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“*Mon adorable Mécène...*” Ranieri Calzabigi’s correspondence with Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg

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Abstract: *The paper focuses on presenting a unique, exceptionally rich, but still basically unprocessed correspondence from the second half of 18th century between the Count and later Prince Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg, a well-known and respected figure in European history, and one of his important sources of information, Italian poet, librettist, opera reformer, writer and intellectual, Ranieri de Calzabigi. The edition of the correspondence is the main output of the grant project Vienna „à la française“: The role of Wenzl Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg’s Parisian stays to his Viennese cultural patronage, which is briefly presented. The main questions in case of this paper are: Calzabigi’s position within Kaunitz’s social-informational network, his sources of information and also the relationship between the Prince and the poet.*

Keywords: *early modern period, aristocracy, diplomacy, 18th century, enlightenment, intellectuals, agents, informational networks, grant project, Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg, Ranieri Calzabigi*

This paper presents an extensive and exceptionally intact collection of correspondence dating from the second half of the 18th century (which is the primary output of a research grant project), consisting of letters between an influential aristocrat and an intellectual. The study presented here also describes and summarizes some of the research that has been undertaken so far.¹

¹ The paper also briefly presents the grant project itself, entitled *Vienna “à la française”: The role of Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg’s Parisian stays in his Viennese cultural patronage*. The project was implemented in 2019–2021 and funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GA ČR, reg. no. 19–25570Y). It was coordinated within the Association for Central European Cultural Studies, and the research team was headed by the musicologist Dr. Jana Franková. The other team members were the historian Dr. Lenka Švandová Maršálková and the art historian Dr. Gernot Mayer. The research findings (including a commented scholarly edition of the extensive correspondence between Calzabigi and Kaunitz) will be published by the Olms publishing house in a monograph entitled *Letters written from the theatre of*

The correspondents – and the central personalities in this study – have attracted varying degrees of attention from researchers. Count (later Prince) Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg (1711–1794) is a widely familiar figure in European history and historiography: he was a respected diplomat and statesman, a proponent of Enlightenment ideals, a patron of the arts, and a highly educated man. Scholars have always been fascinated by his exceptionally accomplished diplomatic and political career, and recent research has also focused on his numerous activities in the domain of culture.² Kaunitz was a man of many talents and interests, and this was reflected in his extensive network of social contacts and sources of information – a network that he constantly strove to expand further. Those

life: The correspondence between the poet Ranieri Calzabigi and his patron Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg (ca 1764–1791), Hildesheim 2022. The text of this paper is a modified and expanded version of a chapter from this monograph: Lenka ŠVANDOVÁ MARŠÁLKOVÁ, *Ranieri Calzabigi – an agent, client, or friend of Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg*, in: *Ibidem*. Since this paper presents only one chapter of the forthcoming book and not the complete research, it has not been possible to introduce sufficiently all the topics that would otherwise deserve attention. Therefore, more information can be found in the aforementioned monograph.

- 2 Count (later Prince) Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg (1711–1794) was one of the most famous members of the house of Kaunitz. He studied at Leipzig University, and his travels later took him to both of the Low Countries, the German-speaking lands, Italy, France, and Lorraine. He was particularly enthused by his stay in Paris, and both the city and French culture left a deep and lasting impression on him. Wenzel Anton's career began in 1735, when he was appointed *Reichshofrat*, and he spent the following years in the diplomatic service. He travelled to Turin as an extraordinary imperial envoy (1742–1744); he served as a government minister in the Habsburg Netherlands (1744–1746); he was instrumental in the signing of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748); and in the following year he was decorated with the Order of the Golden Fleece. In 1750–1753 he once more lived in France, this time serving as the imperial ambassador. He succeeded in laying the foundations for the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756, and after his return from the posting he was immediately appointed as *Hof- und Staatskanzler*. He held this office almost until his death, serving under four Habsburg emperors; his advice was particularly prized by the Empress Maria Theresa. He was rewarded for his service with the title *Reichsfürst* (in 1764) and with a Bohemian princely title (twelve years later). His marriage to Countess Maria Ernestine von Starhemberg yielded six sons and one daughter; three of the sons (Ernst Christoph, Dominik Anton Andreas, and Joseph Clemens) followed in their father's footsteps and served as diplomats at various European courts. Kaunitz was also a noted supporter of the arts and sciences. He was the patron of several artists, musicians, and writers (including the composer Christoph Willibald Gluck, the lutenists Karel and Josef Kohout, and the painters Friedrich Heinrich Füger, Hubert Maurer, Joseph Schöpf, and Martin Knoller), as well as institutions (such as the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts; he was also a co-founder of the Vienna Academy of Copper Engraving and the Imperial Gallery at the Belvedere). Among the key works from the extensive literature about Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg are the following: Grete KLINGENSTEIN – Franz J. SZABO (eds.), *Staatskanzler Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg 1711–1794. Neue Perspektiven zu Politik und Kultur der europäischen Aufklärung*, Graz 1996; Grete KLINGENSTEIN, *Der Aufstieg des Hauses Kaunitz. Studien zur Herkunft und Bildung des Staatskanzlers Wenzel Anton*, Göttingen 1975; Franz J. SZABO, *Kaunitz and enlightened absolutism 1753–1780*, Cambridge 1994; Lothar SCHILLING, *Kaunitz und das Renversement des alliances. Studien zur außenpolitischen Konzeption Wenzel Antons von Kaunitz*, Berlin 1994.

who sought to win his favour supplied him not only with news from the worlds of politics and diplomacy, but also with information about the latest scientific discoveries, literary achievements, theatre, music, and fine art. His contacts also offered recommendations on who he should hire into his service, which projects he should support, and which works should not be allowed to escape his attention; this is evident from numerous sources connected with Kaunitz.³ One of the important figures in his network of contacts was the Italian poet, librettist, musical theorist, writer, and scholar Ranieri Calzabigi (1714–1795) – however, Calzabigi is far less widely known than his patron. He has attracted attention from musicologists, but not (so far) from historians; this is despite the fact that he remained in contact with Kaunitz (first personally, and then via correspondence) for around 40 years, from the 1750s to his death.

What, then, do we know about this Renaissance man? He was born in the Tuscan city of Livorno (Leghorn) to a wealthy mercantile family, and after completing his studies he took over the family business. However, his career as a merchant was short-lived; the business collapsed, and he was forced to leave Tuscany. In 1741 he moved to Naples, where he became the secretary to the French envoy Paul François Galucci de l’Hôpital, Marquis de Châteauneuf-sur-Cher. It was during this time that he wrote his first operatic libretto, which at this stage of his life was heavily influenced by the renowned librettist and dramatist Pietro Metastasio; indeed, he sent one of his works to Metastasio asking for his opinion on it.

In 1751 Calzabigi left Naples in the service of the Marquis de l’Hôpital and travelled to Paris, where he met numerous important cultural figures, including the composer Christoph Willibald Gluck, the later director of the imperial theatres in Vienna Count Giacomo Durazzo, the dancer and choreographer Gasparo Angiolini, the renowned opera singer Gaetano Guadagni, and many more. In Paris he also met Wenzel Anton von

3 There is a wealth of literature on this issue; a general treatment is given e.g. in Claire LEMERCIER, *Formale Methoden oder Netzwerkanalysen in den Geschichtswissenschaften. Warum und Wie?*, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 23, 2012, no. 1, pp. 16–41. Works on Kaunitz’s activities in the cultural and artistic sphere include e.g. Jiří KROUPA, *Wenzel Anton, Prince Kaunitz-Rietberg: From “Curiosité” to Criticism of Art*, *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity: řada uměnovědná* (F), vol. 45, no. 40, 1997, pp. 7–58; Christine LEBEAU, *Verwandtschaft, Patronage und Freundschaft. Die Rolle des Buches im Kreis um Kaunitz*, in: Grete Klingenstein – Franz J. Szabo (eds.), *Staatskanzler Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg 1711–1794. Neue Perspektiven zu Politik und Kultur der europäischen Aufklärung*, Graz 1996, pp. 291–304; Gerhard CROLL, *Musiker und Musik in der Privatkorrespondenz von Wenzel Anton Fürst von Kaunitz. Informanten und Informationen*, in: *Ibidem*, pp. 341–359; Jana FRANKOVÁ, *Wenzl Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg and his Grand Tour – A Source for his Future Musical Patronage?*, in: Rudolf Rasch (ed.), *Music and Power in Baroque Era*, Turnhout 2018, pp. 319–342, and most recently Gernot MAYER, *Kulturpolitik der Aufklärung. Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg (1711–1794) und die Künste*, doctoral dissertation, Universität Wien, Wien 2020 (published under the same title by Michael Imhof Verlag, Petersberg 2021).

Kaunitz-Rietberg, who was the Habsburg ambassador in France from 1750 to 1753. In Paris, Calzabigi experienced the “Querelle des Bouffons” – a polemical conflict between proponents of French and Italian opera, which resonated throughout the contemporary musical world and played an important role in shaping Calzabigi’s own opinions. While living in the French capital, he also prepared an edition of the complete works of Metastasio, and he even (along with his brother Giovanni Antonio and Giacomo Casanova) organized a lottery to raise funds for the establishment of a military academy.

