

Press Release, 22 May 2017

Two precious new acquisitions for the Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation's collection: a letter and an (alleged) portrait of Nannerl (Maria Anna Mozart, Wolfgang Amadé's sister)

The Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation is pleased to announce that it has acquired two very valuable items for its collections and for research on Mozart's sister Maria Anna, known as 'Nannerl' Mozart. A graceful portrait, allegedly showing the young Maria Anna Mozart and until now owned privately, was recently added to the collection of the Mozarteum Foundation. At the latest since the 19th century the enigmatic portrait of a woman dating from the 18th century has been regarded as a portrait of Nannerl; from now on it is on display in the Mozart Residence.

At an auction of autograph manuscripts in Berlin in March, a letter written by Maria Anna Mozart was purchased. This original letter dating from 1799 contains Nannerl's reminiscences about her brother Wolfgang Amadé, and is one of the most personal and informative documents about his childhood. Until now it was also owned privately. The acquisition of the four-page letter is an extraordinary enrichment for the unique collection of autographs of the Mozart Family in the Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation. There is no other collection like this in the world – it contains 200 original letters by Mozart, about 300 by his father Leopold and 100 autograph music manuscripts. The *Bibliotheca Mozartiana* (Mozart Library) of the Mozarteum Foundation owns over 80 letters by Nannerl, as well as pages from her diary and other written documents.

Mozart's sister Maria Anna (1751–1829) is of central importance as regards authentic information about Mozart's life and work. It was she who carefully looked after the family correspondence for many years. This includes Leopold's letters from the time when Nannerl and Wolfgang were travelling as child prodigies, letters Mozart wrote on his later travels, and the correspondence between Mozart and his father during his time in Vienna. These letters, together with Maria Anna's handwritten reminiscences, were and are an invaluable source of documentation. What is especially remarkable in this context is the correspondence she engaged in from 1799 to 1807 with the Leipzig music publishers Breitkopf & Härtel about her brother. The *Bibliotheca Mozartiana* already owns many of the approximately 40 letters and so it is of great significance to complete the collection with the new purchase. Maria Anna, as a married woman Baroness von Berchtold zu Sonnenburg, wrote this letter on 24 November 1799 in St. Gilgen. On a total of four pages Nannerl compiled several anecdotes about Mozart's childhood which since have become famous. They refer to the time of the extensive journeys and also contain a touching memory of a particularly loving bond between Wolfgang Amadé and his father.

...1st As the journeys we made took him to different countries, as we were travelling from one place to another, he thought up a kingdom which he called the Kingdom Back. He said he was the king of this realm, and our servant, who was able to draw a little, had to draw a map of it, on to which he dictated the names of the cities, towns and villages.

2nd He was so fond of his parents, especially of his father, that he composed a melody which he sang for him every day before going to bed as his father put him on a chair; his father always had to sing the second voice and when this ceremony was over, and on no day could it be left out, he then kissed his father with fervent tenderness, and then with great contentedness and calm he lay down in his bed... He carried out this ritual until he was ten years old.

Under the title *A Few More Anecdotes from Mozart's Childhood Years. Related by his Sister, the Baroness von Berchtold zu Sonnenburg* excerpts of these anecdotes were published in January 1800 in the journal *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* published by Breitkopf & Härtel.

The alleged portrait of Maria Anna Mozart, purchased recently, raises questions for the researchers at the Mozarteum Foundation that will keep them busy for a long time. The finely executed portrait



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shows a graceful young woman aged between fourteen and eighteen years, very nobly dressed, and even during the 19th century it was already considered to be a portrait of Maria Anna Mozart. A relevant annotation – not dating from the time when the painting was made – is to be found on the back: *Nannerl Mozart / sister of W. A. Mozart, a painting by Mignard*. In several publications the date when the picture was made is stated as 1770.

For several reasons the Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation is not entirely convinced that the portrait really does show Nannerl. For instance, the manner of presentation is unusual. The person portrayed is not holding any music or playing the piano, which at that time could probably be expected, and instead she is holding a valuable piece of cloth or silk in her hand. One is tempted to suppose that it might be the daughter of a cloth merchant. On the other hand we do know that Maria Anna Mozart was very keen on wearing the latest fashion in clothes.

On taking a closer look, the origin and period when the portrait was painted raise further questions: the restored oil painting shows considerable artistic quality and would indicate that it was created between 1750 and 1780. If it is indeed a portrait of Nannerl, the estimated year of its creation, 1770, is not tenable, but it could have been painted on the return from the grand tour of western Europe around 1765/66, when Mozart's sister was aged between fourteen and fifteen. Besides the reference to the artist on the back, the letters 'N. Mignard. P' can faintly be made out in the picture itself. It is perfectly reasonable to assume that that painter was called Mignard. On the one hand it indicates the Mignard Family, to which the Baroque painter Nicolas Mignard (1606–1668) belonged, and this was a French dynasty of painters who were probably active until the second half of the 18th century. On the other hand we could be talking here about a travelling painter called Mignard who was by chance in the region of Hessen around Frankfurt following Mozart's traces and who settled there, as did several Huguenots from the late 17th century. According to the current status of analysis it also cannot be excluded that it is a case of a 'red herring', that the misinterpretation has existed for a long time and that it is an anonymous portrait by an anonymous 18th-century painter. However, it has to be pointed out that there is hardly any kind of motivation for making an extravagant forgery or a manipulation of a portrait of Nannerl because such a painting in those days was certainly not able to fetch such high prices as a portrait of Wolfgang Amadé Mozart.

As a portrait of Nannerl the painting is well documented over the centuries. By the end of the 19th century it was already handed down as a 'Mignard', for the first time in the so-called 'Expert Catalogue' by Guido Adler for the Vienna Exhibition in 1892. A drawing of the portrait is shown there with the note 'Chalk Drawing based on the Original Painting by Nic. Mignard 1770, Dr Hoch'sches Conservatorium, Frankfurt a.M.' One generation later the location of the painting is stated as being in the academic conservatory founded in 1878 in Frankfurt. In May 1906, following up on information from the Mozart expert Eduard Speyer, the *Musical Times* printed a photo apparently of the same portrait. The legend states, "From a reproduction, in Mr Edward Speyer's Collection, after the original oil-painting by Mignard, at Dr Hoch's Conservatorium, Frankfurt am Main." At the beginning of the 20th century the pianist Eduard Jung (1884–1959) received the oil portrait as a present from the Hoch Conservatory. The Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation was able to purchase the picture from his heir.

Further Information:

Christine Forstner, Press and Public Relations, Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation, Schwarzstr. 26, A-5020 Salzburg, Tel.: +43 662 88940-25, forstner@mozarteum.at, www.mozarteum.at