of 4750 Fl. from the Berlin opera house.

Many people might find this unbelievable. They would say that the Berlin opera house would have to be five times the size of the Viennese Kärntnertor theatre which, when fully booked, would yield at the most 820 Fl. What is more, it has five tiers whereas the Berlin opera house has only three. But all was explained when I said that instead of charging fixed prices for the tickets, I charged 2,3,4,6 and 8 Friedrichs d'or¹¹⁷. The Princess of Oranien alone ordered four tickets and paid 40 Friedrichs d'or, whereby a rather curious incident occurred. On the morning of the performance when crowds were jostling to buy tickets at the box office, a common soldier came up to me and asked for a ticket in his broad local accent and placed a little roll wrapped in paper on the table. "That's 24 four groschen coins, four taler" he said, taking the ticket and turning to go. "Wait, my friend" I said, "you're mistaken. The ticket is only two taler". But he had already disappeared through the door. When I opened the roll, to my astonishment it contained 24 Friedrichs d'or. To this day I have no idea where the money came from. One has to admire the soldier's honesty because the roll was not sealed and nobody has ever asked me whether or not the money was correctly handed over.

It does not behove me to mention the applause with which my oratorio was received nor the kindness and discernment¹¹⁸ of the Berlin critics. The newspapers covered the event in great detail and pronounced the music an artistic triumph – which it was. The next day, as I was dining with an old friend from Vienna days, Colonel Fabian, I was called out to receive a weighty package with a note from the King's treasurer, Rietz, in which he wrote that the contents of the package was a token of appreciation from the King who had so much enjoyed yesterday's performance. It was a large golden snuff-box decorated in blue enamel containing 200 ducats. I was deeply touched to be thus honoured by a King who revered the arts so much and took pleasure in rewarding artists with such generosity and discernment. On the last day of my stay, I was prevailed upon to be his guest for lunch and dinner at Charlottenburg and the royal favourite surpassed herself in attending to my comfort and leaving me in no doubt about the high esteem in which her royal friend held me.¹¹⁹

As I left, she said, "if you ever need anything from the King in future and I can be of assistance, then come to me. It will always be a pleasure for me to do the best I can for you".

Soon after midnight, Reichardt and I returned to Berlin and at half-past one my son and I left in a coach and travelled day and night without sleeping anywhere to Breslau where we arrived on the fourth day.¹²⁰ There I had already organised a performance of my *Job* with an orchestra of 100 players and after deduction of all costs, came away with slightly over 200 taler. I arrived back in Johannisberg with glory and money and was received with happy faces by my family and with friendly, if searching, looks by my creditors.

Chapter 27

The Prince Bishop's illness. My discussion with him.

Johannisberg had lost much of its former liveliness. The Prince Bishop became ever more despondent. He was grieved that where once he gave the orders, he now lived as a pensioner and

¹¹⁷ A gold coin, modelled on the Louis d'or, worth five Reichstalers.

¹¹⁸ *Gütig und nachsichtig*

¹¹⁹ *mich mit einem angenehmen Eindruck von der besonderen Huld ihres königlichen Freundes zu entlassen.*

¹²⁰ 200 years later I did exactly the same journey by road – in four hours!

watched helplessly as the incomes of his staff kept being reduced and outsiders appointed to offices and the hunt without his say. He had tried several times to appeal to the Emperor Joseph II to regain control of his estates but to no avail.

The Emperor died and the Prince turned to Emperor Leopold. Against all expectations, the monarch restored the control of his properties to him. The good news arrived from Vienna early one morning by courier and on the same day the Prince gave a sumptuous banquet and reinstated all his former staff at their previous salaries and functions.

But his ordeals had undermined his health and he became very ill with typhus¹²¹. His personal doctor, Stolle, although convinced he could be cured, agreed to our demand to summon several doctors to form a *consilium medicum*, all six of whom, excluding Stolle, thought his illness was incurable. But Stolle did not give up hope and he was proved right. The medicine prescribed unanimously by the six doctors made the Prince weaker and weaker. Stolle called us together and told us that the Prince would die unless we allowed him to treat the patient as he thought best. We agreed, and by the third day he was already showing signs of recovery and in a further five days was considered out of danger. But he was still afflicted with exhaustion and a weakness in his legs so that he could no longer walk but had to be carried by two people. Stolle thus kept him alive for nearly four years.