After ten years in Paris, Calzabigi left France for Brussels, where (supported by Count Johann Karl Philipp von Cobenzl) he attempted to organize a lottery, though ultimately this venture proved a failure. He subsequently presented his lottery project to the Prussian royal court; this effort was similarly unsuccessful, so he relocated to Vienna. It is likely that he was invited to the Habsburg capital by Kaunitz himself, as he was immediately appointed as the Count’s secretary; he also simultaneously held another position, in the department of the *Staatskanzlei* responsible for the Low Countries. Calzabigi soon became an important member of the circle of art lovers that had coalesced around the *Staatskanzler*; he worked with the composer Gluck and the above-mentioned Count Durazzo, who helped to introduce French *opéra comique* to the Viennese public. While in Vienna, Calzabigi continued to write literary and dramatic works. In 1761 the ballet *Don Juan, ou le Festin de pierre* had its premiere, with music by Gluck and a libretto by Calzabigi, and in the following year their first “reformed” opera, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, was premiered. The opera was very well received: compared with the complicated and convoluted plots, music, and overall concept that had previously typified the genre, it was substantially simpler in its approach. A similar “reformed” concept was also evident in subsequent works by Gluck and Calzabigi, such as the operas *Alceste* (1767) and *Paride ed Elena* (1770). Besides Gluck, Calzabigi also collaborated with other composers: Florian Leopold Gassmann set his satire *La critica teatrale* to music; Antonio Salieri wrote music for Calzabigi’s libretto *Ipermestra* (which was performed with the title *Les Danaïdes*), and near the end of his life Calzabigi wrote two librettos (*Elfrida* and *Elvira*) for Giovanni Paisiello.

However, despite his literary successes, in 1774 Calzabigi had to leave Vienna (for reasons that will be discussed below). He travelled first to Pisa and then to Naples, where he lived until his death. He remained an active author until the very end of his life, as is evidenced not only in his extensive correspondence, but also in his poems and essays.⁴

4 Lucio TUFANO, *I viaggi di Orfeo. Musiche e musicisti intorno a Ranieri Calzabigi*, Roma 2012; see also other studies by the same author. Anna Laura BELLINA (ed.), *Ranieri Calzabigi: Scritti teatrali e letterari*, Roma 1994; Federico MARRI – Francesco Paolo RUSSO (eds.), *Ranieri Calzabigi (Livorno 1714–Napoli 1795) tra Vienna e Napoli*, Lucca 1998); Ghino LAZZERI, *La vita e l’opera letteraria di Ranieri Calzabigi. Saggio critico con appendice di documenti inediti o rari*, Città di Castello 1907. Calzabigi also appears

The vast majority of the surviving correspondence between Kaunitz and Calzabigi dates from the period when the latter was living in Naples. During his time in Vienna he also exchanged letters with Kaunitz when necessary, but the pair remained in regular personal contact, so it was not necessary to discuss everything in writing. The surviving letters represent only a part of the pair’s complete correspondence; Kaunitz’s replies to Calzabigi have not been preserved (with only two exceptions⁵), and Calzabigi also wrote more letters than have survived. Moreover, Calzabigi assumed that Kaunitz would burn his letters; he had stated his wish that only his literary works should survive him, though the real motivation for his insistence that his letters should be burned probably lay elsewhere: he expressed himself with striking frankness, whether writing about important figures, sensitive political topics, or professional matters that were not intended to become public knowledge (in which case he was justifiably fearful that information might leak out).⁶

Fortunately, Kaunitz paid no heed to his friend’s insistence that his letters should be destroyed, so it has been possible to create a scholarly edition presenting the texts of 47 letters and 16 appendices, totalling around 300 folios. The documents are mainly held in the Moravian Provincial Archive in Brno and the Kaunitz family archive,⁷ though some are at the Morgan Library in New York⁸ or at the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna.⁹ The study presented in this paper has also drawn on other sources, especially archives in Vienna,¹⁰ edited texts,¹¹ and old printings.

The edited letters cover the period from the mid-1760s to 1791. During this period, a gradual shift in the perception of the ideal letter was underway. The artifice that had

as a supporting character in a number of publications on musicology or art history, e.g. Anthony R. DELDONNA, *Opera, Theatrical Culture and Society in Late Eighteenth-Century Naples*, London – New York 2016; G. MAYER, *Kulturpolitik der Aufklärung* etc. He was also mentioned in works written by his contemporaries: Giacomo CASANOVA, *Mémoires de Jacques Casanova de Seingalt*, Tome VI, Bruxelles 1871, pp. 82–83. More references are given below.

- 5 See the draft of Kaunitz’s reply to Calzabigi dated 18 September 1775, OeStA Wien, HHStA, Große Korrespondenz, kart. 405, konv. B, fol. 15–16. The other is a letter dated 9 August 1768, which is only cited in the literature: Oskar TEUBER – Alexander von WEILEN, *Das K. K. Hofburgtheater seit seiner Begründung = Die Theater Wiens*, Bd. II-1, Wien 1896, p. 142, number 11.
- 6 See Calzabigi’s letter dated 10 March 1784, MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), inv. no. 4129, fasc. II, fol. 124–131.
- 7 Especially the Moravian Provincial Archive in Brno (MZA) and the Kaunitz family archive (RA Kounic), G 436, inv. no. 4129, fasc. I and II, though other parts of the Kaunitz family archive were also used.
- 8 US-NYpm, Mary Flagler Cary Music Coll. – Letters, Call. N° MFC C171.K21.
- 9 OeStA Wien, HHStA, Große Korrespondenz, kart. 405, konv. B.
- 10 In the Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (OeStA, AVA) the source was the Familienarchiv Harrach; in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (OeStA, HHStA) the main source was the fund “Große Korrespondenz” in addition to numerous others.
- 11 Primarily the edition by Alfred Ritter von ARNETH – M. Jules FLAMMERMONT (eds.), *Correspondance secrète du comte de Mercy Argenteau avec l’empereur Joseph II et le prince de Kaunitz*, Paris 1889–1891.

characterized the preceding period had fallen out of favour, and guides on “the art of letter-writing” recommended that the written text should resemble spoken language: it should be natural and readable, covering a wide range of topics.¹² The cult of *sensibilité*, sentimentalism, or the “culture of sensitivity” thus penetrated into the style of contemporary letter-writing, which was characterized by a high degree of emotional expressivity. Previously, it had been deemed appropriate to conceal one’s feelings under a mask of perfect self-control, but now it was considered acceptable to display emotions – though it was essential to use the correct means of expression when doing so. Educated men and women thus embraced letter-writing as a specific literary genre, one in which rationality and emotion (sense and sensibility) were to co-exist in an ideal harmonious equilibrium.¹³

Calzabigi’s correspondence reflects this trend quite closely. Though his sentences are complex and his vocabulary quite florid, he nevertheless expresses his message in a comprehensible manner. It is immediately evident that the letters were written by an educated man; the script is neat and legible, and his words clearly indicate his subordinate status while also expressing his respect, friendship, and admiration for Kaunitz. As was common among intellectuals at the time, the correspondence is mainly in French, a language in which Calzabigi was highly proficient. Several letters are in Italian, while others contain words or some entire sentences in Italian, inserted into an otherwise French text. Most of the letters contain numerous Latin citations (mainly from classical authors) or paraphrases of Latin texts. This – in addition to the accomplished style, broad range of topics, and cogently expressed observations – is further evidence of the writer’s education and erudition.¹⁴

The characteristics outlined above mean that Calzabigi’s correspondence with Kaunitz places considerable demands on the reader. This may be one reason why researchers have

12 For more on this topic see e.g. Carmen FURGER, *Briefsteller. Das Medium „Brief“ im 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhundert*, Köln – Weimar – Wien 2010; Beatrix BASTL, *Formen und Gattungen frühneuzeitlicher Briefe*, in: Josef Pauser – Martin Scheutz – Thomas Winkelbauer (eds.), *Quellenkunde der Habsburgermonarchie (16.–18. Jahrhundert). Ein exemplarischer Handbuch*, München – Oldenbourg – Wien 2004, pp. 801–812; Pierre BOURDIEU, *Teorie jednání*, Praha 1998, pp. 27–28, 37–40, 81–86, 96–101, etc.

13 Ivo CERMAN, *Chotkové. Příběh úřednické šlechty*, Praha 2008, pp. 359–375; Idem, *Šlechtická kultura v 18. století. Filozofové, mystici, politici*, Praha 2011, pp. 233–240; Benoît MELANÇON, *Diderot: l'autre de la lettre. Conversation et correspondance*, in: Christoph Strosetzki – Bernard Bray (eds.), *Art de la lettre, art de la conversation à l'époque classique en France*, Paris 1995, pp. 355–367.

14 On languages in the Early Modern Age see e.g. Peter BURKE, *Jazyky a společenství v raně novověké Evropě*, Praha 2011; Walter-Michael WUZELLA, *Untersuchungen zur Mehrsprachigkeit und Sprachgebrauch am Wiener Kaiserhof zwischen 1658 und 1780*, in: *Šlechta v habsburské monarchii a císařský dvůr (1526–1740) = Opera historica 10*, České Budějovice 2003, pp. 415–438, etc. Among the *Briefsteller* (guides on how to write letters) see e.g. Friedrich Carl von MOSER, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, Frankfurt am Main 1750.

largely overlooked it, with only a few minor exceptions.¹⁵ More attention has been directed towards Calzabigi’s Italian-language correspondence with his friends and acquaintances in Italy (primarily the diplomat, merchant, and banker Count Antonio Greppi, the mathematician and astronomer Paolo Frisi, the poet Giovanni Fantoni, the sculptor Antonio Canova, and others); some letters from this correspondence have been published in scholarly editions.¹⁶ As an educated man who moved within a cultivated environment, Calzabigi was in contact with a wide circle of people, though there are few documents of this fact, as most of his correspondence appears not to have survived. There is only one other known example of his correspondence with members of the nobility – five letters addressed to Count Johann Philipp von Cobenzl, dating from 1786–1788.¹⁷ For this reason, the letters written to Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg represent a unique source; they are numerous, they cover a substantial period of time, and they address a wide range of topics.¹⁸

Besides creating a parallel French-English edition of this correspondence, including annotations and introductory studies (which opens up this largely unknown body of writings to a wider readership), a further aim of the grant project was to investigate Kaunitz’s network of acquaintances in the world of culture and the arts; he began building up this network during his first educational and diplomatic journeys, and he later used his contacts to influence cultural life in Vienna. The project also set out to explore Kaunitz’s activities as a patron of the arts, as well as Calzabigi’s role in Kaunitz’s network of contacts and the relationship between the two correspondents.

