

ANTONIO LOLLI'S LETTERS TO PADRE MARTINI

By ALBERT MELL

TODAY the violinist-composer Antonio Lolli (ca. 1725-1802) is almost forgotten. Yet any list of outstanding violin virtuosos of the pre-Paganini epoch would include his name at the very top or close to it. Since the art of the performer is by its very nature transient, it is remarkable that the impact of Lolli's playing and personality persisted even into Paganini's lifetime, a generation later; indeed, Julius Schottky, a contemporary biographer of Paganini, found it appropriate to use Lolli as a basis of comparison in his chapter "The Case for and against Paganini's Artistic Greatness." Employing the device of a conversation among three protagonists, identified as the Cold One, the Enthusiast, and the Friend of Art, Schottky has the Cold One say: "It is good that you remind me of Lolli, of whom I once heard in Prague just what is now being heard about your extravagantly praised Paganini. To be sure, I was about thirty years younger; but that man remains unforgettable to me; for only he accomplished what is claimed today for the 'Samael of art'...".¹ The Cold One continues with a detailed account of Lolli's phenomenal bow and left-hand technique — a description drawn from an article on Lolli that had appeared in the Leipzig *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1799.² To the fulsome praise of Lolli the Friend of Art responds: "My friend, you are describing Paganini's playing to perfection. Just what you felt thirty years ago we who are younger sense perhaps at this moment, and only this span of years seems to open a gap between our opinions."

By the time of his death in 1840 the overwhelming effect of Paga-

¹ Julius Max Schottky, *Paganinis Leben und Treiben als Künstler und als Mensch* (Prague, 1909; facsim. of ed. of 1830), pp. 69-70.

² Under the title "Biographie einiger Tonkünstler ältere Zeiten" this important and first extended account of Lolli appeared in two installments: No. 37, pp. 578-84, and No. 39, pp. 609-13. The description of Lolli's technique is to be found on pp. 579-80.

nini's transcendental virtuosity and charisma not only had relegated virtuosos of the past to a historical limbo, but had reached an apogee of performance that may well endure as long as the violin is played. Writing some years after Paganini's death, Hanslick, the critic and historian of Viennese concert life, recognized the artistic kinship between Paganini and Lolli; he wrote as follows with regard to what he believed to be Lolli's first performances in Vienna ca. 1761. "He was in many respects the forerunner and prototype of Paganini and the spiritual father among violinists of the dazzling charlatanry of virtuosity; one can also date appropriately the traveling virtuoso par excellence from Lolli . . ." ³

During Lolli's lifetime, the traveling virtuoso still found it necessary to hold some kind of fixed position; a lucrative court affiliation provided not only an assured income and prestige but, for outstanding performers, the invaluable privilege of extended leaves of absence. It was during such leaves that Lolli undertook extensive concert tours, absenting himself from the posts he held: from 1758 to 1774, chamber virtuoso of Charles Eugene, Duke of Württemberg; from 1774 to 1785, solo violinist of Catherine the Great of Russia; and, during his last years, solo violinist of the King of Naples.

Lolli's European reputation undoubtedly dates from his appearances in the spring of 1764 at the Concerts Spirituels in Paris. The reviews of his playing by the *Mercure de France* and other journals reach a level of encomium not to be matched until the advent of Viotti two decades later. Lolli's first sonata and concerto publications also date from his first Paris sojourn. During the years that followed, the printing and reprinting of his music, his numerous tours, and the spate of anecdote about him all testify to his enormous celebrity.⁴

In sharp contrast to the amount of documentation dating from the period of his fame, there remains comparatively little information about Lolli from his earliest years as a performer. It is for this reason that his letters to Padre Martini are of especial interest. They are the earliest personal documents concerning Lolli that have come down to us. They help reveal his personality and character and at the same time provide information about his activities during his first years at the Stuttgart court.

³ Eduard Hanslick, *Geschichte des Concertwesens in Wien* (Vienna, 1869), p. 106.