“What worries me most of all”, the worthy doctor once confided to me, “is that while the Prince lives for a few years longer, his mental capacities might gradually deteriorate to such an extent that he will not be able to discharge his domestic or governmental duties. He will not only lose his appetite for amusements to cheer him up, such as music, but he might become senile. Then there is the danger that certain people around him might take advantage and commit him to acts of folly. As long as the Provincial Governor (*Landeshauptmann*), your brother-in-law President Gambsberg and yourself attend him, there is little danger. But the former’s lungs are such that he will not survive three months and Gambsberg is far too busy so you are the only one on whose support I can rely”. Never has a prophet spoken a truer word than the good doctor. The Governor died in due course and despite the Prince’s promise to appoint me to the more lucrative post of *Amtshauptmann* of Johannisberg, somebody else persuaded the Prince under false pretences to appoint him and snatched it away from me.

Even before the Governor was buried, I noticed a change in the Prince who, for many years, had shared his innermost secrets with me. He suddenly became cool and indifferent towards me. It was quite obvious to me and every well-wisher that we had been excluded from the Prince’s confidence by others who desired to exploit his weakness for their own ends. Gambsberg and I lodged complaints but a squalid clique conspired against us who dictated to the Prince how he should answer us. Their motto was; do not dare to offer unsolicited advice nor appear without being summoned!

A major strategy of their plot was to deprive him of anything which would cheer him up and keep him in constant fear of death in order to distract his attention from their despicable machinations. They were able to convince him that he was hourly in danger of dying of a stroke. This made him so fearful that he indeed started to become senile.

All this brought on an attack of gout but with Stolle’s help I was able to walk with a stick after fourteen days. During his daily visits to me, he told me all the mischief being played on the Prince. “Go up to the castle”, he said, “and talk to the Prince. He has always had confidence in you. Tell him the truth to his face. Perhaps it will shake him up”.

“What if he treats me badly?”

“Just keep trying”.

I decided to do so.

I knew from long experience that to attract the Prince’s attention, one had to speak to him in a very special way. During the evenings up at the castle, music had given way to gambling¹²² at two or more

¹²¹ *Faulfieber*

¹²² *Kommerzspiele*

tables and the Prince, seated in a sedan chair, would be carried in to watch. I entered on my stick and limped straight to the Prince's chair. Everybody, especially that fine gentleman¹²³ playing tarok, stopped what they were doing and stared. The following conversation then took place between me and the Prince.

Prince: What do you want? I have not summoned you.

Me: (in a firm and serious tone of voice). It is bad enough that Your Highness has not summoned me and treated me so disdainfully at a time when you need me most. (To a footman behind the Prince's chair). Hey, you, blockhead! Stop gawping. Don't you see I can hardly stand? Bring me a chair. (The footman brought a chair). There. Right next to the Prince. (I sat down).

Prince: You are being extremely disrespectful.

Me: If that person over there is allowed to sit, then I have ten times his right to do so.

Prince: Are you being impertinent?

Me: God forbid! How could that be possible! But I am told that your Highness's days are numbered and so I thought to myself that he might die before I could be reconciled to him. So I decided to drag myself here as best I could to tell your Highness that I forgive you for everything so that you will not suffer in the next life.

Prince: (deeply shaken) What? Forgive me? What have I done to you?

Me: (coldly) I have not come to reproach your Highness, but (looking at him full in the face) as I see, you still have some years to live. (To the footman) Bring me some light from the table. Look into my eyes your Highness. (Pause) Your eyes are bright, your complexion fresh, your breathing easy. How is your appetite, may I ask?

Prince: I can eat.

Me: And sleeping?

Prince: About the same.

Me: So, where on earth is the danger of death?

Prince: Well, a stroke can happen when you least expect it.

Me: Your Highness is as far from a stroke as I am from Novaya Zemlya.

Prince: How do you know?

Me: From experience. Prince Hildburghausen has had the same illness as yours for nineteen years. He can neither walk nor stand but he's still alive, bright and cheerful in his 88th year.

Prince: (sighing) Ah, that will not be my lot.

Me: Why not?

Prince: You think so?

Me: Certainly, if your Highness changes your way of life for at the moment you are holding the door wide open to death when it should be locked and bolted against it.

Prince: But what should I do?

Me: Liven yourself up. If I may say so, fear is unmanly and childish and your Highness is an intelligent man. People only have to fear strokes if their blood is thick and that you most certainly do not have. But it *will* thicken if you sit there day after day like a broody hen hatching out silly ideas, one after another. That's what thickens the blood – liveliness thins it out.

Prince: How should I cheer myself up?

Me: That's a question your Highness can answer for himself.

