

Catherine Sprague

Mozart and Vesuvius Land



2011



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Introduzione

Chi è Catherine Sprague

Catherine Sprague è una famosa ricercatrice sul compositore di Mozart, e fornisce attualmente lezioni e presentazioni in tutto lo stato del New Jersey negli Stati Uniti. È una pianista che ha studiato con il maestro russo, Malvina Potop, nel New Jersey. Ha studiato musica e psicologia al Mount Holyoke College di South Hadley, Massachusetts e all'Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. Attualmente sta lavorando alla realizzazione di un libro su Mozart che raccoglie le esperienze musicali e culturali, durante gli anni prodigio, tra cui anche le visite del giovane compositore in tutta Europa (e, Naturalmente, Italia), così come la musica che ha scritto durante gli anni della prima metà della sua vita. Il libro dovrebbe essere pubblicato nel 2012 e sarà caratterizzato da centinaia di immagini di recente scoperta che mostrano luoghi di spettacolo, mecenati, cantanti e musicisti e scene speciali relative alla sua vita. Ci sarà un'ampia sezione che copre la sua permanenza a Napoli, 1770. Il Dr. William Cowdery, della Cornell University, è un co-editore del libro.

La musica per pianoforte di Mozart è stata la spinta principale alla base delle indagini della Sprague nella vita di Mozart. Ha tutte le ricerche degli archivi di Parigi, Londra, Lione, Ginevra, Verona, Salisburgo, Praga, Londra e molte altre città per individuare le immagini di cantanti di Mozart, come Anna de Amicis, per esempio, che ha cantato il ruolo di primadonna in "Lucio Silla", una delle opere di Mozart scritte in Italia, 1773. Mozart ha dato centinaia di concerti nei suoi primi anni, ma alcuni di questi siti non sono mai stati ascoltati e visti prima, semplicemente perché non esistono più. Ma, attraverso la ricerca negli archivi, alcuni di questi siti come apparivano in tempo di Mozart sarà ora possibile rivisitare questa straordinaria esperienza.

Mozart e suo padre è venuto a Napoli perché Napoli operistica era allora di grande importanza nella sua vita. Inoltre, il bellissimo paesaggio e soprattutto il Vesuvio sono stati il punto più alto di viaggiatori durante il "Grand Tour". Mozart in un suo scritto così "parla" a sua sorella Nannerl: "il Vesuvio sta fumando furiosamente" dimostrando così, anche un grande interesse per questa terra.

C.S.

2011

1. **Of Mozart you have for many years studied not only his unparalleled musical achievements, but also followed his biographical career in search of the traces and documents relative to his stay in Italy and in particular in the Land of Vesuvius. Can you tell us first of all how your encounter with the great musician took place?**

When I think back on my earlier experiences with the music of Mozart, certain memories and experiences no doubt played a role in later on developing a strong interest the composer. There are vivid memories of studying Mozart's piano works written for four hands, known as piano duets, the very same ones that Mozart played with his older sister, Nannerl. These were compositions providing domestic music-making entertainment to both the listener and performer. They were written over the span of Mozart's life (1756-1791), including both his Salzburg and Vienna years. My older brother took the lower or bass part and I played the upper part, similar to Mozart and his sister. We would laugh at the playful manner of the music and even more so when mistakes were made. Mozart's piano duets show that he had fully assimilated the *galant* style so popular in his day, and which had a ready market for the 18th century public and performers.

A wonderful family portrait shows Mozart and his sister (her hair à la mode, in the French style) playing this very sort or type of composition. One can see from the portrait that Mozart's right hand is crossing over his sister's left hand, reflecting an actual moment in at least one of the works (whose authenticity as one of Mozart's works, however, is in doubt). The mother, Anna Maria, appears in an oval portrait on the wall. Her death in Paris, 1778, two years prior to this painting, is a reminder of a string of unfortunate events during Mozart's tour of Munich, Mannheim and Paris which strained family relations to the breaking point.



Leopold Mozart with his son and daughter at the keyboard, painted by Johann Nepomuk della Croce, 1780/1, Salzburg.

Other memories were music classes at the Longy School in Cambridge, Massachusetts where some of Mozart's ensemble music was played. Mozart's music came off sounding very badly if not done with the greatest precision. A few years later at college, a music professor decided to try a certain trick on the class using music of Mozart. No one knew the identity of the composer and the music turned out to be the opening movement of the famous Requiem (K. 626), Mozart's last work. In any case, we were taken aback by the sad and tragic notes of the basset horns and the persistent syncopations or off-beat rhythms. It all sounded so eerie, but baroque, to many of us. The lesson was that Mozart could assimilate most any style of music, while making it highly original.

Then about eight years ago, I took some piano lessons with a Russian master in New Jersey and studied some Mozart sonatas. I decided to read up on Mozart's life and within the space of a year, was engulfed in a massive research project of my own. But reading about Mozart is complicated, if one cares to try to learn the truth, as well as how music was perceived and understood in Mozart's era. Concerning the facts of Mozart's life, they are fairly well documented, but the spin of the basic facts can often distort the facts themselves. I have had the pleasure, though, of making contact with hundreds of people throughout Europe and the United States, such as with Aniello Langella of Naples, who assisted me with issues connected with Sir William Hamilton's villa near Vesuvius.

Mozart's trips to Italy captured my attention for a number of reasons. While in Milan on his last trip and at the age seventeen, he wrote his famous piece, "Exultate Jubilate", a great favorite of mine. He also studied with some masters in Italy. Who were they and what did Mozart learn? I wondered what he thought of Italy and how he was received by the land where so much of classical music originated. And, Mozart's first letters were sent from Italy, intended for his sister and his mother, containing some zany and preposterous thoughts and words. One detail I had to know: how close to Vesuvius did Mozart actually come, since the volcano was a main item of attraction and certainly would have captured his imagination.

2. As a child Mozart is said to have lived in the shadow of his father. Can you tell us something on how this relationship was being lived?

Mozart's father, Leopold Mozart (1719-1787), was an excellent mentor, teacher, and manager of his son, so much so that a great deal of Mozart's early success and creative development can be credited to him. In the year of Mozart's birth, 1756, Leopold's teaching manual on the violin entitled, *A Treatise on the Fundamentals of Violin Playing*, was published in Augsburg, Germany, Leopold's birthplace, and brought him a certain level of fame, independent of his son. Leopold was a good and competent composer, though lacking in the originality of his son. He held the position of the Vice-Kapellmeister (second highest position) of the Salzburg court musical establishment, earning enough to support a family of four in a comfortable though very modest lifestyle. A university education in Salzburg and earlier education in Augsburg had broadened his interests beyond music into the realms of science, literature, art, history and geography. In short, Mozart was very fortunate to have such a father as his teacher, and it comes as no surprise that he used to say, "Next to God, comes Papa".

Early on, as Leopold saw his son's unusual talent begin to manifest itself, he devoted more and more of his energy and time to developing Wolfgang's talent. He had reasoned that since God had permitted this prodigy to be born in Salzburg, it was his duty and obligation to further his son's obvious god-given talent. When Mozart was only six years old, Leopold brought him to Vienna to play before the Empress and many of the prominent music loving nobility there. He then organized a lengthy tour to Paris, London, The Hague, and Switzerland (1763-1766). This tour lasted over three and a half years.

But, Leopold knew that Italy was the main haven for music, and especially for opera, the music by which composers earned their greatest fame and fortune. He planned an initial tour to Italy (roughly 1770 – March 1771), out of which grew two more tours (Aug.1771-Dec, 1771) and (Oct. 1772-Mar.1773). The bond between father and son was very close and it would seem that they were practically inseparable. They collaborated on compositions together and Mozart's views about musicians and music in many respects mirrored those of his father. Mozart's early works show strong resemblances to his father's works and they have often been confused with one another. This strong and impressive team approach seemed to work over many years and serve them both quite well.

Leopold began to pin his family's future and fortune (including Nannerl's marriage prospects) on the success of his son, who he reasoned, could obtain a lucrative post elsewhere. The family had come to dislike Salzburg. To accomplish this pursuit, Leopold micro-managed his son's thoughts, words and deeds over a long stretch of time, because he did not think his son was mature enough to carry out the main goal, or the so-called 'Family Compact' or understanding. Leopold was a careful planner, by nature, whereas Mozart tended to be more impulsive. These contrasting personalities were bound to collide at some point and as Mozart matured and grew older, the troubles were unavoidable.

During a trip in 1777 that Mozart took to find a more suitable position (part of the plan to improve the family's lot) and which was 'chaperoned' by his mother, Leopold showed a relentless control over his son's every actions in Munich, Mannheim and Paris. Letter after letter was sent to Mozart, sometimes with good advice, but often with words designed to increase his son's subservience and sense of guilt. This included blaming Wolfgang for his wife's unfortunate death in Paris in 1778, and by constantly reminding Wolfgang of the debt incurred by the many mistakes he had committed along the way. He demanded that his son return to Salzburg immediately after his wife's death and take the position of court organist, albeit at quite a higher salary than he had earned before. Wolfgang did so very reluctantly, but his stay in Salzburg only lasted for two more years before the final break. This occurred when Wolfgang was conveniently in Vienna with his employer, the (hated) Archbishop and his orchestra. He refused to return to Salzburg, as his father had demanded. Wolfgang, with only ten years to live, was now on his own in 1781 at the age of twenty five, and out from underneath his father. Their relationship was never the same.