⁴ For bibliographical details of Lolli's published works (five sets of violin sonatas, one set of duos, and eight concertos for violin and orchestra) and his *L'Ecole du violon en quatuor*, see the writer's article on Lolli, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. VIII (1960), col. 1132.

From the time of his birth, at Bergamo or its environs, until 1758, the year of his affiliation with the court of Württemberg, nothing is known about Lolli. Even his birth year can only be approximated as 1725 on the basis of an entry in the 1802 death register of his parish church in Palermo: "On the 11th day of August, Ant.us Lolli, in his 77th year, fortified with the sacraments, gave his soul to God and was interred in the Convent Church of St. Mary of Peace of the Capuchins."⁵

Nothing is known about Lolli's origins, his training as a musician, or his other activities. Although members of his immediate family became active as performing musicians (chiefly his brother Gaetano, a violinist of journeyman talent, and a sister Brigida, an opera singer of second rank, who married the dancer Giuseppe Anelli), their forebears are not known.⁶ As of the present, it is only with the appointment as solo violinist in the Stuttgart *Kapelle* that a biography of Lolli can really begin.

Both the circumstances of his appointment and the subsequent correspondence suggest that Lolli owed his position to two illustrious musicians: Padre Martini and Niccolò Jommelli. His name appears for the first time in the Stuttgart court records for the year 1758/59, where he is listed as "Solo Geiger" at a stipend of 700 florins. He had been engaged ostensibly as a replacement for the brilliant virtuoso Pasquale Bini, who had served under Jommelli from March, 1754, until the termination of his contract in 1758; during this tenure "Pasqualibini," as he is named in court documents, had enjoyed the handsome annual salary for an instrumentalist of 1950 florins.⁷ In comparison, Lolli was indeed a bargain at 700 florins. But Bini had reached the peak of his career, while Lolli was at the beginning of his. That he had been hired as Bini's successor is in itself testimony to his own considerable ability as a performer, even though his reputation did not yet warrant as large a remuneration as Bini's. At 700 florins⁸ Lolli's stipend was approximately twice that of the other violinists of the ducal *Kapelle*, with but one exception: Pietro

⁵ Registry of Deaths, 1802, Parish of S. Ippolito, Palermo, no. 224.

⁶ R. Aloys Mooser's putative Lolli genealogy goes back to the 17th century and includes an impressive number of actors, dancers, and musicians named Lolli. But Mooser establishes no proof of kinship other than the same family name and activity in the performing arts. See Mooser's article, "Violonistes-compositeurs italiens en Russie au XVIIIe siècle," *Rivista musicale italiana*, L (1948), 225-240. Mooser errs in identifying Lolli's sister Brigida as his daughter.

⁷ Joseph Sittard, *Geschichte der Musik und des Theaters am Württembergischen Hofe* (Stuttgart, 1890-91), Vol. II, p. 56.

⁸ This sum consisted of 300 florins "remitted by the Director of Music Jommelli to the Musician Lolli," with the remaining 400 florins paid by a special ducal decree of May 9, 1759.

Martinez, the leader of the violinists of the Kammermusik, was paid 800 florins. Even before his first year of service was completed, Lolli was paid an extra 300 florins, while his salary for the following year was raised to 800 florins, placing him on a par with Martinez.⁹ Lolli's increased remuneration testifies to his status as a favorite of Duke Charles Eugene. Salary advances were to become a *modus operandi* for Lolli, who was constantly in debt and always close to financial disaster despite a series of raises that would bring his stipend to a peak of 2000 florins by 1765.¹⁰

Although Lolli was to remain at Stuttgart until his contract was terminated in 1774, circumstances at the outset of his affiliation hardly augured such an extended tenure. Lolli had barely settled himself at Stuttgart in the fall of 1758 when he began to think seriously of leaving. This is revealed in the first of Lolli's five extant letters to Padre Martini. The correspondence suggests a friendship that antedates the violinist's Württemberg appointment — a friendship, furthermore, in which the revered padre felt a responsibility for Lolli's conduct that went beyond mere priestly concern. The first of Lolli's letters is not dated, but its contents as well as its position in the correspondence indicate a likely date near the end of 1758 or the beginning of 1759.