Key questions addressed by this study include: whether Calzabigi can be considered one of Kaunitz’s informers; his position within Kaunitz’s social and informational network; what both correspondents gained from their extensive correspondence, and how; what Calzabigi wrote in his letters, and why he thought that these topics would interest Kaunitz; where he took his information from, and how his letters were delivered to their recipient.

15 Only one letter (in Italian) has previously been published in a scholarly edition (in fact in several editions). Dated 6 March 1767, it was first published in 1938, and subsequent editions followed, e.g. Vladimír HELFERT, *Dosud neznámý dopis Ran. Calzabigiho z r. 1767*, *Musikologie* I, 1938, pp. 114–122; Christoph Willibald von GLUCK, *Alceste, Tragedia per musica in drei Akten von Ranieo de’Calzabigi*, Teilband B, ed. by Gerhard CROLL – Renate CROLL, Kassel 2005, pp. X–XII, etc.

16 The latest work listing currently known letters by Calzabigi is L. TUFANO, *I viaggi di Orfeo*, here pp. 1, 39, 75, 84 and 86–87; see also Hertha MICHEL, *Ranieri Calzabigi als Dichter von Musikdramen und als Kritiker. Mit einer biographischen Einleitung. Gluck Jahrbuch IV*, Leipzig 1918, here pp. 99–100; A. L. BELLINA (ed.), *Ranieri Calzabigi*, pp. XLIV–XLVI.

17 OeStA Wien, HHStA Wien, Große Korrespondenz, kart. 444, konv. G, fol. 93–114.

18 For more information about the letters see the subchapters in the forthcoming book: Jana FRANKOVÁ – Lenka ŠVANDOVÁ MARŠÁLKOVÁ, *Correspondence, Correspondence between Ranieri Calzabigi and Wenzel Anton Kaunitz-Rietberg and Style of the letters* in: J. Franková – G. Mayer – L. Švandová Maršálková (eds.), *Letters written from the theatre of life...* (in press) and also the part *Edition*, in: *Ibidem*.

Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg's contemporaries considered him to be a man of good taste, who was genuinely knowledgeable in many fields. This was partly due to his numerous informers, both professionals and amateurs; we have a fair degree of knowledge about some of his informers, but less is known about others. Kaunitz employed a number of agents (some of whom were specialists in a particular field such as art or theatre), and naturally he also drew on other sources of information: his friends and acquaintances who were influential politicians and diplomats,¹⁹ as well as members of his family (three of his sons followed in his footsteps and pursued diplomatic careers, and during their postings abroad they informed their father about everything that interested him).²⁰ An invaluable source of contacts and news was Count Florimond Claude de Mercy-Argenteau, the imperial ambassador in France from 1766 to 1790, who was an important channel for the dissemination of French cultural influences in Vienna. As will be shown below, the Count informed Kaunitz not only about political developments, but also about the qualities of actors and the possibilities of hiring them. Mercy-Argenteau sought out and sent Kaunitz various items: books, luxurious furniture and fabrics, and eye-glasses, as well as seedlings for trees and shrubs. He also kept Kaunitz informed about the latest developments in the worlds of culture, science, and technology, and he even (in collaboration with others)

19 In *Kulturpolitik der Aufklärung*, G. MAYER discusses the activities of numerous informers, some of whom worked in collaboration with each other. They include Charles Simon Favart, Giovanni Francesco Brunanti, Christian Mechel, Gottfried van Swieten, Joannon de Saint-Laurent, Count Giacomo Durazzo, Count Johann Josef von Wilczek, Count Karl Josef von Firmian, Count Antonio Greppi, Count (later Prince) Franz Xaver von Orsini-Rosenberg, Cardinal Alessandro Albani, or Count von Cobenzl and his agent Pietro Poloni. Other informers of Kaunitz are less well known. For example, during his time in Brussels he befriended Marie-Jeanne de Proli, née de Clotz, who sought out and sent him luxurious furniture, curtains, and other fabrics, as well as tulip bulbs. MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), inv. no. 4370, kart. 447. At this time he also employed two French agents, Camber and Canet, who collaborated to supply him with *objets d'art* from Paris. OeStA, HHStA Wien, Große Korrespondenz, kart. 405, konv. A, drafts from 1. and 6 October 1745, fol. 17–18, 19–20. The imperial book-buyer Reich sent him books from Leipzig, as well as findings of other works that were of interest to him. MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), inv. no. 4375, kart. 447, fol. 1, 3. A certain Monsieur Monclair sent him various items from Paris (books, watches, kitchenware and tableware, lamps, and components for various devices), and the imperial historiographer, the Jesuit Georg Pray (who was also the librarian at the university in Buda) sent him his own works of historiography. OeStA Wien, HHStA, Große Korrespondenz, kart. 405, konv. A, fol. 91, 93–94, 119. Kaunitz's agent in matters of dressage and equine veterinary care was the Palatinate envoy at the Imperial Diet in Regensburg, Johann Heinrich von Francken, who sent him veterinary texts and put him in contact with leading experts in the field. For more information on this topic see Lenka ŠVANDOVÁ MARŠÁLKOVÁ, "Ma santé commence à être un peu meilleure..." *Osvícenec a jeho zdraví. Část druhá: Václav Antonín z Kounic-Rietbergu jako pacient*, *Theatrum historiae* 28, 2021, pp. 35–77.

20 Ernst Christoph was the imperial envoy in Naples and at the election of Pope Clement XIV; Dominik Anton Andreas served in Warsaw, St. Petersburg, and Spain; Joseph Clemens served in Stockholm, St. Petersburg, and Madrid. Their correspondence with their father is held e.g. at MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), inv. no. 4264 (Ernst Christoph), inv. no. 4265 (Dominik Anton Andreas) and inv. no. 4267 (Joseph Clemens), and at OeStA Wien, HHStA, Große Korrespondenz, kart. 405, konv. C.

negotiated the purchase of thoroughbred horses for the *Staatskanzler*. It is unsurprising that during his mission in France, Mercy-Argenteau was in contact with other members of Kaunitz’s social network, such as the salon owners Madame Geoffrin and Madame Blondel, various publishers of new books, artists, investors, and the theatrical agent de Bréa.²¹ How, then, did Ranieri Calzabigi fit into this network?

The topics of Calzabigi’s letters unsurprisingly reflected his immediate concerns, though he returned to some topics on a regular basis. During his time in Vienna, Calzabigi was an active participant in the city’s theatrical scene. Kaunitz too was a passionate devotee of the theatre, and he enthusiastically promoted French theatrical productions in high society; besides being personally attracted to the theatre, he also viewed it as a tool for social distinction and for his own cultural and political ambitions. Calzabigi likewise promoted the *comédie française* and sought solutions for its dire financial situation.²² Under Kaunitz’s direction, he met with Giuseppe Afflisio (Durazzo’s successor as the imperial theatre director, and a proponent of the French theatre) and the actor Beaubourg, and they spent long hours discussing strategies for reducing costs and increasing earnings. The drastic financial problems that beset the French theatre in Vienna may also have been one

21 Mercy’s correspondence with Kaunitz is held at MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), inv. no. 4320, kart. 446, though his activities are also evident from various other documents associated with Kaunitz; see e.g.: A. Ritter von ARNETH – M. J. FLAMMERMONT (eds.), *Correspondance secrète du comte de Mercy Argenteau*; Alfred Ritter von ARNETH – Auguste GEFFROY (eds.), *Correspondance secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le comte de Mercy-Argenteau*, Paris, 1874–1875, etc. On the role of diplomats as mediators of culture, news and services see e.g.: Veronika HYDEN-HANSCHO, *Reisende, Migranten, Kulturmanager. Mittlerpersönlichkeiten zwischen Frankreich und dem Wiener Hof 1630–1730*, Stuttgart 2013; Michael ROHRSCHEIDER – Arno STROHMEYER (eds.), *Wahrnehmungen des Fremden. Differenzenerfahrungen von Diplomaten im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Münster 2007; Martin BAKEŠ – Jiří KUBEŠ, *Císařští diplomaté mezi cizinou a domovem*, in: Jiří Kubeš et al., *V zastoupení císaře. Česká a moravská aristokracie v habsburské diplomacii 1640–1740*, Praha 2018, pp. 124–175, here pp. 158–168, etc.

