



Mozarthaush Vienna

“What we are not allowed to say these days, we’ll have to sing” – 225 years of Figaro at Mozarthaush Vienna

28 January to 6 June 2010

“What may not be said today is sung – Figaro’s 225th anniversary at Mozarthaush Vienna“ is the title of this years’ first special exhibition which will be on view at Mozarthaush Vienna from 28 January to 6 June 2010. At Domgasse 5, today’s Mozarthaush Vienna, the composer lived from 1784 to 1787. The exhibition focuses on Mozart’s famous musical comedy “The Marriage of Figaro“ KV 492 which was written here. The composition of the opera buffa in four acts with libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte was started here in October 1785 and dated 29 April 1786.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is from the Neunkirchen City Archive: a historically interesting copy of the score to Figaro in German by Christian August Vulpius, which was published by “Hofmusicus Simrock in Bonn”. The title sheet says: “Die Hochzeit des Figaro eine Operette in 4 aufzügen Die Musik von W: A. Mozart. bei Hofmusicus Simrock in Bonn”. Added in different handwriting is “umb 15 Taler von Constanze Mozart. F. J. H. Comte de Walsegg 1796”, indicating that this edition was probably owned by Constanze Mozart and sold by her to Franz Graf Wallsegg zu Stuppach, the “anonymous” commissioner of Mozart’s requiem mass KV 626. The exhibition at Mozarthaush Vienna takes a closer look at the music historical context in which the Figaro score was written.

The exhibition will be on view from 28 January to 6 June 2010; admission is included in the regular ticket price. Mozarthaush Vienna (A-1010 Vienna, Domgasse 5), which is part of the culture cluster of Wien Holding, is open daily from 10 am to 7 pm.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is a score of Wolfgang Amadé Mozart’s opera “The Marriage of Figaro“ KV 492, in German language, consisting of Acts I and II (Acts III and IV will not be on view). The title sheet says: Die Hochzeit des Figaro eine Operette in 4 aufzügen Die Musik von W: A. Mozart. Bei Hofmusicus Simrock in Bonn. [added later in different handwriting] umb 15 Taler von Constanze Mozart. F. J. H. Comte de Wallsegg 1796”

The word “umb” is archaic but was still in use in the early nineteenth century. Taler were in circulation in Salzburg and particularly in Germany. Constanze Mozart (1762–1842) spent most of the time in 1796 as a singer in Germany (Hamburg, Leipzig, Dresden) and in Austria outside Vienna (Linz and Graz). Franz Graf Wallsegg zu Stuppach (1763–1827) owned a house on Hoher Markt no. 522 in Vienna in which Michael Puchberg (1741–1822), recipient of the “begging letters” from Mozart, also lived. He married Anna Prenner, Edle von Flammberg (c. 1770 1791 Stuppach). In July 1791 Wallsegg commissioned Mozart to compose a requiem mass (Requiem in D minor KV 626) in memory of his young wife. Because of the premature death of the composer on 5 December 1791 the requiem remained unfinished and was performed by the count himself at Neukloster Abbey in Wiener Neustadt on 14 December 1793. Wallsegg and his wife were buried in 1827 in the family crypt in Schottwien.

Nicolaus Simrock (1751–1832) was already running a business selling sheet music and instruments in 1780. In 1793 he founded a highly reputed music publishing company with its own printing works, which was transferred to Berlin in 1870. Simrock published first editions of Mozart’s works (KV 225a, 384, 468, 492, 620) and also many early editions. He was a close friend of the young Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) and published many of his compositions.

Next to a portrait of Constanze Mozart (1762-1842) from the Archive of the International Mozarteum Foundation, which is a reproduction of an oil painting by the Danish artist Hans Hansen (1769–1828) there is a taler with a portrait of Sigismund III, Graf von Schrattenbach (1698–1771), archbishop of Salzburg, 1760, and a facsimile of the autograph of W. A. Mozart's opera "The Marriage of Figaro" KV 492, open: Duetto per il Soprano e Basso (Conte and Contessa): Esci ormai garzon malnato (act II, scene 6, no. 16, finale). The autograph is to be found today in the Music Department with Mendelssohn Archive of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, (Acts I and II) and the Music Department of Biblioteka Jagiellonska in Krakow (Acts III and IV). The Sinfonia and Acts I and II cover 163 sheets with 322 written pages and four blank ones. Acts III and IV cover 139 sheets with 268 written pages and ten blank ones, all with twelve lines of music.

Portraits of Franz Anton Leitgeb (c. 1747-1812) and Anna Maria Margarethe von Rizzi (1762-1821) as well as silhouette portraits of Franz Graf Wallsegg (1763-1827) and his father Franz Joseph Graf Wallsegg (1733-1786) illustrate the environment of the persons involved in the history of this copy of the score. Franz Anton Leitgeb was the steward of Franz Graf Wallsegg zu Stuppach. He arranged the commissioning of the requiem with Mozart. According to older sources he is the messenger who brought the letter commissioning the requiem to Mozart in July 1791 and whom Mozart described as a strange apparition. This figure resembles the description by the well-known Austrian writer Franz Grillparzer who remembers Leitgeb as an old man. "A tall gaunt man dressed in grey with a serious expression, a striking appearance apt to make a daunting impression." This is how the description "the grey messenger" arose. Leitgeb played a number of instruments and was a member of the count's orchestra. During his lifetime he was connected to Stuppach Palace and its master through music, a tradition that was continued by his son Johann Leitgeb. Anna Maria Margarethe von Rizzi married Franz Anton Leitgeb in 1779. She arrived in Schottwien with her husband and three small sons around 1787. Her second son Johann later took over from his father as steward of Wallsegg's estate. As a long-serving member of the orchestra in Stuppach Palace he was familiar with the count's musical portfolio. The silhouette portraits of Franz Graf Wallsegg and his father Franz Joseph Graf Wallsegg are part of the album "Collection de l'illustre noblesse de Vienne, d'Hongrie, et de Prague, contenant 1024. Silouettes dessinées et dédiées a la meme par François Gonord suivie d'une idée sur la phisionomie". The silhouettes of the two are often confused today.

One of the exhibited manuscripts reveals a particular passion of Franz Graf Wallsegg who maintained a magnificent court at Stuppach Palace near Gloggnitz and regularly put on chamber music soirées at which the count himself played either cello or flute. These events formed the musical background to the life of a landed nobleman. He was a music enthusiast and would-be composer and would pass off works by other composers as his own simply by pasting over the author's name, possibly as a form of guessing game without any deeper significance. The title page of the quartet for flute, violin, viola and cello no. 1 by François Devienne is seen here with the name expunged by Franz Graf Wallsegg.