Most Reverend Father,

I have received your most esteemed letter, in which I gather that your Reverence is pleased at my finishing out the year lest the loss of my very modest reputation should result. I am grateful to you for the affection that you still retain for such a weak servant as I, but I would have you know that I never had such a notion [as leaving], and truly it must have been that my letter — so full of mistakes as it will have seemed to you — may have suggested indispensability as to my desire to come to Bologna before my time was up. Now the time has come for me to explain to your Reverence all that is happening to me. I did not want to reveal the secret to Signor Pilla — for no other reason than your very great friendship, for how easy it is to talk; and, lest I might suffer some embarrassment, I have kept silent about what I now want to describe to you. I would have you know that I want to come to Bologna for a year for the purpose of learning counterpoint thoroughly and also to settle certain matters regarding my personal affairs. The good Maestro Jommelli, furnished with the claims of that letter of recommendation with which, out of friendship for me, you have favored me, has quickly secured for me leave from my patron, so that I may go wherever I like for a year while retaining my stipend; as a result of which — God forbid — were the pro-

⁹ Stuttgart, Hauptstaatsarchiv, Church Treasury Accounts, Bestand A 282, 1759/1760, fol. 197 a and b.

¹⁰ At 2000 florins, Lolli's stipend matched that paid to Pietro Nardini during his Stuttgart tenure from October, 1762, to March, 1765.

carissimi miei questo è stato il motivo che osavo dirvi che io non
 ho mai fatto una gratia a dire all'figli. Ma ora
 che ho ricevuto una lettera di lei, mi ha fatto
 che le narro e che a ordine di farvi che i due sono in ogni mia gratia
 intanto mi conservo il suo amore che vale sopra ogni mia gratia
 mi ha fatto di non pregustarmi comandi e quando non
 si succede il caso di aver un risentimento di libertà la suppone
 di qualche suo che vorrebbe e mi chiedo a qualunque rivera
 in secondo di splicarla di farvi anche a mio padre mia nome del
 lungo ~~perché~~ io non posso veramente che più mi ha fatto una lettera
 di lei. Ma il fatto è che lei non ha fatto. Lei mi ha fatto
 i suoi complimenti e dice che non possono. Antonic Loli
 tanto per la raccomandazione perché non me
 di lei. Come anche al detto
 mio nome che non posso
 qual che non a una. Ma ad altri. Io spero che non è più al servizio

By courtesy of the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Bologna.

Plate I.

An excerpt from the first of Loli's five extant letters
to Padre Martini (Carteggio Martiniana, I-18, no. 131).

fessors to learn suddenly of this, they might begin to grouse. Since this is the reason I have written to Signor Pilla as to my wanting to come to Bologna, Your Reverence would do me the favor of letting Signor Carlo Pilla know that you received a letter from Signor Jommelli and that what I am telling you now is written therein and telling him not to speak, for reasons of secrecy. In the meantime keep your love for me, which I value beyond any of my hopes; give me the honor of your most prized commands, and, if the occasion arises when you have a free moment, I beg you for some word, and put me to any test whatever. I forgot to explain, to make known, to my Father — in the name of Signor Jommelli — that I truly did not wish to remain here any longer; but with my being granted a leave I can do no less than stay, because it [the leave] is of great usefulness to me.

Maestro Jommelli sends you his regards and says that, because of the recommendation of Your Reverence as well as his weakness for my playing, he will do for me what he has never done for others. Pasqualino is no longer in service.