As things stood for quite a long time, Wolfgang had surpassed his father's knowledge of music by about the age of fourteen or perhaps even several years earlier. But he had nevertheless remained joined to his father's hip for a very long time, well past the point

when he could have struck out on his own. Leopold (and perhaps even Wolfgang) believed that the family's ticket to improve its financial situation was through Wolfgang, who would surely obtain a prestigious post somewhere. Having traveled to many parts of Europe and witnessed far better conditions for musicians, both Leopold and Wolfgang were of the mind that Salzburg was simply no longer suitable for living or for professional, musical purposes. Wolfgang seemed willing to give this all a serious try, but he was not successful in finding a post that he wished to take. His attempts to secure a prestigious position, at the age of twenty two, were probably misguided anyway, as he was simply too young to take such a post, in spite of being most gifted composer at the time. The view of prodigies came with some reservation and even skepticism. Mozart, and by implication his music, was considered 'one more instance of early fruit being more extraordinary than excellent'⁽¹⁾. This view was compounded by the rivalries with other composers who could and did feel threatened by such a young talent. I am firmly in the camp of people who believe the benefits of Leopold as a teacher and mentor far outweighed whatever detriments and emotional toll that may have been inflicted upon his son. From the literature that I have read, scholars are either too harsh on Leopold, or conversely, too harsh on Wolfgang. It is easy to criticize Leopold, and he did have his faults. But, without Leopold Mozart, Wolfgang would simply not have achieved his level of mastery and musical awareness so quickly and so thoroughly. It was Leopold who exposed his son to all the major musical centers of Europe by the age of 14, a considerable feat by any stretch of the imagination, and one which had a huge benefit to Mozart. And, it was Leopold Mozart who had instilled in his son very high standards for both performance and composition. Finally, and perhaps most important, he drilled into his son that he did indeed have special talent, and that he therefore had a duty and obligation to realize it. This was the legacy that Leopold left with his son.

3. And what about his sister? Did she have any influence on the great musician's life and/or artistic career?

Mozart's sister, Maria Anna (1751-1829), usually referred to by her nickname of "Nannerl", was five and a half years older than Wolfgang. As it turned out, Mozart learned his first lessons on the keyboard indirectly through his sister. Using short little pieces that his father had prepared for his eight year old sister and which were contained in a notebook now called the "Nannerl Notenbuch", Mozart began to experiment on the harpsichord and learn simple works at a very young age. Over the years, Wolfgang and his sister became unusually close ---- their many playful exchanges in the letters make this abundantly clear. During the early years, when Wolfgang and his sister toured together, they often performed as a team on one instrument (sometimes a harpsichord and in the later years a fortepiano) and on two keyboard instruments. Mozart even composed such pieces for himself and his sister to perform together. But, while Nannerl became an excellent pianist, she could not compose or improvise as her younger brother was able to do, and by the time Mozart was only eight years old, he had already surpassed his sister and become the major attraction.

¹ This remark was made by British Ambassador in Munich, Louis De Visme, in a November 30th, 1772 letter to music historian Charles Burney, upon hearing Mozart perform in Salzburg earlier that year. During his visit, De Visme heard Mozart and his sister play duets upon the same harpsichord.

We do not really know how Nannerl felt about all this, but she seemed to go along with her father's wishes most of the time, except when he decided not to bring her to Italy.

We know from the letters that Nannerl and her mother had wished to come to Milan to hear Mozart's first opera there. Leopold expressed anger to his wife that they had expressed this desire to a friend who had traveled back and forth from Salzburg and Milan. But, Leopold did not wish to have all members of the family away from Salzburg, and he worried about the appearance this would give to authorities there. Nannerl and his wife, therefore, would be used as 'anchors', while Leopold and Wolfgang would search for new opportunities for the family. As time went on, she had become resigned to this fate, and simply hoped that her brother would obtain a prestigious post so that she could leave Salzburg. These hopes would never come to pass, notwithstanding Mozart's best efforts to gain a post in Munich, Mannheim and Paris.

Consequently, as time wore on, she had to be satisfied that her brother would live in Vienna and write certain works for her (which he did ---with certain works called preambula, for example, and sonatas) or send her the latest works for the piano which Mozart used for himself, such as his latest piano concertos. These he shared only with her, with the proviso that no one else have them, as they were special to him. The letters are filled with remarks that both she and her father were always anxious to receive his latest compositions so that she and her father could have the pleasure of playing them in Salzburg or in St. Gilgen where Nannerl lived after her marriage. It was a somewhat pitiful state of affairs, but nothing could be done. Otherwise, she exerted little influence on her brother's musical taste or development. She most certainly loved his music, but she was relegated to living a plain life in Salzburg where she taught piano, and St. Gilgen after her marriage, the birthplace of her mother situated in a vast and desolate stretch of wilderness about three hours away (in 18th century travel time) from Salzburg.

After her brother's death, Nannerl was an important and vital source of information about Wolfgang in the very first biography written in 1792, and she wrote some interesting accounts or 'reminiscences' of his life, which she recalled from their early years of travel together. She saved the family letters (of which about 800 still exist from the four Mozart family members) so that they could serve as the basis for future writings on her brother's life. While some letters were lost over the years and even prior to when they were in her hands, she saved these valuable documents. In this respect, Nannerl remains central to the history of Mozart's life, and we can all be thankful that she did indeed save those family letters.

4. Why in your opinion did Mozart's music enjoy such an extraordinary success? What is there in his compositions that makes them so appealingly intriguing?

Mozart's music has two special qualities: 'surface beauty' as well as 'inner depth'. His melodies are so distinct and make such an impression upon first hearing that they immediately stand out and resonate with a listener. Some can be easily whistled and sung, but most are so original and of such a striking beauty that one can immediately identify them as those of Mozart. Compare his melodies to other contemporary composers and his

melodies and phrasings sound natural, as if they always existed and only needed to be written down. In a word, they sound effortless. They ‘flow like oil’, words that Mozart used to describe one of his violin concertos. The melodic lines are beautifully shaped and elaborated, something Mozart mastered over many years of hard work.

Mozart knew how to treat his musical material in much the same way that an expert tailor puts together a specially tailored and exquisitely crafted suit. One of the guiding principles behind his art was something he and his father referred to as ‘il filo’ --- the thread. The music, according to this dictum should proceed naturally and flow like oil, but at the same time contain a thorough working out of all possible ideas inherent in the music, in a logical and musically coherent fashion. Due to its ‘naturalness’ and subtle use of instrumentation and harmony, his music may be appreciated without a realization for how complicated most of it certainly is. The more a certain piece of music is listened to or carefully examined, the more this becomes evident.

Showmanship without art was not pleasing to Mozart. He believed that exaggeration of any kind in music should be avoided, as it ran counter to his aesthetic ideal. He strove for the ‘golden mean’ and balance. While other composers could attract attention by doing something in a direct, perhaps even blunt and jarring way, Mozart would be far more subtle. While he valued technical skill, such effects had to fit in with the overall idea of the work, or was part of something grander than the mere notes themselves. While showy pieces containing ‘professional tricks’ may have won composers an audience, the worth of their inherent value is eventually called into question over the course of time.

Mozart mastered all the musical genres or types that a composer could be expected to write for the period of time in which he lived (1756-1791). He produced masterpieces in operatic works, symphonies, sacred works, chamber music, and instrumental music for many different kinds wind and stringed instruments. This versatility in all kinds of music, across the board, has played a large role in making his music so universally admired and loved. It is no accident that his music is heard in more than 500 films and movies, more than any other composer. If he had demonstrated mastery in merely one or two genres, then it is quite likely that his appeal with the broader public would not be so apparent.

Finally, Mozart could express a range of emotions from the profoundly tragic to the joyous and happy, while managing to convey these feelings as genuine and real. This is not easy to accomplish. Listen to the second movement of the Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola, K. 364, a somber and deeply troubling piece of music and compare it to the last movement of Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, K. 525. Both are compelling, genuine and completely convincing of their emotional content, yet are polar opposites on the emotional scale. Mozart gives his music a certain sense of ‘inevitability’, sounding natural and easy, as if he barely struggled to produce this music. In between the polar opposites, one hears music that can be suave, pompous, humorous, sublime, sly, joking, down-to-earth, majestic, forgiving, angry, contemplative, naive, childlike, sorrowful, pathetic, and so on.

Imagine by analogy that Mozart possessed a huge “musical dictionary”, one as large as the Oxford English Dictionary, for example, which contains such a number of words that

many are barely ever used by ordinary humans. Similarly, Mozart carried a certain musical dictionary around in his head, constantly expanding it and experimenting with it, and sometimes even causing musical critics to think his music was too complex, learned and overly 'seasoned'. Some critics believed, in his more audacious works, to think he wrote 'wrong notes'. His contemporaries, though competent, worked with a more ordinary, limited dictionary, but one which still enabled them to write average or even better than average music *some* of the time.

5. Now some more practical questions. We understand that when young Mozart did not perform he used to attend the prestigious salons of the time. Can you confirm this? By the way how much did the musician earn from his concerts and performances?

Mozart was in great demand as a pianist during his entire lifetime, performing in concert halls, taverns, salons, palaces, so-called "great rooms" of hotels, bourses, and so on. I could not actually imagine a situation in which he was a guest at a salon and did not perform. At Versailles, London and The Hague, he performed for all the respective rulers, along with the many nobles and leaders of Cologne, Mainz, Mannheim, Munich, Prague, Berlin, and Dresden. His fame was generated from his ability to improvise, sight-read and compose instantaneously, even when he was very young. Usually, Mozart was admitted into palaces upon the recommendation of an ambassador or high ranking official who had heard him perform in a certain city. Sometimes, he was summoned to a palace or residence when word got out he was in town.