22 The expansion of French culture during the second half of the 18th century was reflected in the activities of numerous French theatre companies in many major European cities. However, life was not always easy for these ensembles; this can be seen in the example of Vienna, where (despite Kaunitz’s protection) the French theatre faced opposition from certain influential figures and suffered from dire financial problems. Rahul MARKOVITS, *L’“Europe française”, une domination culturelle?*, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 67, 2012, no. 3, pp. 539–573 (in English as “*French Europe*”, *a Form of Cultural Domination? Kaunitz and French Theater in Eighteenth-Century Vienna*, trsl. Michèle R. Greer); Bruce Alan BROWN, *French theater and Italian opera in eighteenth-century Vienna. Continuities, cosmopolitanism, and criticism*, in: Damien Colas – Alessandro Di Profio (eds.), *D’une scène à l’autre. L’opéra italien en Europe. Volume 2: La musique à l’épreuve du théâtre*, Wavre 2009, pp. 153–164; Karin FENBÖCK, *Getanzte Politik: Franz Anton Hilverding und die Inszenierung des kaiserlichen Hofes im Wiener Ballett von 1750 bis 1765*, Berlin 2019, etc. On the roots of Kaunitz’s musical patronage see J. FRANKOVÁ, *Wenzl Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg and his Grand Tour*. For general information on cultural dominance in the Early Modern Age see the extensive study by Timothy C. W. BLANNING, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789*, Oxford 2002.

reason why Calzabigi continued to work on his lottery project; he may have hoped that by bringing an injection of funds to the state budget he would secure financial support for the theatre in return.²³

In his letters to Kaunitz, Calzabigi naturally discussed the theatre's repertoire and casting; it would perhaps be no exaggeration to consider him one of the leading figures on Vienna's theatrical scene. As Kaunitz's secretary, he acted as an important mediator between the *Staatskanzler* and other people. Calzabigi, Afflisio, and Kaunitz's theatrical agent de Bréa were in regular contact with each other. De Bréa's network reached further, including the above-mentioned Count de Mercy-Argenteau, through whom he had contacts with influential figures in French cultural life (and in other fields).²⁴ All the above-mentioned figures helped to seek out talented actors, dancers, and singers and to recruit them for theatres in Vienna. This usually presented certain problems – either it was not possible to release the performers from their current contractual arrangements, or they had exorbitant wage demands, or they failed to meet the standards on which Kaunitz insisted (he always had the final say in the decision making).²⁵

Calzabigi was well aware of de Bréa's tasks, and the theatrical agent kept him informed on a regular basis, sending him positive or negative opinions on various artists and asking him what to do next (as communication with Afflisio was somewhat problematic). Calzabigi discussed matters with Kaunitz, relaying the *Staatskanzler's* instructions or sending him letters. During de Bréa's visits to Vienna, Calzabigi met with him (and other proponents of the French theatre) personally and engaged in passionate discussions. Although it is not particularly clear from his correspondence, Calzabigi also had regular meetings with the librettist and editor Marco Coltellini, as well as with Baron Jean Théodore Gontier (a French theatre director and theatrical critic, a member of the board of book censors, the publisher of the largest French-language newspaper in Vienna, the *Gazette de Vienne*, and also one of Kaunitz's theatrical agents).²⁶

23 Calzabigi's interest in state finances was not restricted to the lottery. In 1761 he elaborated a detailed proposal for a financial system, which (along with other notes on the lottery dating from 1762) is held at OeStA Wien, HHStA, Staatskanzlei, Notenwechsel, Hofkammer, kart. 252. For more information about the lottery see the chapter in the forthcoming book: Manfred ZOLLINGER, *Small Stakes, Great Profits. The Game of Lotto*, in: J. Franková – G. Mayer – L. Švandová Maršálková (eds.), *Letters written from the theatre of life...* (in press) and about the theatre see the chapter: Jana FRANKOVÁ, *Music and Theatre: a shared interest between Ranieri Calzabigi and Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg*, in: *Ibidem*.

24 For more details see G. MAYER, *Kulturpolitik der Aufklärung*, here e.g. pp. 60–72, 354–396, etc.

25 For literature on this topic see above; numerous mentions can be found e.g. in the edition of Mercy's correspondence: A. Ritter von ARNETH – M. J. FLAMMERMONT (eds.), *Correspondance secrète*.

26 On Coltellini see L. TUFANO, *I viaggi di Orfeo*, here Ch. II. *Vienna 1763: Calzabigi, Coltellini e Ifigenia in una lettera di Pietro Metastasio*, pp. 19–41. For Gontier's correspondence see e.g. MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), inv. no. 4493, kart. 452.

Calzabigi’s influence on the choice of works to perform from the dramatic repertoire – and on the financial management of the theatre – may have sealed his fate, as in the spring of 1774 he had to leave Vienna. Although we only have access to his own words, which understandably present him in the most positive light, it is likely that he had numerous enemies and was the subject of much criticism.²⁷ Those who knew him described him as an educated and cultivated person, but also as a sceptical man who was involved in intrigues and speculative behaviour. For example, Casanova said this of him: “*In Vienna I lived a very quiet life, [...] I frequently had dinner with Calzabigi, who displayed his atheism for all to see and who spoke shamelessly about Metastasio, who despised him. Calzabigi knew this, but he did not care; [he was] a great political schemer, and he was the right hand of Prince Kaunitz.*”²⁸ Another of his contemporaries wrote that he was “*a very educated man, an author himself, and he is very witty, but he is an ambitious man, fond of intrigues and plotting.*”²⁹

Joseph II likewise was not fond of Calzabigi; the Emperor was a great proponent not of the French theatre, but of German (“national”) performances.³⁰ Kaunitz defended his secretary vehemently, pointing out his intelligence, experience, and dependability and standing up for him against his detractors;³¹ however, this proved insufficient, and the poet eventually decided to leave Vienna and travel to Pisa. It is evident that Calzabigi’s departure represented a blow to Kaunitz, as when he was trying to recruit a new secretary, he asked Count Mercy for assistance, setting out requirements for the new appointment which were in fact a precise description of Calzabigi himself: “*My friend, please look around a little and see if you could not find me a man, above all somebody who is honourable and high-spirited, who would be good company for me as a secretary, librarian, reciter of texts, even if he lacks a title – a man of the academic gown, of the sword, of the cloth, or a scholar, all would be acceptable to me. I would reward him according to what he deserves and the financial possibilities. Please look around a little – either yourself, or via others; you would*

27 Apparently, several defamatory letters about Calzabigi were written in Vienna; he suspected that the writers were a group of actors (mainly members of the Baglioni family, headed by the soprano Clementina) with whom he had fallen out. Calzabigi’s letter to Kaunitz dated 18 May 1774, MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), inv. no. 4129, fasc. I, kart. 439, fol. 29–33.

28 “*Je vivais à Vienne très tranquille, [...], je dinais souvent chez Calsabigi, qui faisait parade de son athéisme, et qui disait impudemment du mal de Métastase, qui le méprisait. Calsabigi le savait et s’en moquait; grand calculateur politique, il était le bras droit du prince de Kaunitz.*” Giacomo CASANOVA, *Mémoires de J. Casanova de Seingalt écrits par lui-même, nouvelle édition*, tome septième, Paris 1900, p. 293.

29 “[...] *homme fort instruit, auteur même, et rempli d’esprit, mais ambitieux, intrigant et cabaleur [...].*” Giuseppe GORANI, *Mémoires secrets et critiques des cours, des gouvènements, et des moeurs des principaux états de l’Italie. T. I*, Paris 1793, here p. 68.

30 A draft of a letter from Joseph II, probably intended for Kaunitz, dated 5 November 1767, OeStA Wien, HHStA, Hausarchiv, Sammelbände 70, fol. 64.

31 Kaunitz’s report to the Emperor about the management of the theatre, dated 6 November 1767, OeStA Wien, HHStA, Saatskanzlei, Interiora 86 (alt 107, 108) – Uniformierung, Hoftheater, fol. 255.

*be doing me a great service.*³² Having left Vienna, Calzabigi no longer had direct personal contact with Kaunitz, and his role also changed; this is clearly evident from his letters written to Kaunitz from Italy. Formerly a man who played an active and influential role in the Habsburg capital's cultural life, Calzabigi now became more an observer and a supplier of information.

Calzabigi did not settle permanently in Pisa; in late 1779 he moved to Naples, which was experiencing an unprecedented cultural boom under the reign of the royal couple Ferdinand IV (also III and I) and the Archduchess Maria Carolina. The Queen was an educated woman with a forceful personality, who was influenced by Enlightenment ideals. She was a patron of artists, philosophers, and scholars; she funded schools, museums, and libraries; she implemented essential reforms and strove to limit the influence of the conservatives. Her vehement enemy Bernardo Tanucci, a minister and former regent, was replaced by Francesco Aquino, Prince Caramanico, and another of her protégés, the future Prime Minister Sir John Acton, was entrusted with reforming the navy. Renowned economists, lawyers, and philosophers – such as Ferdinando Galiani, Gaetano Filangieri, or Giuseppe Maria Galanti – published works brimming with innovative ideas, and the court was visited by art-loving diplomats from all over Europe who were keen to enlarge their collections during their stay in Italy. The intellectual elite of Naples gathered at the Rosa d'ordine Magno Masonic lodge and in the city's salons. The home of the brothers Antonio and Domenico di Gennaro, both prominent scholars, was regularly visited by Saverino Mattei, Francesco Mario Pagano, Antonio Planelli, and also Ranieri Calzabigi (in fact, in 1783–1784 the group published its own periodical, entitled *Scelta miscellanea*). However, Calzabigi described how Enlightenment ideas and a desire for self-education were not universally embraced in Naples; it was his opinion that some members of the local aristocracy and the wealthy classes still had plenty of room for refinement in their taste.³³

Calzabigi was an astute observer, and his commentary on current affairs often displayed an acerbic irony. He expressed his impressions and ideas to Kaunitz without reservations, and he was more than willing to offer his advice. He assessed political developments both in

32 “*Voyez un peu de même, mon ami, si vous ne pourriez pas me trouver peut-être un homme, honnête surtout, et ensuite gai, et qui pourrait être de bonne compagnie pour moi sous le titre de secrétaire, bibliothécaire, lecteur, ou même aucun titre quelconque, de robe, d'épée, d'église, ou homme de lettres, cela me serait égal. Je lui ferais un sort à l'avenant de son mérite et de ses circonstances. Voyez un peu, je vous prie, et par vous-même et par d'autres; vous me rendriez un très grand service.*” Kaunitz's letter to Mercy dated 3 February 1774, A. Ritter von ARNETH – M. J. FLAMMERMONT (eds.), *Correspondance secrète du comte de Mercy Argenteau*, here p. 439.