Your most humble servant
Antonio Lolli ¹¹

Lolli's letter is hardly a model of literary style or clarity of expression. Still, at a time when formal education was a privilege not readily available, Lolli had somehow learned to write. Despite ambiguities of content and syntax, not to mention his highly individual spelling,¹² the essential facts are clear: he was not going to break his contract; both Padre Martini and Jommelli had interceded on his behalf; the extraordinary privilege of a year's leave of absence with pay had been granted by the Duke; and Pasquale Bini was no longer at Stuttgart.

The closing reference to Bini was apparently an answer to a query of Padre Martini. The exact reason for the termination of Bini's contract is not known. He was always a restless spirit with a predisposition to mental illness, as had already been noted by his teacher Tartini some years earlier. After leaving Württemberg, Bini held transient posts at various German courts before returning to his native Pesaro, where he

¹¹ Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Bologna: Carteggio Martiniana, I-18, no. 131.

¹² Even a casual perusal of the Italian original of this letter (see Plate I) will reveal the idiosyncrasies of Lolli's spelling: note the doubling of the letter *t*, a habit that extends even to his own signature; more often than not, where one expects a double consonant, it is missing; the letter *s* is used systematically in place of the letter *z*. Capitals are usually missing at the beginning of sentences, punctuation is at a minimum, and articles are often elided with the nouns that follow. That these anomalies are not simply the vagaries of mid-18th-century Italian spelling and writing style may be seen if one compares the letter to Martini by the far better educated Jommelli (letter of Feb. 23, 1759; see Plate II, below).

died in April, 1770, at fifty-four, as a result of an illness connected with his mental disorder.¹³

The writer suspects that Lolli's real reasons for wanting a year's leave were more of a personal nature than a wish to study counterpoint. The latter reason would have flattered Padre Martini and would certainly have carried more weight with the Duke. There is no evidence, however, that Lolli ever actually studied counterpoint with Martini, nor do his compositions show either contrapuntal interest or skill. Such study might not have appreciably improved Lolli's ability as a composer, but identification as a pupil of the illustrious Martini would perhaps have served to mitigate the unusually severe criticism of his compositions.

Lolli's correspondence with Martini continues with the following letter, the first of the dated missives.

Most Reverend Father,

I regret having to inconvenience you again with this [letter], knowing very well that Your Reverence will be continually preoccupied with so many worthy activities; nevertheless, trusting always in your usual kindness, I take the liberty of letting you know that, God willing, I shall have the honor of kissing your hand this Easter or, at the latest, fifteen days after, that so I have accepted the leave as I describe it in my last letter, and during the time I am in Bologna I shall have the good fortune of being helped by you. I give you news that Signor Jommelli has composed a major work¹⁴ and received a magnificent gift from our patron. Signor Jommelli enjoins me to greet you in particular, as I do, too; in order not to weary you, I kiss your hand, and I am and always shall be that which I declare myself:

Of Your Reverend Father
Your true servant
Antonio Lolli¹⁵

February 15, 1759
Stuttgart

¹³ For the most complete account of Bini's life, see Giuseppe Radiciotti, "Aggiunte e correzioni ai Dizionari biografici dei musicisti," *Sammeibände der internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, XV (1914), 582-86. Radiciotti indicates that Bini preceded Jommelli at Stuttgart by two months; however, Jommelli's appointment as *Ober-Kapellmeister* dates from November, 1753, and it was undoubtedly he who hired Bini in March, 1754. The Bini article in Grove (1954) is based wholly on Radiciotti, without acknowledgment.

¹⁴ Probably the opera *Nitteti*, based on a libretto by Metastasio, which was first performed Feb. 11, 1759 during the birthday celebration of the Duke. See Sittard, *op. cit.*, II, 88.

¹⁵ Carteggio Martiniana, I-18, no. 132.