Prince: But I'd like your suggestions.

Me: Well, your Highness must do exactly the opposite of what you are now told to do

Prince: And what would that be?

Me: Firstly, retain for at least the time being your princely and episcopal duties. Herr von Gambsberg can take care of the former and the latter your spiritual advisors. Secondly, entrust the management of your household, which has caused you endless trouble, to somebody honest.....

Prince: That would be a task for you.

¹²³ *Jener saubere Herr*. I think Dittersdorf is being ironic as he sees the "gentleman" in question as the source of all the Prince's woes.

Me: I have another plan in mind.

Prince: Which is?

Me: To be your Highness's mentor, purely out of love, provided you promise to accept everything I advise for the better instead of treating me with callousness and contempt.

Prince: Then you would have to be constantly in my presence.

Me: With all my heart.

Prince: Then you could take over the management of the household.

Me: So be it – but on the explicit understanding that I have *plein pouvoir*.

Prince: That you shall have.

Me: And thirdly, your Highness must faithfully follow the instructions of your worthy doctor, Stolle, who has saved your life and will keep you alive much longer.

Prince: Gladly – with all my heart.

Me: As far as entertainment is concerned for your Highness's distraction, there is much to discuss for I have many things *in petto* which will most certainly appeal to you.

I knew the Prince well enough to predict that my mention of *in petto* would arouse his curiosity. I was sure that at least as long as I would not reveal my secret, he would not allow himself to be led astray so I stood up and said; "I am convalescing so if your Highness permits....."

Prince: Oh please stay. Like the Good Samaritan, you have poured balm into my wounds.

Me: (after sitting down again) Why is there no music today?

Prince: There hasn't been any for many days now.

Me: That's bad. But why not?

Prince: It just makes me even sadder

Me: (smiling) I wouldn't have thought so. On the contrary, it would cheer you up.

Prince: Well, if you think so. I'll take your advice. From tomorrow there will be music every evening, just as before.

Me: God speaks through you. Everything will be fine. (I took my leave).

Prince: When will you come again?

Me: If the weather is like today, I'll come tomorrow and will bring a new symphony.

I kissed the Prince's hand and he dismissed me very courteously.

My Farewell.

So I had now taken it upon myself to be constantly at the Prince's side. Every evening after I had accompanied him to his bedroom after supper, I had to promise to be at the castle the next morning at eight o'clock and so it went on, day after day.

During this time I noticed how clumsily and awkwardly his servants, accustomed to idleness, attempted to lift, carry and lead the Prince who could not walk one step unaided. I therefore showed them a variety of different methods to help the Prince and themselves at the same time. In general I observed that, despite his numerous retinue, the Prince was badly served. Sometimes the ante-room was full of these wastrels but whenever one was needed, none of them were to be seen or heard. I frequently admonished them but all to no avail so one day I called them all together and said, "as my mild words have hitherto had no effect, I shall now crack the whip. Every day two of you will take turns to attend the Prince for 24 hours and sleep in the ante-chamber. There are eight of you so your turn of duty will be every five days while everybody else will wait at table, without exception. If any of you fail to appear, I shall deduct one gulden from his salary and donate it to the Poorhouse". I carried this threat out with a couple of slack cleaners because dust lay thickly on the stoves in the Prince's bedroom and dayroom, quite apart from a general untidiness. Order was now restored in the castle and that pleased the Prince very much. However, I had made many enemies amongst those scoundrels – but I ignored them.

One evening the weather was so stormy that the Prince said I should spend the night at the castle and he would have a bed set up for me next to his bedroom. This I did and when the Prince retired, I sat by him in an armchair and talked to him until he fell asleep. He usually woke up around 3 o'clock in the morning, was helped to turn over and always remained awake for half an hour until he slept again until about 8 o'clock. This is what happened that night. Hearing in my room that he was awake, I put on my dressing-gown, went to his bedside and waited until he fell asleep again. He took so much pleasure in this that he talked me into spending the night with him and eventually it became routine. In short, well-intentioned fool that I was, I spent two years and a month up at the castle which was so uncomfortable for me that it was largely the source of my current health problems, not only ruining it in my 54th year but contributing to the wretched situation I now find myself in, ill and destitute.

The endless sitting, the lack of exercise and the disturbed nights became extremely irksome after barely six months but as I had freely offered to do so, I wanted to see it through as long as I possibly could. But after 25 months I suffered a most severe attack of haemorrhoids and had to return home to recover my health. That was just what my enemies were waiting for. During my absence the notorious N bribed one of the Prince's valets and various lackeys the Prince tolerated, to turn against me. I could name all these scoundrels but I have no desire to sully the pages of my life story in which so many great and noble names appear.