33 Stimulating accounts of the unique cultural climate in Naples during the second half of the 18th century, including the reflection of political events in opera, are given in A. R. DELDONNA, *Opera, Theatrical Culture and Society*, or in Girolamo IMBRUGLIA (ed.), *Naples in the Eighteenth Century: The Birth and Death of a Nation State*, Cambridge 2000.

Naples and beyond; his letters are fine examples of the opinions of educated contemporary observers concerning the growing power and importance of Russia and Prussia, as well as developments in France and America, and he took a sceptical approach to the Pope and the Catholic Church in general (indeed, both Kaunitz and Calzabigi were considered somewhat lukewarm in matters of religious faith). Writing to the Prince, Calzabigi described with satisfaction his meetings with important figures and the impressions they had left on him. He deemed it a particular honour to be in contact with members of the royal family and other rulers, and he wrote knowledgeably about various aristocrats, diplomats, artists, and writers. However, not all of them earned his respect; for example, writing about the former Sicilian Viceroy Marquis Giovanni Fogliani Sforza d’Aragona (who in the mid-1760s and 1770 proved unable to deal with the epidemics of cholera and famine that followed an uprising on the island), Calzabigi described him as an imbecile: “*via his agents, he [Marquis Tanucci] fomented an uprising in Sicily, of which Marquis Fogliani, his enemy and a true imbecile, was a sad and foolish victim*”.³⁴ Calzabigi described not only the local cultural scene, but also various curiosities and things of interest; he gave colourful descriptions of everyday life and the natural world. Understandably, his attention was captured by major natural disasters (such as a devastating earthquake that hit Calabria in 1783³⁵ or an eruption of Vesuvius in August 1779³⁶), as well as by the story of a bandit named Angelo Duca, an Italian Robin Hood-type figure.³⁷

Calzabigi was sorely disappointed by the Neapolitan public’s attitude to education, culture, and art; he noted that there was a general lack of interest in studying, and he criticized the inadequate attention paid to valuable artefacts, which enabled foreign art lovers to expand their collections. As an example he gave the British diplomat at the Neapolitan court, William Hamilton, who made a substantial profit from selling part of his collection of contemporary and ancient art after returning home from his posting: “*If public schools, colleges and universities in Sicily are well-attended, the same cannot be said of Naples. People study little here, and children from wealthy families do not even go to school. They are taught by a priest whom they call a preceptor. [...] Up to the age of seven, children learn nothing – not even the language of their nannies from foreign lands, unknown here. [...] [Children] are mostly interested in carriages and horses. They abandon their lessons and go to the stables. [...] Here, nobody has a taste for art, nor for reading; nobody buys paintings, nobody views scientific collections. I do not know any noble or wealthy man who has his own*

34 “*Il [marquis Tanucci] excita par ses emissaires la revolte de Sicile, dont le marquis Fogliani son ennemi, vrai imbecille, fut la triste, la sotte victime*.” Letter dated 26 June 1783, MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), kart. 439, inv. no. 4129, fasc. II, fol. 102–112.

35 Letter dated 1 March 1783, *Ibidem*, fol. 96–101.

36 Letters dated 12 April 1781 and 12 May 1781, *Ibidem*, fol. 72 and fol. 65–70.

37 Letters dated 26 June 1783 and 11 November 1783, *Ibidem*, fol. 102–112 and fol. 115–123.

collection of drawings, engravings, books; if they do own such things, then maybe there are just one or two items, which they use to show off. The English minister profited greatly from this ignorance. At minimal cost, he built up a collection of ancient art, which after returning home he sold for 8000 pounds sterling.”³⁸ (Calzabigi was of course exaggerating; despite his criticism, he considered Italy to be a cradle of art, and he himself had the opportunity to view many collections.) Similarly to Calzabigi, Kaunitz too made no secret of the fact that he mistrusted Italians. This scepticism was evidently due to negative experiences he had had during his posting in Turin; he had complained that the Italians were lazy, unreliable, and violent.³⁹

Nevertheless, theatre in Naples was flourishing, and the Teatro di San Carlo was the hub of the city’s cultural life, so Calzabigi was not deprived of culture during his time there. His letters to Kaunitz include detailed descriptions of interesting things he had encountered on his travels, as well as his own works. He had become accustomed to presenting his works to Kaunitz while in Vienna, and later he used to send him poems (some of them devoted to Kaunitz himself, some to other noble figures). During his Italian “exile”, Calzabigi viewed literature and poetry as one of the few respites that had remained available to him; he worked on completing his older works as well as writing new dramas, and other authors asked him for his opinions on their texts (or at least that is how he presented his discussions with other authors in his letters to the Prince). He dedicated some of his works to Kaunitz, and he even planned to write a biography of his friend in the manner of Plutarch, as he was convinced that his patron was easily the equal of the most prominent figures in the ancient world and in more recent history.⁴⁰

Either at Kaunitz’s request or on his own initiative, Calzabigi diligently sought out interesting books; he assessed their style, content, and reception, he added information

38 “Si les écoles publiques, les collèges, les universités de Sicile sont fréquentées, celles de Naples ne le sont point. En général on étudie peu ici, et les enfans de *bene stanti*, ne vont pas du tout aux écoles. Ils ont ordinairement un prêtre qu’on appelle un *precettore*. [...] L’enfant jusqu’à l’âge de 7 ans n’apprend rien, pas même une langue par le moyen des gouvernantes qu’on ne connoit point ici. [...] Pour l’ordinaire ils prennent passion pour les cochers, et les chevaux. Ils quittent les leçons pour descendre à l’écurie. [...] Nul n’a ici le goût des beaux arts, nul le goût de la lecture; nul ne fait emplette de tableaux; nul ne donne dans les collections d’histoire naturelle. Je ne connois pas un seul homme de naissance ou riche qui aye des cabinets de dessains, d’estampes, de livres; si ce n’est peut être un ou deux par ostentation. Le ministre d’Angleterre a bien profité de cette ignorance; il a formé à peu de frais un cabinet d’antiquités qu’il a vendu ensuite chez lui pour 8000 livres sterlins.” Letter dated 18 March 1780, Ibidem, fol. 1–7 and 18–23.

39 Cf. Elisabeth GARMS-CORNIDES, *Kaunitz und die habsburgische Italienpolitik während des Österreichischen Erbfolgekrieges*, in: Grete Klingenstein – Franz J. Szabo (eds.), *Staatskanzler Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg 1711–1794. Neue Perspektiven zu Politik und Kultur der europäischen Aufklärung*, Graz 1996, pp. 29–46, and Carlo CAPRA, *Kaunitz and Austrian Lombardy*, Ibidem, pp. 245–260, here p. 257.

40 Letter dated 30 June 1774, MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), inv. no. 4129, fasc. I, fol. 34–40.

about their authors, and he wrote to the Prince giving detailed accounts of his findings. For example, Gaetano Filangieri’s *La Scienza della legislazione* (published in Naples in 1780) was a bold work for its time, and Calzabigi was greatly enthused by it, so he investigated how it could be sent to Vienna as soon as possible. Writing about a biography of Maria Theresa by the Bishop of Oria, Alessandro Maria Calefati, he praised its excellent Latin, which he contrasted with numerous other works that had sought to celebrate the Empress.⁴¹ He even copied a number of smaller-scale texts into his letters, or sent them as appendices. These were anecdotes which he thought would amuse Kaunitz, epigrams commenting on current affairs, or poems that he had acquired from various sources. Sometimes he considered it important to explain in more detail the circumstances from which these texts had emerged.⁴²

As a proud author, he naturally kept a close watch on whether and where his own works might be performed, monitoring theatres, casting decisions, and audiences’ responses. Of course, he wrote detailed analyses of the qualities (both positive and negative) of specific performances and theatrical ensembles that he saw on his travels in Italy. The famous Teatro di San Carlo even planned to perform dramas on which Calzabigi had collaborated with the composer Gluck, whom he was asked to invite to Naples (though Maria Theresa’s death in November 1780 put a halt to all cultural activities for a while). Calzabigi noted with satisfaction that the public were finally becoming satiated with the old-fashioned style of theatre represented by Metastasio. An important contributing factor to this development was the ballets performed by the famous dancer and choreographer Charles Le Picq, which also featured members of the local elites. Calzabigi described how some of his works (specifically *Les Danaïdes* in 1784) were warmly received at the highest level of society; part of this opera was performed at the home of the Russian ambassador Andrey Kirillovich Razumovsky, and the Swedish King Gustav III (who was staying in Naples at the time) asked the librettist to write a short prologue to the opera, which he also sent to Kaunitz.⁴³

41 Letters dated 9 September 1780 and 21 January 1781, *Ibidem*, fasc. II, fol. 24–31 and fol. 83–91.

42 Cf. C. LEBEAU, *Verwandtschaft, Patronage und Freundschaft*.

43 Calzabigi’s libretto for the opera *Les Danaïdes* had a different fate than the one he had envisaged. He presented part of the text to a noble audience in Naples accompanied by the music of Giuseppe Millico, though he had originally planned to collaborate with Gluck. However, ill health prevented Gluck from working on the project, and the libretto was instead given to Antonio Salieri and was modified by his collaborators (François-Louis Gand Le Bland Du Roullet and Jean-Baptiste-Louis-Théodore de Tschudi). Calzabigi considered this a betrayal, and he vented his anger in his letters. Even at the end of his life, Calzabigi was still renowned as a librettist. In 1790 the former *Kapellmeister* of the Prussian royal court, Johann Friedrich Reichardt, asked the author for two of his works (*Les Danaïdes* and *Semiramis*), which he wanted to present to the King accompanied by his own music. He even invited Calzabigi to come to Berlin and attend the performances of the operas. The author was flattered by this offer, and he evidently gave it serious consideration, for he asked Kaunitz for advice on the matter. Indeed, he even approached the Prussian King in a letter, but the plans never came to fruition. L.