A letter from Jommelli to Padre Martini, dated Stuttgart, February 23, 1759, was presumably written in response to an inquiry as to Lolli's status at Württemberg. Had the good padre any doubts, Jommelli's second paragraph would have set his mind at ease, for it is tantamount to a testimonial. Of especial interest is Jommelli's designation of the violinist as "il Bergamaschino." This shows that, despite the paucity of earlier information about him, Lolli was now well-known enough to have acquired a sobriquet; furthermore, it confirms Bergamo as the place of his birth. Down to the present day, writers about Bergamo's musical past have relied entirely on secondary sources for their accounts of Lolli. They have accepted him as an illustrious Bergamasco on the basis of anecdotes hardly flattering to the inhabitants of that city or region.¹⁶

The following is Jommelli's letter.¹⁷

My Reverend Father and Patron,

I hope that Signor Lolli, called the Bergamaschino, will have more than once offered my apologies to Your Very Illustrious Reverence for my not having answered until now your most compact note, a neglect caused by the assiduous activity in which I have been continually involved. I trust that your kind indulgence will wish to pardon this involuntary delay without ever crediting the least defect in the sincere esteem and the well deserved veneration that I pride myself in professing toward Your Very Illustrious Reverence — this beyond the limitless obligations that I owe you.

The aforesaid Signor Lolli conducts himself very well here, in both his profession and his personal affairs. His Royal Highness, our most gracious patron, is really pleased with him; and all the rest of us love him deeply.

I am anxiously awaiting the announcement that at least the first volume of Your Very Illustrious Reverence's great work is out. I therefore beseech you to give me news of it, so that I may not be among the last to hear it.

The continuation of your grace is part of my greatest happiness, of which the honor of your commands makes up the rest. I therefore beseech you fervently for one or the other, ever assuring you the more of my ardent desire to make myself

¹⁶ According to C. F. Cramer, *Magazin der Musik*, 1783, p. 251, Lolli was asked to play an Adagio after having showed off his violinistic acrobatics. He refused, laughingly, saying, "I must tell you that Bergamo is the place of my birth. In Bergamo we are all born fools and I am one of the most refined of them." Paraphrases of the anecdote appear also in F. W. Marpurg's *Legende einiger Musikheiligen* (1786), p. 81, and in E. L. Gerber's *Historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, Vol. I (1790), p. 821. See also G. Donati-Pettini, *L'Arte della musica in Bergamo* (Bergamo, 1930), pp. 33-34; Angelo Geddo, *Bergamo e la musica* (Bergamo, 1958), pp. 148-51.

¹⁷ Carteggio Martiniana, I-24, no. 1. Martini habitually made notations on his correspondence received; witness his remarks at the top of page 1 of Jommelli's letter (see Plate II): "Monsieur, Mons. Antoine Lolli, called the Bergamask, violin player at the Court of His Serene Highness, the Duke of Württemberg; Stutgard/ Director and Maestro di Capella of H. S. H.," a reference to Jommelli; and "Franca & Mantova," apparently the agent of transmittal.

better known to you, on any occasion — be it of greater importance or whatever it may be.

Stuttgart, February 23, 1759

Of Your Very Illustrious Reverence
Your very humble and most grateful, faithful
servant

Niccolò Jommelli

Running through the enormous correspondence of Martini — and the letters from Jommelli and Lolli are no exception — is a continuing concern about, and interest in, the status of his magnum opus, the *Storia della Musica*. Martini's legion of correspondents included the most celebrated musicians of the day as well as figures of lesser artistic consequence; it seems as though the entire musical world was mobilized to assist the revered padre in his momentous undertaking. Naturally, the long-expected announcement of the publication of the first volume of the *Storia* was eagerly awaited. Although the first volume bears the date 1757, its actual publication occurred several years later; gift copies from the author to Rameau and other distinguished figures were not distributed until early in 1761.¹⁸

After the Lolli letters of early 1759, which are concerned primarily with his leave of absence,¹⁹ more than a year elapses before there is further news of him in Padre Martini's correspondence. This time, the source is a letter from the violinist Angelo Emiliani,²⁰ dated Stuttgart, May 12, 1760, a letter which was brought to Martini at Bologna by the ballet master François Sauveterre. After the usual compliments Emiliani writes: "I believe that Your Most Illustrious Reverence will have received from Signor Antonio Lolli my regards which I urgently begged him to convey to you, and I would, furthermore, have sent you this letter by him had not the press of time before his departure prevented it. . . ."