This despicable plot undermined my position and aroused the Prince's suspicions towards me so that on 7 April 1794 I received notice banning me from the castle for ever and with orders to go with bag and baggage to Freiwaldau to take up my official position there within eight days. I would have liked to reveal the underhand way in which my enemies impugned my honesty in the Prince's eyes were it not for the fact that it would have exposed the late Prince to the most dishonourable scandal. I will thus draw a veil over the matter. But I cannot refrain from adding that I have proved my innocence at the Imperial Court itself by means of a Court decree which has acquitted me from any suspicion of wrongdoing as well as making me adequate amends.¹²⁴ I treasure this decree like gold and am prepared to show the original to anybody who asks. Is it any wonder that so many slights and indignities and *pathemata animi*¹²⁵ have caused the breakdown of my health?

My illness and thus my woes began at the end of October 1794 and since then every hour has been a torment. Despite all the efforts of the doctors to induce my gout so that it could run its natural course, none have succeeded, even after five years.

The Prince died on 5 January 1795. An imperial administration took over with the intention of reclaiming the imperial estates from the Breslau bishopric but the King of Prussia intervened and took over the bishopric himself. Lengthy negotiations ensued between the two Courts before it was agreed that the estates would remain, as before, with the bishopric.

As Prince Joseph von Hohenlohe-Bartenstein had been appointed coadjutor before the death of the late Prince, he now became the new Bishop of Breslau. As is usually and everywhere the case, he had his own retainers to care for which meant that I, my brother-in-law and a few elderly officials were all pensioned off.

Despite my 26 years of service, I received a yearly pension of only 333 taler and 8 groschen (500 Gulden). My brother-in-law, von Gambsberg, who had served the bishopric for more than 40 years, received the same. The good man died six months ago and his wife, my sister, now receives a paltry 133 taler and 8 groschen.

Since that painful time of my life, my health has deteriorated to such an extent that I cannot walk and have to be carried from my bed to my armchair and back again. Doctors, medicines and three sojourns at spas (Ullersdorf, Landeck and Teschen)¹²⁶ have used up all my savings so that when one

¹²⁴ *Hinlängliche Genugtuung*

¹²⁵ Sufferings of the soul

¹²⁶ These spas are still in business, now called, respectively, Velke Losiny, near Olomouc, Czech Republic, Ladek-Zdrój, Poland and Cieszyn, Poland.

of the most renowned doctors advised me to try the spa at Baden near Vienna, I could not afford it and with a sigh contemplated my imminent end.

Ignaz Freiherr von Stillfried heard from a third person about my desperate situation and quite unexpectedly I received this consoling letter from him.

“I have heard about your sad predicament. On my estate which I bought in Bohemia I have three houses. Come with your family into my arms. I cannot allow you all to starve and together we shall see out the remainder of our days”.

I joyously accepted this humanitarian offer and threw myself and my family (my wife, two sons and a daughter) into the arms of this most generous friend. God knows that if I had not found this benefactor, I would have perished of poverty and distress and my family....dear God, who can tell? For nearly two years I have now been in Bohemia living on Stillfried's estate at Rothlotta, Tabor district near Neuhaus¹²⁷. Although we have free accommodation, in all other respects I am a beggar. From my pension I have to pay annually in cash;

Mortgage interest	81 Fl.
War Tax	60 Fl.
House and ground rent	9 Fl.
A servant who has to lift and carry me (with my son's help) and spend the night near me more often awake than asleep.	120 Fl.
A maidservant's wages	36 Fl.
Laundry	45 Fl.
Total	351 Fl.

which leaves me with 149 Fl. I leave you to judge how I can possibly afford to clothe five people with this amount as well as pay for other small but necessary items. My valuables disappear, one by one, for a third or even less of what they are really worth. And what will happen when they have all gone?

Over the past five years I have exercised my spiritual and mental energies – the former, praise God, still intact – and produced a considerable body of new works, operas, symphonies and a large number of pieces for the fortepiano. They were all advertised three months ago in the Leipzig *Musikalische Zeitung* but, alas, there have been no takers for any of them although I offer good value for a fair price.¹²⁸

I revere my beloved German nation but when it comes for appeals for help, they fall on deaf ears. My name and works are well known throughout Europe so I might conclude that I have given pleasure to half a million people. If only each one would donate one single groschen to me, or rather my family, for it would be of no more use to me, what a trifle it would be for the giver but what a boon it would be for the bereaved and wretched family of a man who, unlike the man in the Bible, did not bury his talent.