During his travels in Italy, and later during his time in Naples, Calzabigi had the opportunity to view art collections belonging to influential families, and he also saw interesting works of art in churches and public buildings. In his letters to Kaunitz, he gave enthusiastic descriptions of paintings by renowned artists, and he recommended works he advised Kaunitz to buy if their owners decided to sell them. He also offered knowledgeable descriptions of artists themselves, including expert assessments of their style and technique. For example, he predicted a bright future for the still-neglected Florentine artist Pietro Giarrè, and he was captivated by the work of Anton Rafael Mengs and a painter at the English royal court, Johan Joseph Zoffany; he warmly commended all three to Kaunitz's attention. He knew some artists personally, and he valued not only their works, but also their friendship; he wrote poems celebrating the sculptor Antonio Canova and the painter Domenico Pellegrini.⁴⁴

In most of Calzabigi's letters, especially from the final period in his life, we can find mentions of a topic that was close to both his own heart and Kaunitz's: illnesses, treatments, and how sickness made his life unpleasant. He also shared interesting facts from the world of medicine.⁴⁵ Already during his time in Vienna, some people described him as a hypochondriac, and even though he did genuinely suffer from a number of medical issues, he often exploited this fact as a negotiating tool.⁴⁶ Casanova described his working regime: "*This Calzabigi, because his entire body was covered in sores, always worked lying in bed, which he almost never left, and the minister [Kaunitz] visited him almost every day.*"⁴⁷

TUFANO, *I viaggi di Orfeo*, Ch. V. *La cantata encomiastica Gli Elisi o sia Lombre degli Eroi per Gustavo III di Svezia*, pp. 138–181. See also Calzabigi's letter dated 10 March 1784, MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), kart. 439, inv. no. 4129, fasc. II, fol. 124–131.

44 See e.g. the letters dated 30 June 1774 and 27 December 1791, MZA Brno, RA Kounic (G 436), inv. no. 4129, kart. 439, fasc. I, fol. 34–40, and *Ibidem*, fasc. II, fol. 196–199. For more information about the fine arts see the chapter in the forthcoming book: Gernot MAYER, *Batoni, Canova, Zoffany: Ranieri Calzabigi and the visual arts*, in: J. Franková – G. Mayer – L. Švandová Maršálková (eds.), *Letters written from the theatre of life...* (in press). Cf. Jiří KROUPA, *Václav Antonín Kaunitz-Rietberg a výtvarná umění. Kulturní politika nebo umělecký mecenát?*, *Studia comeniana et historica* XVIII, no. 35, 1988, pp. 71–79; *IDEM*, *Wenzel Anton, Prince Kaunitz-Rietberg*.

45 For more details see Lenka ŠVANDOVÁ MARŠÁLKOVÁ, "*Ma santé est mauvaise actuellement...*" *Osvícenec a jeho zdraví. Část první: vztah ke zdraví a nemoci na příkladu Václava Antonína z Kounic-Rietbergu a jeho blízkých*, *Theatrum historiae* 26, 2020, pp. 157–189; *IDEM*, "*Ma santé commence à être un peu meilleure...*". The introductions to these studies cite more literature addressing the topics of health, sickness, and their perception in the Early Modern Era.

46 Charles PIOT, *La Correspondance du baron Godefroid van Swieten et du comte de Cobenzl, au point de vue de la musique et du théâtre*, *Bulletin de l'Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique* 57, 1887, no. 13, pp. 882–889.

47 "*Ce Calzabigi, ayant tout le corps couvert de dartres, travaillait toujours dans son lit, dont il ne sortait presque jamais, et le ministre [Kaunitz] allait chez lui presque chaque jour.*" G. CASANOVA, *Mémoires de J. Casanova*, p. 292.

Besides his dermatological problems, Calzabigi frequently suffered from eye infections. He referred to these as “*fluxion aux yeux*”, and they prevented him from engaging in literary or other activities: “*My eminent patron, I have still not entirely rid myself of my eye infection. It is long-lasting and difficult. I am almost unable to read and write, even though today reading and writing are my only pleasures.*”⁴⁸ Calzabigi’s illnesses understandably had a devastating impact on his mental health, and his letters contained increasingly frequent references to his feelings of anxiety and melancholy, described in vivid terms: “*I will tell you only that I am suffering and I am sad...*”⁴⁹, or “*For two months now, my bed and my chamber are my universe. This deep melancholy cannot be cured by any medicine, spiritual or physical. Only death itself can relieve me of it.*”⁵⁰

Calzabigi’s troubled state of mind was exacerbated by his fear of poverty and the fact that he felt abandoned by his friends. The payment of his pension was delayed, so he appealed to his influential acquaintances and requested their help and intervention (for example the Viennese banker Baron Johann Jacob von Gontard or the diplomat and statesman Count Johann Philipp Cobenzl, who later succeeded Kaunitz as the *Staatskanzler*). It is not without interest that Calzabigi’s correspondence with Cobenzl is quite similar to the letters he wrote to Kaunitz; he complains about his poor health, but he also comments astutely on matters of everyday life, using cultivated language interspersed with citations from classical authors.⁵¹

Describing himself as the lowliest of all unfortunates, Calzabigi wrote that he considered Kaunitz’s friendship his “only respite”. However, his motivation is clear; the Prince was not writing to him as often as he would have liked. Whenever a longer period of time elapsed between Kaunitz’s letters, Calzabigi became despondent, writing to Kaunitz to assure him of his undying affection and admiration, and using all possible strategies to appeal to the Prince’s emotions, to capture his attention, and to gain his support.

Kaunitz himself was no stranger to the strategic exploitation of his health problems.⁵² From an early age he had suffered from a range of conditions: headaches, catarrh, fevers, various unspecified weaknesses and nausea, and evidently also scurvy. However, today

48 “*Je ne suis point encore delivré, mon illustre Mécène, de ma fluxion aux yeux. Elle est longue, et incomode. Je suis presque privé de lire, et d’écrire; et cependant la lecture, et l’écriture font aujourd’hui ma consolation unique.*” Cited from: L. ŠVANDOVÁ MARŠÁLKOVÁ, “*Ma santé est mauvaise actuellement...*”, p. 180.

49 “*Je vous dirai en general que je souffre, que je suis triste...*” Cited from: Ibidem. On melancholy cf. Elborg FORSTER, “*From the Patient’s Point of View: Illness and Health in the Letters of Liselotte von der Pfalz (1652–1722)*”, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 60, 1986, pp. 297–320, here pp. 303–304.

50 “*Depuis deux mois mon lit et ma chambre sont pour moi l’univers. Cette profonde melancolie ne peut être soulagée par aucun remède moral ou physique. La mort seule peut m’en delivrer.*” Cited from: L. ŠVANDOVÁ MARŠÁLKOVÁ, “*Ma santé est mauvaise actuellement...*”, p. 181.

51 OeStA Wien, HHStA Wien, Große Korrespondenz, kart. 444, konv. G, fol. 93–114.

52 For more details see L. ŠVANDOVÁ MARŠÁLKOVÁ, “*Ma santé est mauvaise actuellement...*”; IDEM, “*Ma santé commence à être un peu meilleure...*”.

some of his conditions would be described as psychosomatic: they repeatedly surfaced whenever he was forced to deal with an unpleasant situation or a task that he feared. His contemporaries too were suspicious of his excessive concern with a perfect outward appearance and the occasionally strange methods he used in order to maintain his health, and they described him as a hypochondriac. Although there is no doubt that many of his conditions were genuine (and did have a negative impact on his everyday life), Kaunitz was nevertheless skilled at exploiting his medical problems in order to achieve his goals – including his political and diplomatic career goals.

Kaunitz was far from enthusiastic about the diplomatic missions on which he was dispatched in the 1740s.⁵³ He feared that they would ruin him financially, and naturally he was displeased that he would no longer be present at the imperial court. For example, before departing for France, where he would spend two years as the imperial ambassador, he hired an agent named Wenzel Franz Haymerle, who was to keep him regularly informed about events at the court as well as looking after his various other interests.⁵⁴ Kaunitz's health went through a particularly critical period in 1745 and 1746, during his mission in Brussels. He was greatly dissatisfied with his time in the city, which affected his health, and he attempted by all available means to secure his dismissal from the post. He wrote to everybody who could possibly influence the Empress's decision, bombarding them with detailed and suggestive descriptions of his medical conditions and asking them to intervene on his behalf (his most frequent addressee in this regard was his predecessor as *Staatskanzler*, Count Anton Corfiz von Ulfeld): “[...] *I am requesting my dismissal solely because my health is by now so devastated that it is no longer possible for me to bear the burden of my service, [...] and it is my honour and duty once more to request urgently that Your Excellency inform Her Majesty with all humility regarding my reasons [...]*”⁵⁵ He further wrote: “[...] *it is purely a question of my health, which currently does not allow me to continue in my service, and according to all consultations that I have undergone both here and also in Paris and in England, the only way in which I can regain my health is by resting, and by my dismissal from my position [...]*”⁵⁶

53 For details of the early stages of Kaunitz's diplomatic career see G. KLINGENSTEIN, *Der Aufstieg des Hauses Kaunitz*, here pp. 270–283, or F. J. SZABO, *Kaunitz and enlightened absolutism*, here pp. 14–20.