¹⁸ Dr. Howard Brofsky has graciously informed me that he has narrowed down the approximate date of publication to some time between September, 1760, and February, 1761; Rameau's acknowledgment of a gift copy is dated February, 1761.

¹⁹ It may be assumed that Lolli's leave was slightly less than a year, from Easter of 1759 to the beginning of February, 1760. The one time of the year when Duke Charles Eugene insisted on the availability of his entire artistic establishment was February, during the period of his extended and lavish birthday celebrations.

²⁰ Carteggio Martiniana, I-9, no. 8. Emiliani was a member of the Ducal *Kapelle* for a brief period in the early 1760s.

Lolli continued to enjoy special privileges at the Stuttgart court. Hardly returned from his year's leave, he was again free of official obligations until the fall of the year. Sauveterre,²¹ the bearer of Emiliani's letter, was less fortunate, for he had just been replaced as director of the Stuttgart ballet by Jean Georges Noverre. Noverre, his dancer wife and his wife's sister, the ballerina Nanette Sauveur, were in Württemberg by early March, 1760, for the official confirmation of an agreement signed before a notary at Lyons, November 13, 1759.²² One can assume that Lolli had already met these new and most distinguished additions to the ducal artistic establishment prior to his departure for Italy. With Noverre's appointment Duke Charles Eugene acquired for his ballet the most illustrious choreographer of the 18th century; and as an indirect consequence of the engagement of the Noverres, Antonio Lolli was to acquire a wife, for he was soon to marry Nanette Sauveur. While Lolli was still in Italy in the late spring and summer of 1760, the contracts of the Noverre entourage were renegotiated at Ludwigsburg, July 6, 1760: their term of service was extended from six to fifteen years, and they were granted handsome tax-free salary increases.

Just when and where the marriage of Antonio Lolli and Nanette Sauveur took place is not known, Since the ducal archives have no record of the marriage, an event that would have hardly gone unnoticed considering the prominence of the two artists, it seems likely that the ceremony took place outside of Württemberg, perhaps at Strasbourg, the native city of the Sauveur family. The time was prior to May 5, 1762, the date of a brief ducal decree in which the ballerina is identified for the first time by her married name: "His Ducal Highness has raised the annual salary of the dancer Lolli by 300 gulden which will be paid by the Ducal Treasury; otherwise, the agreement of July 6, 1760, will remain in effect." This raise, which brought the stipend of the "Tanzerin Lolli" to 1800 gulden,²³ may well have been in the nature of a ducal wedding present.

²¹ Sauveterre, who had succeeded Michel Agatha in 1759, had served only one year at Stuttgart.

²² The agreement, in French, covered an engagement "from Monday after Quasimodo till the Saturday of Easter, 1766." The Stuttgart contract of March 7, 1760, was prepared in German by the Intendant of the Ducal Theater; Noverre was appointed as *Balletmeister* and his spouse as *Comoediantin* at an annual wage for both of 5000 gulden; the two dancers who accompanied them, Nancy Levier and Nanette Sauveur, were to receive 1000 gulden each, tax free plus slipper allowances and travel expenses to and from Stuttgart. Both documents are in the Ludwigsburg Staatsarchiv, A-248, Bundle 209; summaries are printed in Sittard, *op. cit.*, II, 198-99.

²³ The florin and gulden have the same value and appear interchangeably in

While the Noverre group was appreciably improving its situation in the first months after its arrival at Württemberg, Lolli was enjoying his trip to Italy. In September of 1760 he was at Parma from where he once again wrote to Padre Martini.