Some notable people who heard Mozart perform during his early years were Madame Pompadour (who refused to let herself be kissed by young Mozart), Goethe (who later recalled the little boy with 'his wig and sword'), Charles Burney (the musicologist who traveled to Italy), and the eminent philosopher and scientist Daines Barrington of the Royal Society of London who wrote an extensive report on Mozart during his prodigy years. In short, Mozart rarely "did not perform" because performing and being on the stage was part of Mozart's persona. He simply enjoyed it.

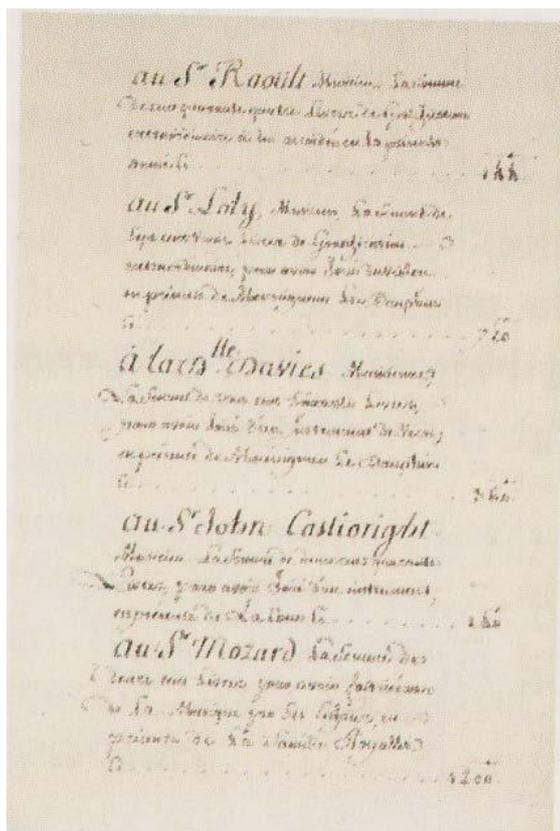
A missed opportunity to play for Voltaire represents a great misfortune, but that was because the great philosophe was indisposed and unwell at the time. He regretted not seeing the young prodigy in 1766 as Mozart passed through Geneva, and expressed to his friend Madame d'Épinay these memorable words, "Your little Mazar, Madame, chose, I am afraid, a rather unfavourable time to bring harmony into the temple of Discord....and I was very ill when this phenomenon shone on the black horizon of Geneva. In short, he has left to my great regret, without my having seen him...."⁽²⁾

As for the amounts that Mozart earned for giving concerts, this varied tremendously from place to place, something which could cause great anxiety. Leopold often complains about this, explaining to his landlord and financier Lorenz Hagenauer how payment could be less than satisfactory when high costs were most always incurred at expensive hotels. A frequent theme in the Mozart letters is the amount of expenses which had to be paid so that

2 Letter of François Marie Arouet de Voltaire to Madame Louise D'Épinay, Sept. 26th, 1766, Ferney

Mozart could perform where rewards could be great. Long waits, while nobles were outdoors hunting far away from their estates, form the basis for many indignant complaints by Leopold. Worse yet were occasions when snuff boxes or watches rather than money were given at a time when hard cash was needed.

As to specific amounts: At Versailles in 1763, when Mozart was only eight, the King rewarded the young prodigy (or his father) with a sum of 1200 livres - a huge amount of money for just a few performances at Versailles, including playing on the organ in the Royal Chapel on New Year's Day, for the members of the royal family:



Extract from the Account of the Menus Plaisirs of the French King, 1764 Folio 47 V; last entry at bottom

The expense sheet for Mozart says, “To Sieur Mozart (Leopold) the sum of 1200 livres (50 louis d’or) for having provided music played by his children in the the presence of the royal family”. This sum was equal to about 450 florins or gulden, and more than Leopold Mozart’s yearly salary of 354 gulden. More modest sums were the norm, however. Scholars vary widely in their assessments of whether the Italian tours were profitable. Maynard Solomon postulates they were quite profitable and estimates the Italian tours brought in 1700 florins, or about five times Leopold Mozart’s salary.⁽³⁾ This seems on the high side, quite frankly, and estimating profits for the Italian tours is fraught with difficulty. The letters report only a sampling of that which took place, and too many unknown factors could impact severely the amount of profit that might have been realized. The noted Mozart scholar Neal Zaslaw believes, on the other hand, that the Italian tours ‘had not proven lucrative’.⁽⁴⁾

3 Maynard Solomon, “Mozart, A Life”, Harper Collins Publishers, 1995, page 87

4 Neal Zaslaw, “Mozart’s Symphonies, Context, Performance Practice and Reception”, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, pg. 214

For a look at some of Mozart's concerts in Italy, attention can be drawn to an April 3, 1770, concert in Florence, for which he earned 333 lire for a private performance at the Villa Poggio Imperiale before Archduke Leopold, Grand Duke of Florence and Tuscany. The payment for this one afternoon's performance equaled approximately 125 florins or gulden, about a third of Leopold's annual salary.

Receipt given by Orsini Rosenberg to Leopold Mozart for concert by Mozart, in Florence, 1770, at the Palazzo Imperiale

In Bologna, just a month earlier, Mozart received 205 Bolognese lire from Count Gian Luca Pallavicini (1697-1773) and Leopold was given 20 zecchini, totaling about 250 florins. The Naples visit produced money rewards relatively shortly after their arrival on May 14, 1770. Leopold wrote to his wife prior to their concert saying that they expected to earn about 150 zecchini at the home of Imperial Ambassador Kaunitz-Rietberg (1737-1797), situated on the Riviera di Chiaia. If this turned out to be true, they would have made about 650 florins or gulden, one of the most profitable concerts in Italy. Leopold simply reported that the concert 'turned out very well' and that many prominent people attended. Concerts of this variety usually numbered around 150 people. This particular concert was organized by the Countess Kaunitz-Reitberg, the Princess Francavilla, Catherine Hamilton and the Duchess of Calabritta, all wealthy aristocrats. Of the money which they expected to earn, Leopold said:

...we need the money because if we leave, we shall have a long journey ahead of us without being able to earn anything; if we remain here, we'll have to survive for 5 months. Here we would always be able to earn enough for our needs, of course, but at present I'm still resolved to leave in 3 weeks' time.⁵⁽⁵⁾

The next day they were called to the Princess Francavilla's palace where they were given a very nice gift (exact amount or item unknown). Leopold often avoided the mere mention of these monetary gifts, as he knew that his letters were often opened by the authorities in Salzburg, a practice that was well within legal limits. He did not wish people to learn of his takings because these same people failed to understand how very substantial his costs were.

5 Letter of Leopold Mozart to his wife, May 26th, 1770, Naples

Mozart made very good money for writing operas (usually about 400 gulden), which was his preferred form of composition. But, he could make far more in one night with a successful concert. The takings for concerts fluctuated wildly though, while opera was guaranteed to earn a substantial sum. Mozart did not write an opera for Naples, although Leopold indicated that an opportunity to do so had been made.

In Naples the impresario Signor Amadori (Giovanni Tedeschi detto Amadori) saw and heard Wolfg. at Jomelli's and invited him to write an opera for the Teatro Reale a San Carlo but because of Milan we were unable to accept his invitation. The impresario then declared that he fully understood that it wasn't worth our while to travel to Naples for a single opera, but that he wished and hoped that sooner or later Wolfg. would write an opera for Bologna or Rome; he simply asked us to let him know about this and he would then send him a scrittura for the Teatro San Reale.⁶

Venice likewise is believed to have given Mozart an offer, but once again, the presumed offer could not be accepted ⁽⁷⁾. A contract dated 17 August 1771 for the composition of an opera by Mozart for the 1773 Venice Carnival is reproduced in Otto Deutsch's book, *Mozart. A Documentary Biography*, 135.

The money which Mozart made for concerts went to the expenses incurred on a daily basis for his travel from one city to the next, and for special purchases such as books, music and clothes, all items of necessity for the Mozarts. So far as is known, the money Mozart made as a child and young adult was always turned over to his father. (He probably had little or no savings of his own, because he had to borrow money for his trip to Munich, Mannheim and Paris in 1777-1778). No matter where the Mozarts happened to be, they could be expected to appear in homes of wealthy aristocrats, and their attire was consequently of considerable importance.