54 See a copy of his contract with Haymerle dated 1 October 1750, MZA Brno, RA Kounic, inv. no. 4495, kart. 453, fol. 60.

55 “[...] *je ne demande mon rappel uniquement, que parceque ma santé est tellement détruite qu'il ne m'est pas possible de pouvoir soutenir plus longtems le poids de mon ministère, [...] et ainsi il est de mon honneur et de ma conscience de supplier encore une fois très instamment V^{ôtre} Excellence d'exposer mes raisons à Sa Majesté en toute humilité [...]*” Cited from: L. ŠVANDOVÁ MARŠÁLKOVÁ, “*Ma santé est mauvaise actuellement...*”, p. 170.

56 “[...] *il ne s'agit que de ma santé qui ne me permet pas de continuer à servir quant à présent, selon toutes les consultes que j'ai fait tenir tant icy qu'à Paris et en Angleterre, si je puis me rétablir ce n'est que par le repos et procul negotiis, [...]*” Cited from: *Ibidem*, p. 171.

Kaunitz’s health sometimes took a turn for the worse even when he was merely discussing a future posting, and his condition would be further exacerbated during his journey and during his time in his host city; this occurred before and during his mission in 1748 to Aix-La-Chapelle (Aachen), where he had been dispatched to the peace talks in the final stages of the War of the Austrian Succession. He used a similar strategy later in his career, in the various other positions he held. As soon as he had achieved what he wanted, his health would rapidly improve. In periods when he was happy, his health was good (or at least stabilized); however, illnesses and their treatment remained a topic of great interest to him, and he shared this interest with Calzabigi.

Both Calzabigi and Kaunitz could be suspected of hypochondria, though the contemporary “culture of sensitivity” – which permeated all aspects of life – meant that 18th-century society was considerably more tolerant of this behaviour than would perhaps be the case today. Their fragile health and their fear of illness did not necessarily have solely negative consequences for them. Indeed, quite the opposite: it may have conferred on them a certain air of exclusivity, as only educated and knowledgeable patients were able to express their fears in cultivated language and to describe their situation accurately.⁵⁷

It is evident from the extracts cited above that Calzabigi’s letters covered a hugely broad range of topics. What, then, were his sources of information? An important role was undoubtedly played by his personal experiences and interests: he drew on his experiences of travelling and his meetings with interesting people; he read widely; he attended various performances and admired art collections, so he was always well-informed about contemporary affairs and was able to share a wealth of knowledge with Kaunitz. He also used his contacts as a source of information. Although his social and informational network was not comparable in size and scope to Kaunitz’s, it was nevertheless quite extensive. Indeed, during Calzabigi’s time in Vienna, his friendship with Kaunitz enabled him to move within elite circles, and he was able to exploit these contacts in later years too. As has been mentioned above, he viewed not only Kaunitz, but also Count Cobenzl as a potential source of protection and support, and he sometimes sent Cobenzl letters addressed to Kaunitz, asking him to forward them to the *Staatskanzler*. He also had a close relationship (as well as similar tastes and interests) with two freemasons and Enlightenment men: Count Karl Johann Baptist von Dietrichstein-Proskau-Leslie and Count Karl Borromeus von Liechtenstein (to whom he dedicated one of his literary texts).⁵⁸

57 Cf. Michael STOLBERG, *Homo patiens. Krankheits- und Körpererfahrung in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Köln 2003, here pp. 243–256. From the wealth of other literature on this topic, cf. e.g. G. S. ROUSSEAU (ed.), *The Languages of Psyche: Mind and Body in Enlightenment Thought*, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – Oxford 1990; Alex WETMORE, *Men of Feeling in Eighteenth-Century Literature: Touching Fiction*, New York 2013, etc.

58 See the dedication on the first page of Ranieri de CALZABIGI, *Lettera di Ranieri de’ Calzabigi al signor conte Vittorio Alfieri sulle quattro sue prime tragedie. E risposta del signor conte Alfieri al medesimo*, Napoli 1783.

Another key contact was the imperial ambassador in Naples, Anton Franz de Paula, Count of Lamberg-Sprinzenstein. The pair were linked by their personal friendship, their interest in art, their fondness for Vienna, and a certain reluctance to socialize with members of the local elites. Calzabigi was a protégé of Lamberg, who presented him to the royal court, where he received a very warm welcome from Queen Maria Carolina: “On the occasion of a ball held by the court [...], Count Lamberg honoured me by presenting me to the court. Her Royal Highness the Queen received me with the greatest honours [...]. Her Majesty informed me that she knew of me via my work and my texts, and she was most insistent that she had read the latter.”⁵⁹ Calzabigi was also a friend of the secretary at the imperial embassy, Norbert Hadrava, with whom he met regularly. However, his relationships with Lamberg’s successors were less amicable. He evidently had little contact with the plenipotentiary ministers Count Karl von Richecourt und Ray or with Johann Franz de Paula, Freiherr von Thugut.⁶⁰ He considered the new ambassador Francesco Ruspoli to be a schemer, preferring instead to cultivate his old acquaintances from Vienna and those with whom he felt he could engage in free discussions about matters that interested him.

Reading Calzabigi’s letters, we can detect a certain aversion to his countrymen, and indeed his contemporaries noticed that he preferred the company of educated people from outside Naples – as well as publishing most of his works elsewhere. This dislike was evidently mutual, giving the poet an additional reason to feel that he was not properly appreciated.⁶¹ However, this does not mean that he was an isolated figure during his time in Italy, or that his social network became sparser – though with just a few exceptions he hardly mentioned his Italian friends in his letters. A large circle of people regularly met at his home for intellectual discussions, and he also corresponded with other people: these included the sculptor Antonio Canova, the economist and Enlightenment figure Abbé Ferdinando Galiani, the doctor and proponent of inoculation Giovanni Angelo Gatti, the merchant and banker Count Antonio Greppi, the poet Giovanni Fantoni, or the diplomat, writer, and librettist Count Alessandro Pepoli. One figure worthy of mention is the writer, poet, and librettist Gianbattista Casti; he and Calzabigi were good friends. Casti too had spent part of his life in Paris and Vienna, and his network of acquaintances and correspondents overlapped with Calzabigi’s, as he likewise corresponded with Cobenzl,

59 “À l’occasion d’un bal que la cour donna [...] monsieur le comte Lamberg me fit la grace de me présenter à la cour. Je fus accueillie de S. M. la reine avec la plus grande distinction [...]. S. M. me dit, qu’Elle me connoissoit par mes ouvrages, et par mes écrits, et insista beaucoup sur ces derniers, qu’Elle disoit avoir lû.” Letter dated 25 October 1780, MZA Brno, RA Kounic, inv. no. 4129, kart. 439, fasc. II, fol. 43–51.

60 Otto Friedrich WINTER (ed.), *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder seit dem Westfälischen Frieden 1648, III. Band (1764–1815)*, Graz – Köln 1965, p. 93.

61 L. TUFFANO, *I viaggi di Orfeo*, here Ch. IV. *Il poeta «cadente» e il re «filosofo»: il secondo soggiorno napoletano e le ottave per la colonia di San Leucio*, pp. 68–137, here p. 110.

Pepoli, Greppi, and Joseph Clemens von Kaunitz. It is no surprise that the correspondence between Calzabigi and Casti resembles that between Calzabigi and Kaunitz in its erudite style and the range of topics it covers.⁶²

Calzabigi also made use of his extensive network of contacts when dispatching his letters (and occasionally also small gifts) to Kaunitz. He often used Lamberg and his circle to do this, as he deemed it safest to include letters and other consignments in the diplomatic mail. He feared that letters from and to him could be opened or confiscated, and he advised Kaunitz to do the same: “*In this country, not only are my letters to Germany (or, if you prefer, to you, my Prince) opened, but I have also not received some letters addressed to me. Three letters from Prince Dietrichstein did not reach me. [...] Whatever the case, if your Highness is willing to do me the honour of writing to me, then letters for me should be sent in an envelope of our diplomat. Nobody has yet dared to open these [...]*”⁶³ Calzabigi also sent his letters with tried-and-tested couriers, as well as sending them via other friends and acquaintances who happened to be travelling to Vienna; one example was the painter Johan Joseph Zoffany, who delivered a letter to Kaunitz (and whom Calzabigi recommended to the Prince).

At first sight, the answer to the question of what kind of relationship existed between the Italian librettist and the *Staatskanzler* appears to be clear. Calzabigi usually signed his letters as the Prince’s most humble servant, and also as his client (when addressing matters of finance or requesting Kaunitz’s assistance). He used various terms of respect when referring to Kaunitz, and he often addressed him as his benefactor and patron – again mostly when writing about money and complaining about the difficulty of his situation. It is therefore justified to view the pair’s relationship as one between a patron and a client. However, it would be unfortunate to restrict our focus to just this aspect; this would cause us to ignore other – and equally important – dimensions of their relationship. The 18th century (and especially its second half) was a period in which the formerly almost impermeable boundaries between the individual social strata became somewhat more permeable than had previously been the case – at least in certain circumstances. Increasing numbers of people were able to pursue studies to a high standard, and those aristocrats

62 For details on Calzabigi’s Italian acquaintances see L. TUFFANO, op. cit.; on the relationship between Casti and Calzabigi see Ch. VI. *Lamicizia con Giambattista Casti*, pp. 183–203—an edited text of Calzabigi’s letter to Casti dated 28 April 1789 is on pp. 200–202; IDEM, *Calzabigi e Casti: nuove letture di vecchi documenti*, Nuovi Studi Livornesi, vol. X, 2002–2003, pp. 81–102.