Very Illustrious Reverence,

I have never wanted to inconvenience Your Reverence with my letters, for I know you are always occupied with your skillful musical compositions, but now, having arrived at the point of my departure, I find it necessary. I petition and dare to ask Your Reverence for the continuation of your protection in which, purely out of your generosity, I have always been a participant, since in this journey that I am making to Vienna, I am very much in need of your aforementioned protection; I beseech the great kindness of Your Reverence to grant me the favor of one of your most esteemed letters of recommendation so that I may avail myself of it during the said time of my stay there. If the book were completed, it would be a suitable means. Above all, anxious to receive your commands, I give myself the honor of professing my servitude to you, letting it be understood that my departure from Parma will follow on the twentieth of September and declaring myself

[the] very devoted, most humble servant
of Your Very Illustrious Reverence
Antonio Lolli

Parma, September 12, 1760 ²⁴

Lolli's plans for a sojourn in Vienna suggest the strong likelihood of concerts by him in that important musical center during the fall of 1760, before his return to Stuttgart. Writing of what he believed to be the violinist's first Viennese performances, Hanslick provides the following information: "In the year 1761 or 1762 the renowned violinist Antonio Lolli came to Vienna where he stayed for several months and earned much money. . . . Details about this Viennese sojourn by Lolli are completely lacking, except that Mozart himself heard him we understand from a letter to his sister Nannerl." ²⁵ Give or take a year, Hanslick's chronology is acceptable, but the one detail he does supply, based on the letter of Mozart to Nannerl is open to serious question. The letter he

ducal contracts. In the 1767 roster of the Ducal Theater, Mrs. Lolli is listed as "Lolli, née Sauveur," at a stipend of 2630 florins, of which 130 florins was apparently her slipper allowance. Her salary, the highest paid any dancer at court, exceeded her husband's, which had reached a plateau of 2000 florins in 1765.

²⁴ Carteggio Martiniana, I-18, no. 133. This letter is not in Lolli's hand.

²⁵ Hanslick, *op. cit.*, pp. 106ff.

refers to was written at Verona, January 7, 1770. Describing a performance of Pietro Guglielmi's opera *Ruggiero*, Mozart wrote: "Irene's part is sung by a sister²⁶ of Lolli, the great violinist whom we heard at Vienna. She has a muffled voice and always sings a semiquaver too late or too soon."²⁷ The earliest sojourn of Wolfgang and his family at Vienna enroute to or from Stuttgart, St. Petersburg, and Italy; his final seems unlikely that Wolfgang and Nannerl could have heard and remembered a Lolli performance in Vienna at this time. A more plausible occasion would be some time during the second and far more extended Vienna stay of the Mozart family in 1767/68. In the course of some thirty-five years as a touring virtuoso Lolli performed many times in Vienna enroute to or from Stuttgart, St. Petersburg, and Italy: his final appearance there was in 1794, by which time he was in the service of the King of Naples and, as Hanslick describes him, "nothing more than a shadow of the former great and celebrated virtuoso."²⁸

Whether or not Lolli's first Vienna performances took place in the fall of 1760, as his letter to Padre Martini from Parma suggests, or in 1761 or 1762, as Hanslick indicates, there is no doubt about the financial and artistic success of his concerts there in the spring of 1763. Our source is the autobiography of Dittersdorf. "Whilst I was in Italy,²⁹ Lolli, the great violinist, had come to Vienna, where he stayed some months and reaped a rich harvest. On the very evening of my arrival, my older brother could not say enough about the sensation caused everywhere by his playing."³⁰ Dittersdorf continues this account at considerable length, explaining how, after studying one of Lolli's sonatas obtained by his brother, he was able to master the virtuoso's style in a week's time, and was soon able to out-Lolli Lolli himself.

By 1763 Lolli's reputation at Vienna was securely established. Three years earlier this was not yet true, which explains his request in his Parma letter of September, 1760, for one of Padre Martini's "most esteemed letters of recommendation." It may be assumed that the benevolent padre responded favorably to this request, but the "book," which

²⁶ Brigida Anelli-Lolli, who with her husband, the dancer Giuseppe Anelli, had been affiliated with the Stuttgart ballet until 1767.