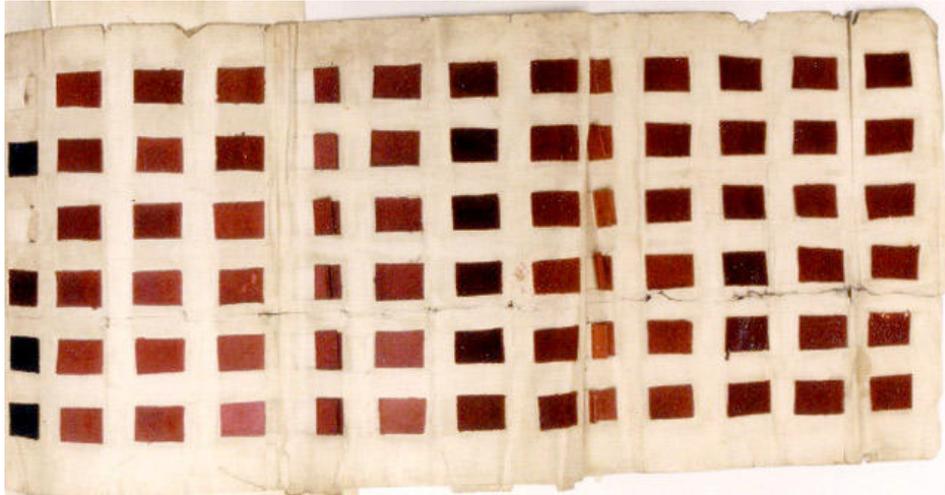
Clothing was exceedingly expensive and a topic of frequent concern in the family letters. As luck would have it, Naples turned out to be an ideal place to buy new clothes. Their friend and acquaintance, wealthy business-man Robert Frédéric Meuricoffre, was in the silk and banking business and arranged for new sets of summer suits to be made. Leopold describes his summer suit as the color known as "Pompadour", a dark cherry red watered silk, lined with sky-blue taffeta, and finished off with silver buttons. Wolfgang's suit was apple-green watered (moiree) silk, with silver buttons and lined with rose-coloured taffeta. "Pompadour" was a color that originated in England during the 1750s and continued in popularity for several decades. It ranged from a deep, purplish brick to a silvery pink, as shown in this chart of colors dating from 1761:

6 Leopold Mozart to his wife, June 27th, Rome

7 A contract dated 17 August 1771 for the composition of an opera by Mozart for the 1773 Venice Carnival is reproduced in Deutsch, *Mozart. A Documentary Biography*, 135. Apparently the plans were later shelved although it is referred several times in Leopold's correspondence



Eruzione del Vesuvio del 1761



Color chart by the English company Cudbear for the color known as "Pompadour", circa 1760

It is possible that the suit Leopold had tailored in Naples is shown in his well-known portrait. No one knows just when the painting of Leopold was completed, but if completed in 1765, a date usually given, an outfit from Naples would be ruled out.



Leopold Mozart, attributed to Pietro Lorenzoni



Man's suit, circa 1750, in apple green

6. Can you tell us how were his encounters with Neapolitan aristocrats organized and planned? Is it true that once he was taken to Pompei to see the excavations? Are there any anecdotes as to this event?

Let me preface my answer with a few comments about his experiences in other Italian cities, prior to coming to Naples. Mozart came to Italy in 1770 with a tour planned and organized by his father. It began in in December of 1769, in Rovereto, then Verona, Mantua, Milan, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Turin, Venice and Padua. There were other cities along the way, such as Parma and Cremona, but these are the major ones. He was hailed as a wonder! In Verona, he appeared before the Accademia Filarmonica and

was put through a sort of test of all his skills in front of some great masters. For this, he was not paid, but it would bring him honor later on when he was made a member of the Academy. He was also painted at the request of an admirer in Verona, Pietro Lugiat, leading to one of the few authenticated paintings of Mozart, shown below. Mozart was exactly fourteen at the time of the painting, and there are descriptions of the sittings in the letters, which had to be skillfully juggled and scheduled, since the Veronese nobility and ecclesiastical officials anxiously awaited a visit by him.



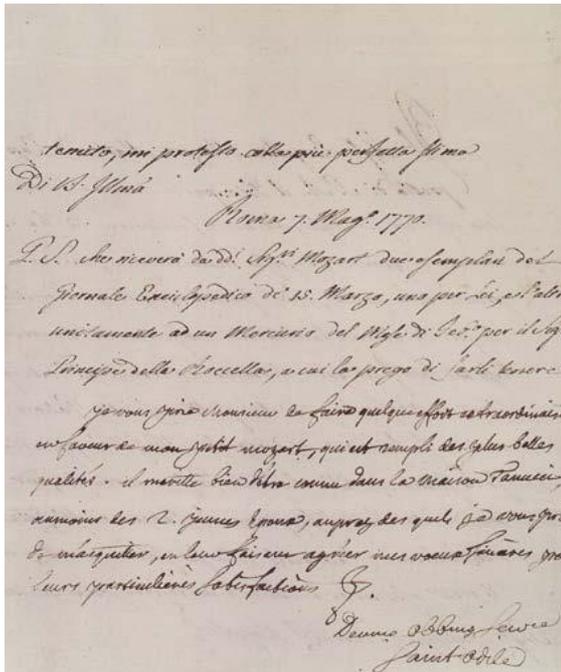
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, by Saverio della Rosa, 1770, Verona

Mozart performed in Mantua shortly after his stay in Verona, and this concert took place in the newly built theater by Galli Bibiena. In Bologna he met with Padre Martini (1706-1784), a leading authority on counterpoint. There he gave an impressive concert at which Martini attended --- an unusual honor. Mozart was paid 205 lire for this concert. In Milan where Mozart spent considerable time and effort, he was under the protection and patronage of Count Karl Joseph Firmian (1718-1782), Governor General of Lombardy, a very prominent official with connections throughout much of Italy and the brother to a high-ranking Salzburg official who knew the Mozarts well and who had actual authority over the music establishment in Salzburg. Count Karl Joseph Firmian secured Mozart's commission to write an opera, *Mitridate re di Ponte*, for carnival 1770/1.

Fortunately for the Mozarts, a good portion of Italy was under Hapsburg control, including the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, Tuscany, Lombardy and Parma. Even though Mozart was not a Hapsburg subject --- the province of Salzburg was an independent state ruled by an archbishop --- he often had ready access to the high-ranking Hapsburg officials whom

were known from prior visits to Vienna. When Wolfgang arrived in any city, Leopold would usually present letters of recommendation to the individual in question, smoothing the way for the ready access that was customarily accorded to important persons.

An example occurred for Wolfgang's arrival in Naples on May 14, 1770. He had letters of recommendation from Count Firmian of Milan and from Baron Saint-Odile of Rome, addressed to the Secretary of the Imperial Ambassador, Count Ernst Kaunitz. The main body of the letter from Saint-Odile reads:



Sig. Leopold Mozart, Chapel Master of his Highness the Prince of Salzburg, has a son of his with him, who at a tender age has made such great progress in music that he surprises all those who hear him....I thought of sending them to you, Illustrious Sir, knowing the value you set on persons of virtuosity; hence I do not doubt that during their sojourn there, you will not fail to favour them with your accustomed kindness....I beg you, Sir, to make some especial effort on behalf of my little Mozart, who is full of the best qualities...

Letter of recommendation, Baron Dominique Saint-Odile (Imperial Ambassador in Rome) to Guiseppe Bonechi, Secretary to Imperial Ambassador at Naples, Count Ernst Kaunitz-Rietberg

Shortly after arriving in Naples, father and son were able to see Prime Minister Bernardo Tanucci (1698-1783). Leopold was correct in describing him as very powerful figure, but would have disapproved of his harsh treatment and expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, and threats against the Pope with the army of Naples. As things turned out, Tanucci ordered his wife's steward to take the Mozarts in one of their carriages to 'see all the rare sights of Naples'. Just how long Tanucci's carriage was at the Mozarts' disposal is unknown, but it could have been for their entire stay in Naples. Their schedule falls broadly into these main dates and sites:

May 18th – visit to Portici where Mozart saw the King and Queen at Mass in the Court Chapel. In the evening they paid a visit to Sir William Hamilton, but at which residence there is certainty. They visit Hamilton's wife play on her Tschudi harpsichord.

May 19th – visit with Count Ernst Christoph Kaunitz-Reitberg, the Imperial Ambassador to Naples

May 20th – visit to Portici again to call on Tanucci, the powerful Minister

May 28th – concert at Ambassador Kaunitz's palace

May 30th – visit to the Palazzo Reale and to the San Carlo Theater, where an opera of Jommelli's, *Armida abbandonata*, is heard by Mozart.

June 3rd – attend a magnificent ball in celebration of the marriage of Queen Marie Antoinette with Louis XVI

June 10th – visit to the Augustinian Monastery of S. Giovanni a Carbonara

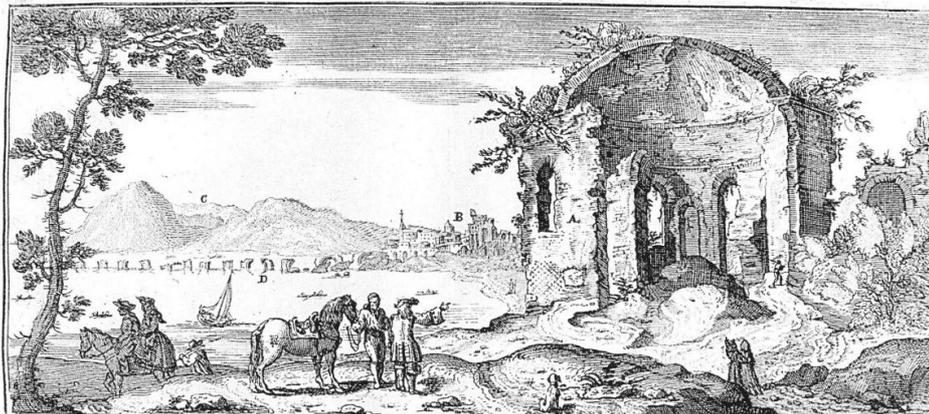
June 13th – visit to Pozzuoli and Baia to see the baths of Nero, the grotto of Sibylla Cumana, the “temple” of Venus, the Elysian Fields, the Molo of Pozzuoli, the Colosseum and many other sights.