63 “*Non seulement les lettres pour l’Allemagne (ou si Vous voulez, mon Prince) les miennes, sont ouvertes en ce pays, mais je ne reçois pas celles qui me sont adressées. Trois lettres du p^{rin}ce Dietrichstein ne m’ont pas été rendues. [...] Quoiqu’il en soit, si V. A. veut me faire la grace de m’écrire, il faut que les lettres pour moi passent sous l’enveloppe du ministre de n^{otre} cour. On n’a pas encore poussé la curiosité à les ouvrir [...]*” Letter dated 22 December 1789, MZA Brno, RA Kounic, inv. no. 4129, kart. 439, fasc. II, fol. 161–166.

who had embraced Enlightenment ideals began to associate with educated people who were not members of the nobility. Regardless of their social origins, scholars shared very similar cultural horizons: they met in salons, theatres, or Masonic lodges; they read the same books; they discussed politics, art, philosophy, and the latest scientific discoveries; and many of them referred to each other as friends or colleagues. We can thus speak of a form of “horizontal solidarity in Enlightenment society”.⁶⁴

The relationship between Calzabigi and Kaunitz is a very apt example of this social shift. Indeed, Kaunitz is often considered one of the main proponents of this change, and justifiably so. In many areas of his life he tended to act in an unorthodox manner, and his diplomatic and political career was no exception; his approach to his professional duties thus attracted admiration from some and criticism from others. Compared with the expectations of the “ideal diplomat” in previous eras,⁶⁵ Kaunitz often acted more in the manner of a private individual, eschewing participation in ceremonies or lengthy masses, which he considered tedious. For example, during his mission in France he often avoided meeting with officials, instead preferring to socialize with Madame de Pompadour and with the intellectuals who congregated in the salons run by Mesdames Geoffrin, Blondel, and Dupin.⁶⁶ If possible, he would associate with people who could offer him some intellectual stimulation – and his standards in this regard were not easy to meet. However, Ranieri Calzabigi succeeded in meeting these high standards, as is evident from their contacts over many years, which were characterized by mutual respect, understanding, and friendship

64 This notion was already advanced by François Furet, and even today some historians demonstrate that the use of the term is still valid. Franz A. J. SZABO, *Perspective from the Pinnacle. State Chancellor Kaunitz on Nobility in the Habsburg Monarchy*, in: Gabrielle Haug-Moritz – Hans Peter Hye – Marlies Raffles (eds.), *Adel im “langen” 18. Jahrhundert*, Wien 2009, pp. 239–260, here pp. 254–260. Social boundaries were transcended by the *république des lettres*; see e.g. Daniel ROCHE, *Les républicains des lettres: gens de culture et lumières au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris 1988; IDEM, *Les circulations dans l'Europe moderne: XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle*, Paris 2011, here pp. 695–733. On this topic see also I. CERMAN, *Šlechtická kultura v 18. století*, pp. 253–272.

65 For comparison, see e.g.: Abraham de Wicquefort – *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* (1680), François de Callières – *De la manière de négocier avec les souverains* (1716), Antoine Pecquet – *Discours sur l'art de négocier* (1738). On the “ideal diplomat” see also Jiří HRBEK, *Společnost králů*, in: Jiří Kubeš et al., *V zastoupení císaře. Česká a moravská aristokracie v habsburské diplomacii 1640–1740*, Praha 2018, pp. 23–41, here pp. 37–41; Jiří KUBEŠ, *Ceremoniál jako jazyk diplomatické komunikace*, in: *Ibidem*, pp. 42–70, here pp. 48–49, 61–62.

66 On Kaunitz's mission at the French royal court see e.g.: L. SCHILLING, *Kaunitz und das Renversement des alliances*, here pp. 159–189; Milena LENDEROVÁ, *Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, ambassadeur d'Autriche en France*, in: Grete Klingenstein – Franz J. Szabo (eds.), *Staatskanzler Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg 1711–1794. Neue Perspektiven zu Politik und Kultur der europäischen Aufklärung*, Graz 1996, pp. 47–56. On Madame de Pompadour see Eva DADE, *Die Marquise de Pompadour und die auswärtigen Diplomaten am Hof in Versailles*, *Zeitenblicke* 8, no. 2, [30 June 2009], URL: <http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2009/2/dade/index_html>, [accessed 29 November 2021]. For correspondence with Madame Geoffrin see MZA Brno, RA Kounic, inv. no. 4202, kart. 441.

(within the constraints imposed by the era). Calzabigi was hugely proud that he could call such an important man his friend; he considered it an honour and a consolation, and he even referred to Kaunitz’s portrait as his palladium: “[...] *finally I own a palladium. From now on, I will look at this painting as at my Penates, and whatever my fate holds for me, it will always be with me. My time at home will be much more pleasant for me; it is a pleasure always to have in my sight my Protector, my Benefactor.*”⁶⁷

However, besides celebratory litanies such as these, the pair’s correspondence also contains numerous examples of Calzabigi’s wit; he had no fear of expressing his opinions with sincerity and irony. This again indicates the rare trust that the two correspondents had for each other. Calzabigi also deliberately focused on topics that he thought would interest Kaunitz – and a typical feature of his letters is the fact that the more neglected he felt, the more he attempted to make an impression on Kaunitz. His letters of this type tend to be lengthy, covering a wide variety of topics and interspersed with citations from classical and contemporary authors, which enabled Calzabigi to display his intelligence and erudition. Like Kaunitz, Calzabigi too used vivid descriptions of his problems (related to health and other matters) in order to evoke his addressee’s sympathy and support.

Can we thus consider Calzabigi to have been one of the *Staatskanzler*’s agents? And if so, what position did the Italian author hold within Kaunitz’s extensive network of contacts? The answer to these questions is not entirely straightforward. Over around four decades of mutual contacts, the relationship between the pair evolved and deepened. They first met in Paris, where they encountered each other in intellectual circles, and they helped to mutually form each other’s tastes and opinions in the fields of art and politics. There are few sources from this period, but it is likely that Kaunitz drew on other sources of information during his mission in France. However, the situation changed during the 1760s. As the secretary and an esteemed companion of the *Staatskanzler*, Calzabigi played a crucial role, often acting as a mediator between Kaunitz and other people – especially from the fields of art and the theatre. A further change in the pair’s relationship came when Calzabigi was forced to leave Vienna. He lost the opportunity to meet personally with the Prince, but he tried to compensate for this loss by sending him regular updates about what was happening in Naples, including numerous amusing and interesting stories, reviews of new publications and cultural events, assessments of artworks, and recommendations of works in which the Prince should take an interest; he occasionally sent Kaunitz books, other texts, and small gifts.

67 “[...] *je possède enfin un palladium. Je regarderai désormais cette image comme mes Dieux Penates, et quel que puisse être mon destin elle viendra toujours avec moi. Mon séjour à la maison va me devenir plus agréable; il est doux d’avoir toujours devant les yeux son Protecteur, son Bienfaiteur.*” Letter dated 6 June 1767, MZA Brno, RA Kounic, inv. no. 4129, kart. 439, fasc. I, fol. 24–26.

During some periods, and in certain circumstances, Calzabigi may indeed have functioned as Kaunitz's agent. It should also be kept in mind that the Prince's network of contacts became substantially sparser in the 1780s following a series of deaths (for example of his friends Charles Alexander of Lorraine, Karl Josef von Firmian, and Friedrich Binder von Krieglstein, as well as his son Joseph Clemens, who passed away during his mission in Spain),⁶⁸ so his association with Calzabigi could have proved useful to him.

However, this is just one of several dimensions in the pair's relationship, and perhaps it is not even the most important aspect of it; it appears that Calzabigi's primary importance for Kaunitz lay elsewhere. Besides appreciating the information that he received from the Italian, Kaunitz particularly valued the opportunity to engage in intellectual discussions with a person who had similar tastes, interests, and opinions – and there is also no doubt that his ego was flattered by the attention of a renowned literary figure and operatic reformer. Moreover, it appears that Calzabigi undertook many of his activities on his own initiative, not merely on Kaunitz's instructions. The poet likewise must have appreciated the intellectually stimulating contact with Kaunitz (like the Prince, he too was highly selective about whom he spoke with), and above all he did not want to lose the Prince's protection. For this reason, he did everything he could to ensure that Kaunitz did not forget about him; he wrote to the Prince regularly and emphasized their many years of friendship. There is no doubt that Calzabigi's information was useful to Kaunitz, though it should also be acknowledged that the Prince could have acquired this information from elsewhere, via his extensive social and informational network. It is therefore likely that the main key to their relationship was their intellectual compatibility and friendship; not only did they share the same tastes, they also both suffered poor health, and they were almost the same age. To conclude, we can cite words from a letter written by Kaunitz to Calzabigi in 1775: *“I think that if you were here with me, I would not long for anything else. Always hold me in your affections at least slightly, my dear Calzabigi! Write to me as often as you can without inconveniencing yourself, and be assured that I continue to love you very much.”*⁶⁹

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68 G. MAYER, *Kulturpolitik der Aufklärung*, p. 363, note 1706.

69 *“Il me semble meme que, si Vous etiez icy avec moi, je n'auerois plus rien à desirer. Aimez moi toujours un peu, mon cher Calsabigi! Ecrivez moi aussi souvent que Vous pouvez le faire sans Vous incommoder, et soyez persuadé que je Vous aime toujours et beaucoup.”* Draft of Kaunitz's letter dated 18 September 1775, OeStA Wien, HHStA, Große Korrespondenz, kart. 405, konv. B, fol. 15–16.