²⁷ Emily Anderson, *The Letters of Mozart* (London, 1938), Vol. I, p. 154.

²⁸ Hanslick, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

²⁹ Young Dittersdorf had accompanied Gluck on a trip to Italy which lasted from April through June of 1763. By the beginning of July, they were both back in Vienna.

³⁰ Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, *Autobiography*, trans. A. D. Coleridge (London, 1896), pp. 125ff.

the violinist had suggested as a "suitable means," was not yet available. It was not until Lolli's return to Stuttgart, after his successful Viennese concerts in the fall of 1760, that the first volume of the *Storia* was finally published. A brief and undated letter from Lolli to Martini was prompted by the news of this signal event.

Reverend Father,

With the greatest pleasure I received your letter and in the same I found the notice of your famous history of music, and I have delivered it into Signor Jommelli's own hands; in it he will take boundless pleasure, and he gave me no other task than to greet you and say that by this very post he will write to you himself. I congratulate Your Reverence for having given the world your skilled accomplishments, and I offer them such applause alone as is merited from all the world. I thank you for having informed me with one of your [letters], for you honor me every time Your Reverence favors me with one of your greetings. Keep me in your good graces, grant me the honor of your commands, and believe me to be

Your true servant
Antonio Lolli

Soon I shall let you know the settlement of my fortune.³¹

The last of Lolli's five letters to Padre Martini was written at Stuttgart, April 28, 1762; the subject of this brief congratulatory note is once again the *Storia della Musica*.

Reverend Father,

On the occasion of Signor Pini's arrival there [at Bologna], I have not wanted to miss the chance of sending you my most heartfelt compliments, wishing you perfect health and peace of mind. I trust that the Lord will grant all that Your Reverence asks, your being so close to God and so deserving to be heard by Him. I must offer you a very great compliment on your remarkable history of music, praise for which — justly sung by the most excellent composers and maestros — is deserved by such an effort and so worthy a volume.

Meanwhile, remain in perfect health, give me the honor of some command or other, and believe me to be your most affectionate servant, as I permit myself the glory of being, professing myself to be always

Of Your Reverence
Stuttgart, April 28, 1762

Your most humble and devoted servant
Antonio Lolli ³²

³¹ Carteggio Martiniana, I-18, no. 134. Just what may be the significance of Lolli's cryptic afterthought remains a mystery.

³² *Ibid.*, no. 135. This letter, like that of I-18, no. 133, is not in Lolli's hand.

Although this last extant letter of Lolli to Martini is in a hand somewhat neater and more precise than that of the violinist, the spelling is hardly an improvement. The syntax and style are so characteristic of Lolli himself that it may well be that the scribe simply provided a clearer and neater copy of Lolli's original, or followed Lolli's dictation faithfully.

In the absence of letters postdating that from Stuttgart of April 28, 1762, it may be assumed that correspondence between Lolli and Padre Martini lapsed at this time. One can only speculate about the reasons. It seems likely that Lolli no longer had need of his benefactor. During the period of three or four years that covers their correspondence, the violinist's circumstances had improved enormously. Relatively unknown at the time of his first Stuttgart appointment in 1758, he had by 1762 already achieved a considerable reputation. His travels in Italy and successful concerts at Vienna and elsewhere had served to bring his artistry to the attention of a far wider audience than that of the Württemberg court. 1762 was also the year of his marriage to Nanette Sauveur, which effected family ties with the famous choreographer Noverre. A virtuoso of Lolli's talent and burgeoning celebrity no longer needed letters of introduction. After the phenomenal success of his appearances at the Concerts Spirituels in Paris in the spring of 1764 and his first sonata and concerto publications in the same year, Lolli was a musical figure of international stature. He was to retain this position for some thirty years.