June 16th – visit to Capodimonte

June 18th and 19th – visit to Vesuvius, Pompeii and Herculaneum, including the Royal Palace of Caserta

Leopold Mozart wrote many interesting things about these visits, but nothing in particular about Pompeii, unfortunately. But of Pozzuoli he stated:

It is like our New Gate, but it took us 8 minutes to drive through it as it is 344 cannas long ⁽⁸⁾. In order to see all the curiosities, you always have to take a torch along because many of them are underground. Wolfg. and I were completely alone with our servant, we had 6 sailors and the cicerone, none of whom could conceal their astonishment at seeing Wolfg., as the 2 old grey-bearded seamen declared that they had never seen such a young boy come to these places to see these antiquities ⁽⁹⁾.



VEDUTA DEL TEMPIO DI DIANA DI POZZUOLI MONTE NUOVO E MOLO
Credersi esser stata questa fabbrica il Tempio di Diana. A ha una gran Cupola di sopra buona parte ruinata. ha molti fregi fronti e cornici
gravi insieme Pozzuoli B e tutta antichissima così detta o dalla moltitudine de' pozzi o dal fiume del Sarno la più antica città della Campania di
cui si sa sicuro che si era fondata prima che i greci avessero una legge di stabilimento. In C una gran città con alcune repubbliche molto
celebri. et una ospedale il luogo chiamasi Triporgola. D'uegli archi gran parte ruinati erano l'antico Molo D fatto da' greci da modernu in chi
nato fene di Cadice.

Pozzuoli, Temple of Diana, Mote Nuovo and Molo. Note: This engraving is of one of numerous copper engravings Leopold Mozart brought back to Salzburg for his family and friends, showing sites and curiosities from their travels.

Wolfgang closed the letter with some humorous remarks of his own:

8 The New Gate referred to a tunnel through the Mönchburg of Salzburg which had recently been completed. 344 cannas equal s approximately 960 meters.

9 Letter by Leopold Mozart to his wife, June 16, 1770, Naples

I'm still alive and as always I'm permanently happy, I like travelling: now I've also been out on the Merditeranean [sic]Sea. I kiss Mama's hand and kiss Nannerl 1000 times, I am your son Stefel and brother Hans ⁽¹⁰⁾. (Mozart plays on the words 'Mediterranean' and 'merde' = French for shit. The names 'Steffel' and 'Hans' refer to two German commedia dell'arte characters. The phrase roughly means 'the halfwit son and silly brother'.)

Mozart often used puns and scatological humor to spice up his letters and get a laugh from his sister and mother. His earthy language should not be taken in the wrong spirit, because it reflected, to a certain extent, common forms of humor and usage in his own era and particularly in the area of Salzburg and lower Bavaria. Mozart described his daily life in Naples to his sister, poking fun at the whole subject by making it sound horribly boring:

I get up at nine, sometimes even at ten, then we leave the house and eat lunch at an inn, and after lunch we write, and then we go out and have supper, and what do we eat? On ordinary days, half a chicken or a small slice of roast meat; on fast days a little fish; and then we go to bed. Have you understood it all? ⁽¹¹⁾

Mozart's letters and those of his father during their trips to Italy can be read online, in Italian and English (French and German too) at the site "Mozart Ways" on the internet:

<http://letters.mozartways.com/ita/index.php>

To read the family letters about the stay in Naples, click on "Luoghi Citati", "N" for Naples, "1770", then "May 19th", and continue forward. The site is not quite in its completed state, but is still a very valuable resource. The annotations and much of the information comes from Dr. Cliff Eisen, a prominent Mozart scholar at King's College, London.

7. What role, if any, did Sir William Hamilton play during Mozart's Vesuvian period, and, in general, what was the attitude of the royal court and nobility towards the great musician? Can you tell us of Palazzo Sessa?

The Mozarts had earlier met Sir William Hamilton (1731-1803), the British envoy to the Bourbon court at Naples for the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, when they visited London in 1764/5 during the Great Western Tour. Hamilton was an unusually learned man who received many prominent foreign guests, both at his principle residence Villa Sessa in Naples, and his Villa Angelica close to Vesuvius. For his studies on the volcano between 1767 and 1794, during which three major eruptions occurred, he became known as 'the modern day Pliny, after the Roman author who witnessed the famous Vesuvius eruption in 79 A.D that buried Herculaneum and Pompeii. He is reported to have climbed the volcano at least 65 times, sometimes in considerable harm's way. We learn from the letters that Leopold and Wolfgang visited Hamilton early on during their Naples stay. The details of their meeting are obscure, limited to one short, but nevertheless highly interesting passage:

10 Postscript by Wolfgang to the June 16, 1770 letter, Naples

11 Letter by Wolfgang to his sister, June 5, 1770

Yesterday evening [May 18th] we called on the English ambassador Hamilton (our acquaintance from London), whose wife plays the keyboard with exceptional feeling and is a most pleasant person. She trembled at the prospect of having to play for Wolfg. She has a valuable instrument made in England by Tschudi with 2 manuals and pedal stops that can be uncoupled by means of the foot. Also present were Mr Beckfort [Beckford] and Monsieur Weis [Vyse], our acquaintances from England. ⁽¹²⁾



William Hamilton with his first wife, Catherine Barlow, by David Allan, 1770

It is unclear just where they met with Hamilton. Earlier that day on May 8th, the Mozarts had gone to Portici to make arrangements to meet with Bernardo Tanucci. Possibly they also stopped at Villa Angelica in the early evening, since Hamilton's house was very near Portici. On the other hand, they could have driven back to Naples and visited the special envoy at his Palazzo Sessa.



William Hamilton, engraving by Giovanni Morghen

12 Letter of Leopold Mozart to his wife, May 19, 1770, Naples

The Palazzo Sessa in which Sir William Hamilton lived was originally a monastery owned by the Lateran Canons, but was sold off to the Marquis Giuseppe Sessa in 1741. A nice period painting of Palazzo Sessa can be seen here:

https://www.galeriefach.de/produkt/2011_99/gf0899_e.html

In 1764 Hamilton acquired the quarters and proceeded to turn it into his primary residence. Once settled in Naples, Hamilton had little desire to return to England. He felt at home in Naples and on one of the bedrooms' wall was the Latin motto, "Ubi bene, ibi patria" (where I am at ease, there is my homeland). Hamilton kept an impressive collection of paintings, Greek vases, and antiquities which later formed the core of the Greek and Roman collection in the British Museum.



The Bay of Naples with the Palace of Sir William Hamilton. Engraving by Anton Cardon, 1765. Hamilton's Villa Sessa is pictured on the hill towards the right, above S. Maria della Vittoria

Just what Mozart's reaction was to Palace Sessa we do not know, unfortunately, and Leopold is unusually silent on the matter. There are absolutely no reports of it, only discussion of the musical instrument made by the famous Swiss harpsichord maker Tschudi, whom the Mozarts had met in London in 1764. We might be able to infer, though, what impact Hamilton's palace (and similar ones) had on Mozart's later aspirations to possess articles of beauty. Mozart's eye was attracted to very fine things, as demonstrated by an anecdote in Vienna, 1782. In a letter to a certain Baroness Waldstätten, Mozart wrote about some beautiful buttons which he saw in a shop in the Kohlmarkt and hoped to have for a certain red jacket, which he also desired:

As for the beautiful red jacket that is tickling my heart so mercilessly, please let me know *where it can be bought and how expensive it is*, for I complete forgot to check how much it was; my attention was totally drawn to its beauty and not to its price. --I simply must have such a jacket so it will be worth my effort to get those buttons, which I can't get out of my mind.....They are made of mother-of-pearl with several white stones around the edge and a beautiful yellow stone in the middle. --I would like to have all things that are good, genuine and beautiful! I wonder why it is that those who cannot afford it would like to spend all they have for this sort of thing and those who could afford it, don't? ⁽¹³⁾

13 Letter of Wolfgang Mozart to his father, Sept. 28th, 1782, Vienna

During their stay in Naples, Wolfgang did not receive an invitation to see either Marie Caroline (1752-1814) a Hapsburg, or King Ferdinand IV (1751-1825), something which was a disappointment to Leopold. In fact, while he expected an invitation, he grew increasingly negative of their prospects, once he heard reports of other musicians having difficulties being received by the royal couple. Leopold indignantly explained the situation to his wife:

Have we performed for the king? - Anything but! We've got no further than the empty compliments paid to us by the queen wherever she's seen us. The queen can do nothing, and it's better to tell you in private what sort of a person the king is, rather than describing it in writing. You can easily imagine what goes on at this court. The young violinist, La Motte, who is in the service of the empress and who came to Italy on her instructions and at her expense, spent a long time in Naples, and delayed his departure by 3 weeks because he'd been told that the king and queen would hear him: but in spite of this, nothing happened. In due course I'll tell you a whole series of amusing things about this court. You'll also see the king's portrait. ⁽¹⁴⁾