Dear Reader – do not think I have written the above to beg for alms. I shall probably be no more when this little book reaches you. But if anyone wishes to do a good deed for my family after the destruction of my ramshackle dwelling, may he receive his reward in heaven.

¹²⁷ Rothlotta, now called Cervena Lhotá is a picturesque Renaissance castle in southern Bohemia near Jindrichuv Hradec (Neuhaus). It is open to the public and has become a major attraction.

¹²⁸ Indeed, there was a remarkable outpouring of music in these final, painful years. According to the Krebs catalogue, six sonatas for fortepiano, 4 hands, 12 sonatas for fortepiano, 2 hands, several of them arrangements of his instrumental works plus a dozen or so operas.

I am honest enough to admit that I have been doubly responsible for bringing unhappiness on my family, firstly by my poverty and secondly by my illness. My poverty may be partly excused because through no fault of my own, I had depended on a pension after 26 years of service which turned out to be far too inadequate and in the meantime my savings had ended up in the pockets of doctors, the vaults of the apothecaries and in health spas – all to no effect. But on the other hand, my foolishness in neglecting my health is inexcusable, all the more so because nature endowed me with a strong and robust constitution. Alas, alas, I have to echo the words of Horace;

*Quae mens est hodie, cur eadem non puero fuit?
Vel cur his animis incolumes non redeunt genae?*¹²⁹

EPILOGUE

During my research for the translation of Dittersdorf's memoirs, I came across Carl Krebs's book entitled *Dittersdorfiana*, published in Berlin in 1900. The onward march of modern digitalisation of books long out of print meant that I was able to download a copy from Harvard university library for free. Carl Krebs (1857-1937) was a Berlin music historian and critic and did for Dittersdorf what Köchel did for Mozart and Kirkpatrick for Domenico Scarlatti – compile a catalogue of all the composer's works that he could trace and identify, 341 in all. Some have been published, many still remain in manuscript in a wide variety of locations and some are, very probably, lost.

Krebs comments on the autobiography, corrects a few minor chronological errors and provides reviews and critical notices of performances of the music during the composer's lifetime. He also informs us about what happened to the composer's family after his death. Dittersdorf mentions that his family consisted of two sons and a daughter. However, the youngest son, also Carl von Dittersdorf, says that there were in fact three sons and two daughters in the family. Krebs was only able to find details of this youngest son. Born in 1793, he was ordained in 1819 and became a priest at Goldberg in Silesia (now called Żłotoryja, Poland). He then became professor of Pastoral Theology at the Lyceum Hosiana and finally a canon at Frauenburg (now called Frombork, Poland) where he died in 1851. Of the daughters, one of them, Anne Marie, married her father's benefactor, Ignaz von Stillfried when she was 17 (and he 56) but died still young and childless in Vienna, date unknown.

Krebs also provides us with a contemporary portrait of Dittersdorf published in a Berlin chronicle in 1788. The portrait is somewhat idealised and written in the flowery prose style of the time. This is my English version;

"Apart from his great musical talent, Dittersdorf possesses the most honest and upright character. Foreign to his nature is any overweening artistic pride which has elsewhere become fashionable. He treats everyone with genuine candour and openness. He hates boasting and idle chatter. He is a friend to everybody who means well. He is the soul of

¹²⁹ Whose reflection is it today? Why was it not the same in youth? Why do these cheeks not return with character unchanged? Horace Odes IV. 10.

modesty (*aus sich macht er nichts*) but if necessary he can act decisively. He speaks very respectfully of other composers and conceals their shortcomings under the cloak of friendship. He encourages would-be composers and accepts any reasonable advice from any quarter. Whenever he speaks to poets and scholars who desire to work with him, he is able to give them many and varied suggestions. There is no danger that the source of his musical inspiration will ever dry up. His intellectual distinction, his genial disposition, his profound insight into the human heart and his social poise make this worthy composer even more likable and attractive”.

Dittersdorf died on 24 October 1799, two days, it is said, after finishing the dictation of his life story. He was interred two days later in the churchyard of the little town of Dešná in southern Bohemia, just a few kilometres north of the Austrian border crossing at Oberthürnau. More than two centuries after his death, his grave is still kept in good order. A recent photograph of it was taken by somebody of the name of Hatlik and posted on the internet at http://commons.wikipedia.org/File%3ADitters_von_Dittersdorf_Grab.jpg