

The “Dux Drafts”. Casanova’s Contribution to Da Ponte’s and Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*

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In this year’s jubilee display to commemorate Mozart’s 250th birthday, the public viewed an inconspicuous manuscript page among more than a thousand exhibits; the first and third leaves of the page were covered by Italian verses in the handwriting of a famous author;¹ this handwriting, known previously only to specialists in the field but of enormous significance in cultural history, was Giacomo Casanova’s (1725–1798). The verses on the first and third leaves of the folded sheet represent two drafts for stage texts apparently dealing with the Don Juan theme in general, and Lorenzo Da Ponte’s (1749–1838) version of the subject for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), in particular.²

When the drafts were discovered³ in Casanova’s estate at the Waldstein family’s Dux Castle in Bohemia⁴ in the early twentieth century⁴ and shortly thereafter published as a facsimile,⁵ the confusion surrounding the creation of *Il Dissoluto punito. O sia Il D. Giovanni* was enriched by yet another facet. While research had [...]

* This contribution developed out of “Die Duxer Entwürfe – Casanovas Beitrag”, the last section of the chapter “Der Prager Herbst” in H. E. Weidinger, *IL DISSOLUTO PUNITO. Untersuchungen zur äußeren und inneren Entstehungsgeschichte von Lorenzo da Pontes & Wolfgang Amadeus Mozarts DON GIOVANNI*, Vienna: Doctoral thesis 2002, 16 vols. (vol. I–IV text, vol. V. bibliography, vol. VI–XVI appendix containing documentation), here: vol. IV, pp. 988–1014. The author would like to thank Reinhard Eisendle, Michael Hüttler, Hans Peter Kellner and last but not least, his mother, Erna Weidinger. The study, a precursor of a book on the topic, is dedicated to her.

- 1 Presented and shown in Herbert Lachmayer (ed.), *Mozart. Experiment Aufklärung im Wien des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts* (catalogue to coincide with an exhibition of the Da Ponte Institute, 17 March – 20 September 2006 at Albertina Vienna), Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag 2006, cat. no. 567 (p. 313); a colour facsimile can be found *ibidem*, p. 66 top.
- 2 See illustrations 2 and 3.
- 3 Discovered by Bernhard Marr (1856–1940) while drawing up an inventory of Casanova’s estate in 1913 (Inv. no. U 16 h 31).
- 4 At that time, Casanova’s estate was in its original location in Dux (now, Duchcov), in the archives of Count Waldstein’s eponymous castle; after World War I the entire archives were transferred to Hirschberg castle, owned by the same family who ran a nearby cotton factory. After that, Casanova’s estate was sent to Münchengrätz Castle (Mnichovo Hradiště) along with the Waldstein library. Today, Casanova’s estate can be found at the Státní oblastní archiv v Praze (Governmental Regional Archives of Prague), which is located at the Chodovec building in the 4th district of Prague).
- 5 Published by Paul Nettl (1889–1972), *Musik und Tanz bei Casanova*, Prague: Gesellschaft deutscher Bücherfreunde in Böhmen 1924, pp. 83–86 (chapter “Casanova – Da Ponte – Mozart?”), b/w facsimile, *ibidem*, pp. 87–88.