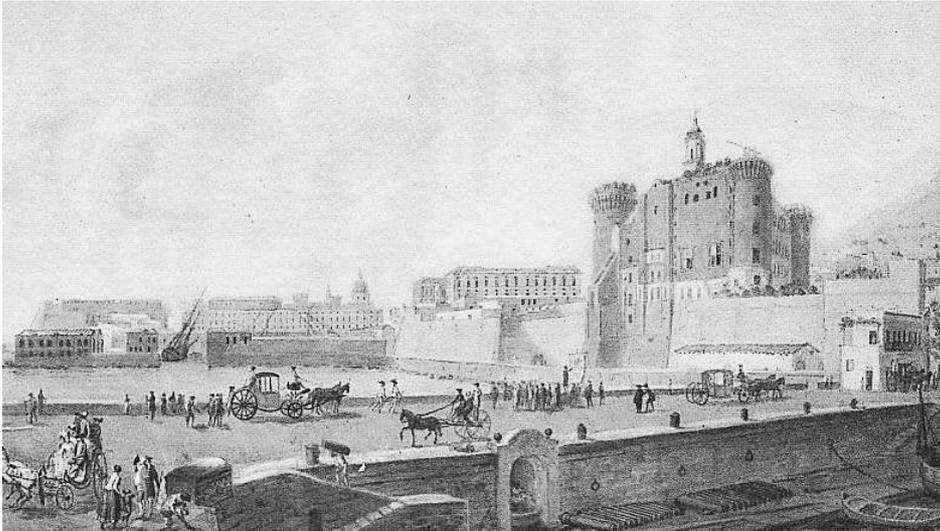
Leopold kept his harshest criticisms to himself due to the fact that letters could be opened in Salzburg, and criticisms and gossip of this kind could hurt his standing. The situation of their not being seen at court might best be explained by the fact that Leopold, years earlier, had irritated Queen Caroline's mother, the Empress Maria Theresia (1717-1780), with a petition filed in Vienna over the failure of Mozart's first opera, *La finta semplice*, to be performed. In a letter to her son in Milan in 1771, she referred to the Mozarts as 'useless people, who go ' about the world as beggars'. Archduke Ferdinand of Milan wished to hire young Mozart in late 1771, but the Empress warned her son that they would make poor employees who would, in time, seek a better post elsewhere. Her attitude may have been passed off to her daughter, Marie Caroline in Naples. Additionally, Tanucci (a serious contender for real power in Naples) and *his* open patronage of the Mozarts may have played a role in Queen Caroline's desire not to receive the Mozarts at court.

Nevertheless, the Mozarts stayed busy in Naples. Despite not being called to court, they enjoyed seeing the daily procession of the Queen in her carriage along the Molo. Leopold describes this sight nicely:

One of the best things here is the daily passeggiò, when the aristocracy drives out in a few hundred carriages to the Strada Nuova and to the Molo, remaining out until after Ave Maria. The queen often drives out with them, invariably on Sundays and holidays. The route runs along the coast, and so guns are fired from the ships whenever the queen drives out with the others, and to the right and the left the carriages stop and salute the queen as she passes. As soon as it starts to get dark, torches are lit on all the carriages in order to produce a kind of illumination. We drive there daily, always in a carriage belonging to some gentleman or other, and so I always have 2 torches, one belonging to his lordship's servant, the other to my own servant. But this involves us in no great expense as torches are very cheap here, some carriages having 4 torches carried by 4 footmen. H. M. The Queen always greets us in a particularly friendly manner (15).

¹⁴ Letter Leopold Mozart to his wife, July 30th, 1770, Rome

¹⁵ Leopold Mozart to his wife, June 5th, 1770, Naples



The Molo Grande of Naples, anonymous painter of the 18th century – Museo di San Martino, Naples

Wolfgang seemed in high spirits, as usual, especially since every evening, ‘the local gentry give us their carriages, so we can go driving with them on the Molo’⁽¹⁶⁾. The Mozarts were invited to several large feasts at various monasteries and were honored with invitations to attend a royal ball in Naples celebrating the wedding of Marie Antoinette with Louis XV. The invitations were obtained through connections ----- a Dutchman, Simon Doncker, whom they had met in Amsterdam, 1766, secured the tickets from the French consul in Naples, Laurent Bérenger. The Mozarts also visited Robert Frédéric Meuricoffre, as mentioned earlier, who provided opportunities for them to go to the theater and see the opera, *La pastorella incognita* by Carlo Franchi. In fact, their chief interest, as always, was attending the theater and opera as often as possible, meeting musicians and composers such as Niccolò Jommelli, whose opera, *Armida abbandonata*, they saw, and Francesco de Mayo, whose music Wolfgang called ‘very beautiful’. They heard Giuseppe Aprile, a famous castrato, sing (who had previously performed at a concert of Mozart’s in Bologna) and also Anna de Amicis, who would be the prima donna in Mozart’s third Italian opera, *Lucio Silla*, K. 135, in 1772.

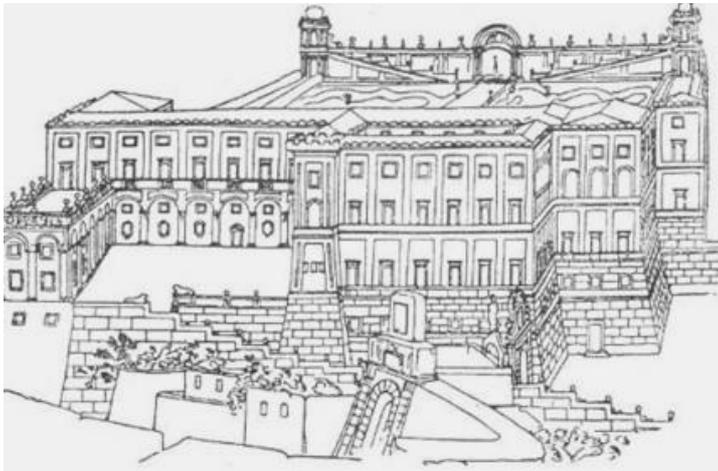
Mozart gave one of his special private concerts in Naples, attended by the highest nobility, at the Imperial Ambassador’s home (Count Ernst Kaunitz-Reitberg) on the Riviera di Chiaia. In 1768 the palace had been the site of an impressive and elaborate set of festivities shortly following the wedding of Marie Caroline and Ferdinand IV. Luigi Vanvitelli, famous architect and designer, was commissioned to ‘dress up’ the palace for this one-time event, and did so with elegant additions to the front of the ambassador’s palace, including sixteen ionic pillars, statues on the upper balustrade and a crest in the center showing of the sign of Austria. One can still see the house today (66 Piazza della Repubblica), but it has been substantially modernized, no longer bears the pillars and balustrade, and shows little resemblance to its former glory.

¹⁶ Wolfgang Mozart to his sister, June 5th, 1770, Naples



Façade of Palace of Count Ernst Kaunitz-Rietberg, Palazzo Teora a Chiaia, from the design of Luigi Vanvitelli, engraved by Giuseppe Guerra – 1768

Near the end of their stay, the Princess de Francavilla (née Borghese) invited the Mozarts to pay her a visit at the Palazzo Cellamare where Mozart performed and received a present. She was considered if not the grandest, one of the grand hostesses of Neapolitan society.



Palazzo Cellamare, Naples from a drawing of Vasconi, 1729

8. When and how was it decided that Mozart should come to Torre del Greco?

We do not know exactly when the Mozarts visited Torre del Greco, but it can be inferred from the letters that they may have visited this area on June 18th or the 19th. They probably were invited by Hamilton whose habit was to take important guests to Villa Angelica. Hamilton leased the relatively simple structure at the foot of Vesuvius and turned it into something of an observatory. It was here that Hamilton conducted his extensive and valuable studies on the volcano. Charles Burney visited Hamilton in October of the same year, 1770, and gave a fairly good account of place, which he described as ‘a small house’ with a ‘large garden or rather vineyard, with most excellent grapes’. Burney wrote:

After dinner we had Music [...]. As soon as it was dark, the Musical entertainment was mixed with the sight and observation of Mount Vesuvius, then very busy. Mr. Hamilton had glasses of all sorts, and every convenience of situation etc. for these observations, with which he is much occupied. [...] Though at three miles distance from the mouth of the mountain, we heard the reports of the several explosions before we saw the stones and red-hot matter thrown up by them [...]. The sight was awful and magnificent, resembling on a large scale the most ingenious and splendid fireworks I ever saw [...].

After supper we had a long dish of musical talk [...]. Music was not wanting, as Mr. Hamilton has two pages of his household who are excellent performers, one on the violin, and the other on the violoncello (17).

Hamilton received other musical guests at Villa Angelica, including the composer and violinist Emanuel Barbella (who is among those Mozarts met) and a certain Genaro Allesando. During his days in England, the impresario and violinist Felice Giardini, whom the Mozarts also knew from the London visit, had given Hamilton violin lessons. As was the norm for music-loving nobility, Hamilton kept a box at the Teatro San Carlo, for which he paid an annual sum of 77 ducats. (18)

Blackened from years of exposure to mutiple eruptions, Villa Angelica nevertheless still stands, now known as the Palazzo Salvatore. Hamilton referred to his villa as “Casino di Portici”, and sometimes as “Villa Angelica, near Mount Vesuvius”. The artist Robert Cozins, who visited Hamilton in 1782, indicates its presence in one of his drawings, and it appears on various other engravings and maps of the period. Located nearby were the hunting preserves of the Boubon Kings, an area known as “i Mortellari”. It will come as no surprise that Hamilton became one of the primary hunting companions of Ferdinand IV.



*Palazzo Salvatore, formerly Villa Angelica
Photo: Giuseppe Maddaloni*



*Top facade, showing statue of Immaculata
Photo: Province of Naples*

17 C. Burney, *An eighteenth-century musical tour in France and Italy*, edited by P. A. Scholes, London 1959, vol. I, p. 260

18 The information in this paragraph comes from C. Knight, *I luoghi di delizie di William Hamilton*, in “*Napoli Nobilissima*”, XX, (1981)



View of an eruption of Mount Vesuvius which began the 23rd of December 1760, and ended the 5th of January 1761, Plate XII in Sir William Hamilton, *Campi Phlegraei*, 1776. Yellow arrow indicates the site Hamilton's Villa Angelica.

Charles Burney's description of Villa Angelica makes clear that the residence was not just Hamilton's site for his studies, but was also a spot for socializing and entertainment, including domestic music-making, dining and sampling the wine. Painters, historians and writers who came to Naples report having been with Hamilton at Villa Angelica, where they could see the volcano at very close quarters and examine his special equipment used for his volcanic studies. It is quite logical, given the fame of young Mozart, that he would extend such an offer to the Mozarts, something that Leopold and Wolfgang would hardly have passed up. Leopold's strong interest in natural science (he owned several microscopes and a telescope) is well documented and the family later attended physics lectures in Salzburg. Everything that Wolfgang saw, heard and learned was internalized, only later to be expressed in his music.

On May 29th, 1770, Leopold wrote a letter home stating:

Vesuvius hasn't given me the pleasure of burning or, rather, spitting fire. Only very occasionally does one see a little smoke. But we shall shortly be seeing it at close quarters. (underlining mine) ⁽¹⁹⁾

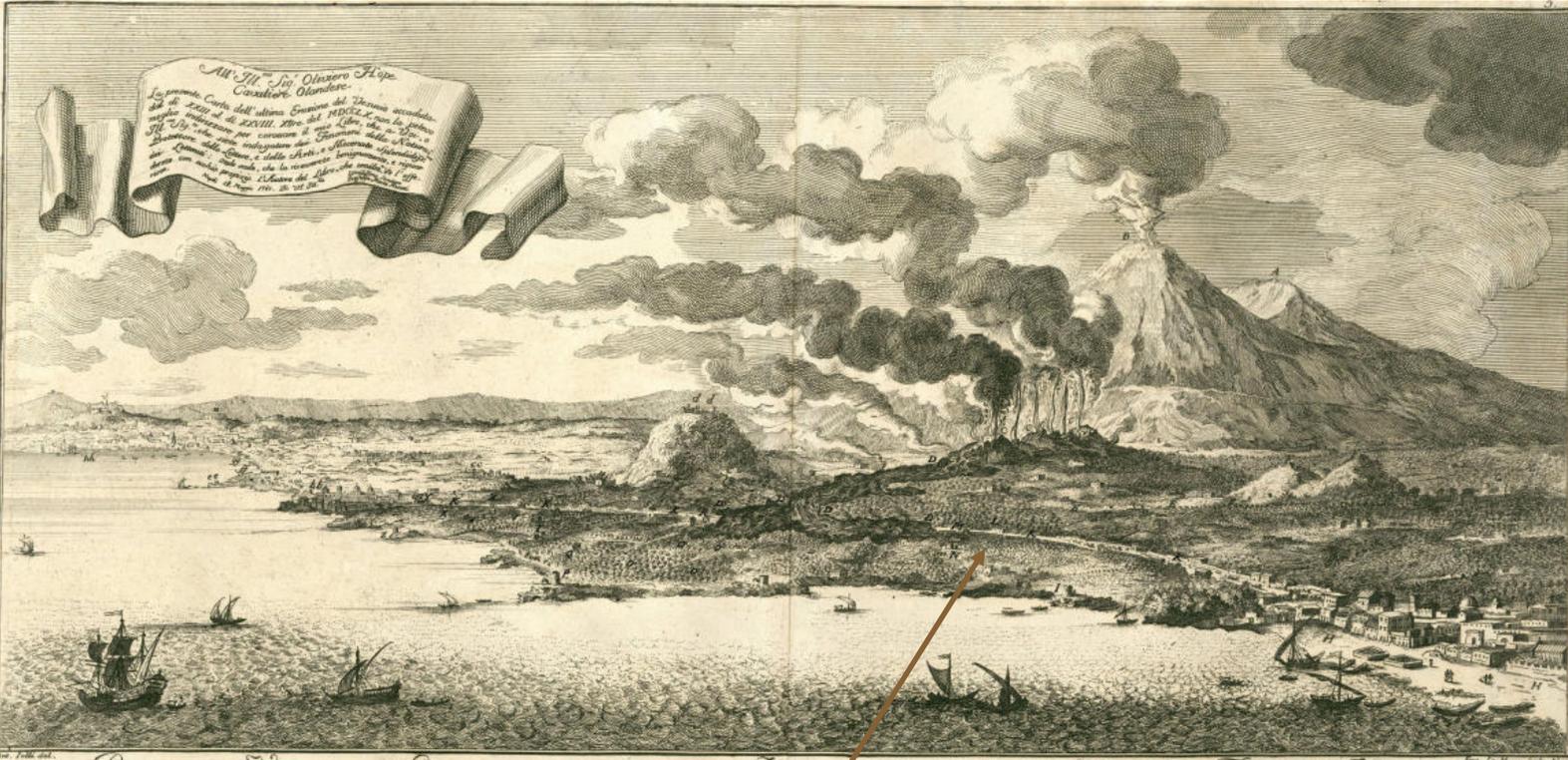
Then on June 5th, 1770, Mozart wrote to his sister:

Smoke is pouring out of Vesuvius today, thunder and lightening and all the rest! ⁽²⁰⁾

On June 9th, Leopold reported they would be visiting Vesuvius again, during the following week, and as far as is known, those visits took place on the 18th and 19th of June. During these two days, they may well have spent some time at Villa Angelica under the auspices of Hamilton. Certainly, the letters themselves do not record all activities during the Naples

19 Letter of Leopold Mozart to his wife, May 29th, 1770, Naples

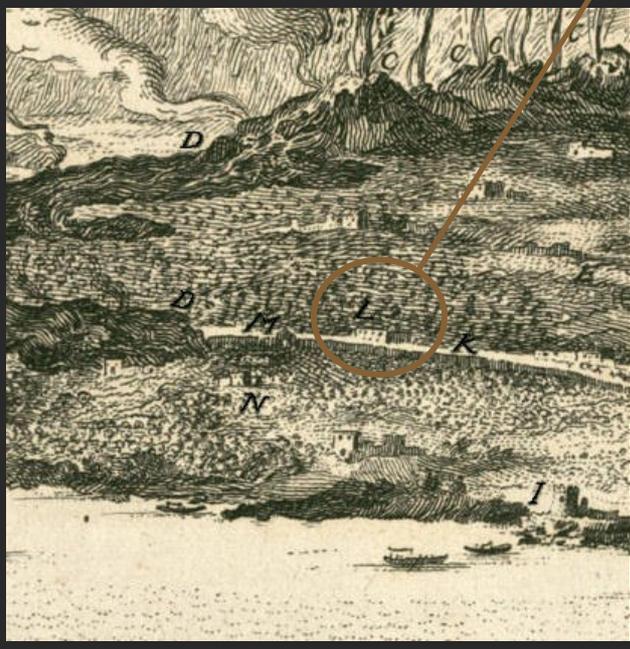
20 Letter of Wolfgang Mozart to his sister, June 5, 1770, Naples



*M. J. de Oudevoort
Consulere Olandese.*
 La grande Carta dell'ultima Eruzione del Vesuvio accaduta
 nel dì 20 di Aprile del 1761. Et per la prima
 volta pubblicata per comando di Sua Maestà
 Britannica, Et per l'ordine del Parlamento della Gran
 Bretagna, e della Irlanda, e di Sua Maestà
 Imperiale, e Reale, che la ricorrenza, e ragione
 della medesima Eruzione del Vesuvio, che molti si affe-
 rano il non esser mai stato.

Prospetto del Vesuvio nell' Eruzione occorsa alla fine dell' Anno MDCLX. preso il punto di Veduta dalla Torre della Nunziata

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------|-------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| A. Vesuvio antico, ora Montagne di S. Maria | E. Strada che conduce a Tre Case | I. Rocciglione | N. Villa di Blacio | R. Porto, e Villa di Bacco | X. Portone, Macerata, e Torre di Valiano | bb. Torre del Greco | ll. Portici |
| B. Vesuvio presente | F. Villa, e Martellari, antiche Montagne | K. Strada Reale | O. Basso della Martella | S. Casa, ed Osteria d'Arancicchio | Y. Epitaffio | cc. Cappuccini della Torre del Greco | gg. Strada Reale di Napoli |
| C. Bacche aperte, di nuovo nell'Eruzione del 1761 | G. Tre Case | L. Angiola, seconda | P. Torre Sciffata | T. Villa Cayo | Z. Torre di Buffone | kk. Monaci di Camaldoli | hh. Napoli con tutte le sue appartenenze |
| D. Lago vecchio di detto Bacche | H. Torre della Nunziata | M. Villa Mercati | Q. Villa d' Hunter | V. Portone, Casa, Strada, e Caselli di Coste | QQ. Casone del Cardinale Antoniano | cc. Giustiniani | ll. Capo di Monte |



L'eruzione del Vesuvio del 1761. Carlo Maria Mecatti.

stay and and the Mozart's often cut short their reports, realizing that further details would revealed once in Salzburg.

An event which probably took place but not written about is recorded in a painting by Pietro Fabris, Hamilton's favorite painter. It shows Mozart and his father attending a musical party at the home of Lord Fortrose (1741-1781), who was considered the intellectual soulmate of William Hamilton's and who similarly surrounded himself with music, art, and collections. The painting shows (though not conclusively) Mozart and his father at a keyboard instrument, William Hamilton on the violin and perhaps Gaetano Pugnani (1731-1798) facing Hamilton on the violin. On the other hand, the composer and violinist Emanuel Barbella (1718-1777), who often performed with Hamilton, might be represented to the far right, rather than the Pugnani. (21)

The scene is actually one of two paintings by Pietro Fabris, the other showing the composer Jommelli to one side presumably composing while Fortrose fences with several friends. Certainly an invitation of this sort could have easily taken place, even if not mentioned by Leopold. The painting may actually refelct a 'reconstruction' of scenes from several, separate events, spread out over a period of time.



Detail from a painting showing Kenneth Mackenzie, 1st Earl of Seaforth at home in Naples: concert party. Figures include Kenneth Mackenzie, 1st Earl of Seaforth, 1744 – 1781 as Viscount Fortrose, back toward viewer; Sir William Hamilton, 1730 – 1803, center brown jacket; possibly Gaetano Pugnani, 1731 – 1798, right with violin; and Wolfgang and Leopold Mozart, far left. Painted by Pietro Fabris, 1770, Naples

21 Emanuel Barbella was a Neapolitan composer, and was among those listed in the letters met by Mozart. One of his works is a mandolin sonata based upon a Neapolitan long song. Mozart later composed his famous canzonetta, "Deh vieni alla finestra" for his opera, *Don Giovanni*, a love song which is sung with mandolin.



Emanuel Barbella, Neapolitan composer and violinist



Gaetano Pugnani, violinist

Another undocumented event took place with a concert given by Mozart at the Conservatory Della Pietà dei Turchini, which was related in writing years later by his sister in 1792, for the first biographer of Mozart, Friedrich Schlichtegroll. According to Nannerl, Wolfgang played before an audience that was so in awe at the demonstration of his talent they believed a ring on one of his fingers possessed special magical powers. To prove otherwise, Wolfgang removed the ring, and performed as before, to the astonishment of his listeners. (22)



Detail, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Saverio della Rosa, 1770, Verona

22 Marianne von Berchtold's Reminiscences, Spring 1792, for Friedrich Schlichtegroll

9. How long did the musician stay in the Vesuvian Land and what other important figures did he meet, and, above all, what are your impressions of this Vesuvian interval? Do you think there are passages of his compositions which were written under the influence of the Vesuvian landscape?

Mozart and his father were in Naples from May 14th – June 25th in 1770, a total of 42 days or almost six weeks. Only visits to Milan in 1770, 1771, 1772/3, the city where his operas were staged, were of longer duration. Altogether, over the three year period, Wolfgang spent 720 days in Italy, or almost exactly two years. No other country could come close to such a lengthy stay, with England coming in at about 15 months. The Mozarts loved Naples and they reported that it was very beautiful. Leopold wrote to his wife on June 9th:

In some ways it's a pity that we can't stay any longer here as there are various interesting things to be seen here during the summer; and the choice of fruit, herbs and flowers changes from one week to the next. The situation of the town, the fertility of the area, the liveliness of the people, the unusual sights etc. and a hundred other beautiful things make me regret having to leave Naples ⁽²³⁾

However, Leopold was anxious to make his way back to Rome, where his son was to receive an award from the Pope, the Order of the Golden Spur of the highest grade. Great honors were in store for Wolfgang elsewhere in Italy. In Bologna, Wolfgang was awarded admittance to the prestigious Accademia Filarmonica, and similarly in Verona. But Naples remained uppermost in Wolfgang's mind as time wore on.

Vesuvius and Naples must have left Mozart in a state of great wonder and amazement. Few people in the province of Salzburg or anywhere else could boast they had seen one of the great vistas and sights of the Grand Tour, i.e., Naples and Vesuvius. Though Mozart never speaks directly of Vesuvius again, there is some evidence to support the notion that Naples and Vesuvius impacted his music in later years. One Mozart scholar, Daniel Hertz, believes that the famous and 'miraculous' terzettino from Act I of the opera, *Così fan tutte*, K. 588 --- "Soave sia il vento" --- paints ever so accurately the special beauty of the Bay of Naples, the hot summer and the air placid waters undulating beneath a boat, all surrounded with gentle breezes in the air. Hertz, who writes extensively on 18th century composers and operas, compares a similar type of aria written by Haydn ("Soave zeffire" from *La pescatrice*, 1770) with Mozart's. He states that 'it cannot be coincidental that whereas Haydn, who had never been to Naples, nor even to Italy (or even the sea until late in his life), Mozart had an uncanny affinity for the sights, sounds and perfumes of southern climes.'⁽²⁴⁾ Mozart's memory of Naples in 1770 comes through directly in the music, helped along by the mastery of that the composer had acquired twenty years later. It is considered one of his most 'perfect and beautiful' arias.

The overwhelming and demonic power of Vesuvius may have resonated with the young Mozart so that its intense power was reflected many years later in the opera, *Don Giovanni*, K. 527. The opera's overture (beginning movement) and the finale (as when the Commendatore appears and pulls Don Giovanni down into the bowels of the earth and into

²³ Letter of Leopold Mozart to his wife, June 12, 1770, Naples

²⁴ Daniel Hertz, *Mozart's Operas*, University of California Press, 1990, pg. 231

hell) represent music quite apart from anything else in Mozart's oeuvre. The music trembles, as does a volcano, and climbs to new heights of terror. In some passages, the music conveys a terrible and powerful force, its ascending and descending minor scales building towards an inevitable, apocalyptic event. The scene with the Commendatore is one of sheer agony, wherein Don Giovanni strives to avoid the terrible fate of death. Was Mozart recalling his days at Naples and the sight of the formidable volcano? Had he remembered, when he wrote this music, of the sights he saw at Pompeii, of the struggles of a people overtaken by the terrible forces and of the agonies that befell them?

One last mention about Naples should give some clear sense how Wolfgang loved Italy and Naples. By the age of 21, he had grown tired of Salzburg and quit his post there. In 1777, he set out on a trip with his mother to find another, more suitable musical post. He unexpectedly encountered many difficulties and frustrations. But, when he met his Bohemian friend and colleague Josef Mysliveček in Munich, who had given many operas in Naples (at least six), Mysliveček suggested that he go back to Italy to find work. He indicated quite specifically that it should be Naples where he could arrange for Mozart to write an opera at the Teatro San Carlo. Mozart was enticed and his spirits were lifted. He wrote his father immediately and said 'He [Mysliveček] says he could write a letter to Naples whenever I want him to; but the sooner, the better.' Mozart then related more of the conversation:

Mysliveček to Mozart: I implore you, go to Italy. There one is really esteemed and valued.

Mozart to his father: And I am sure that he is right. When I think it over carefully, I have to admit that in no other country have I received so many honours, nowhere have I been so esteemed as in Italy; and certainly it is a real distinction to have written operas in Italy, especially for Naples....I have an inexpressible longing to write another opera. It is a long way to go, it is true, but it would be a long time before I should have to write it....and once I have composed for Naples, I shall be in demand everywhere. ⁽²⁵⁾ (underlining mine)

But, Mysliveček did not come through on his promise to secure for Mozart a commission to write an opera for Carnival 1779, a failure which no doubt stung both Wolfgang and Leopold. In the end, Mozart's desire to return to Naples to write an opera was never realized, and the well-known operas of the last decade were written in Vienna and Prague between the years 1782-1791. In more general terms, it was Italy *per se* that drove his imagination wild with excitement and enthusiasm. He wished to return to Italy under any circumstances, and urged his his father in 1778 to do what he could to enable him to return there.

I beg you, do whatever you can to get us to Italy. You know my biggest desire is to write operas... ⁽²⁶⁾

It may be best to conclude with Mozart's own boyish comments (even if colored by his father's views) that convey his special delight with the sights and sounds of Naples.

25 Letter of Wolfgang Mozart to his father, Oct. 10-11th, 1777, Munich

26 Letter of Wolfgang Mozart to his father, February 4, 1778 Mannheim

Naples is beautiful, but it's as crowded as Vienna and Paris. Of London and Naples, I'm not sure if the people in Naples are not more impertinent than those in London, for here the common people, the laceroni, have their own general or chief who receives 25 silver ducats from the king every month just to keep the laceroni in order (27).



One of the Lazzeroni - Seller of Pizza

"Eat here this pizza which costs only one tornese"

VENDITORE DI - PIZZE -

Da una stampa del Settecento, che reca questo dialogo dialettale:
«E' ch' pizza su tornese. Buontellu a sta pizza».

...the dances are miserably pompous, the theater is beautiful, the king has a crude Neapolitan upbringing, and in the opera house he always stands on a little stool so that he appears a bit taller than the queen. The queen is beautiful and courteous, and she has greeted me at least six times at the molo in the friendliest manner. (28)

Catherine Sprague,
July 26th, 2011
New Jersey, USA

27 Postscript of Wolfgang Mozart to his sister, May 19, 1771, Naples
28 Letter of Wolfgang Mozart to his sister, June 5, 1770, Naples

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