THE LIMNER COMPANY



Attributed to DANIEL NIKOLAUS CHODOWIECKI (1726 - 1801)

Portrait probably depicting Italian composer Domenico Cimarosa holding a quill and musical score on which are written the words ‘arcate’ and ‘Autunniche’

Circa: circa 1770

circa 1770

Oil on copper

Oval, 70 mm (2 $^{3}/_{4}$ in) high

Daniel Chodowiecki was the most successful graphic artist of 18th-century Germany, often being compared to Hogarth. Yet he initially trained as a miniature painter and it was as a miniaturist that he became a member of Akademie der Künste, Berlin. Chodowiecki played a major role in the acamdemy's early years, organising the first of their annual exhibitions in 1786, and rising through the ranks to eventually become director in 1797. Today, many of his drawings and prints can be found in public institutions across Europe and in the USA, but few of his miniatures.

Chodowiecki was born in 1726 in Danzig (modern day Gdańsk, Poland) into a Polish-Huguenot family. An apprenticeship with a merchant took him to Berlin in 1743, but, having been drawing and painting from a young age, he soon abandoned commerce to become a professional miniaturist.

Chodowiecki worked in a range of media to produce portrait miniatures and snuffbox miniatures, including watercolour on ivory, enamel, oil on metal and plumbago. He is thought to have taught himself etching around 1750 and his early work received a good critical reception, but it was not until 1770 that etching would eclipse his miniature practice.

The subject here appears to be an Italian composer, the sheet music he holds inscribed ‘arate’ and

‘Autumniche’ (autmumnal in Italian). It likely represents Domenico Cimarosa (1749–1801), a major figure of Italian opera. A Neapolitan native, Cimarosa was a prolific composer. Renowned for his storytelling, the majority of Cimarosa's works were comedies and he is credited as the founder of the comic opera as it is today.

Cimarosa’s success reached beyond Italy, and in 1787 he was invited to Saint Petersburg by Catherine the Great. He would stay in Russia for several years composing and reworking a number of pieces for the imperial court. While Cimarosa travelled, including to Warsaw and working for several years at the court of Leopold II in Vienna, Chodowiecki seems to have worked primarily from Berlin. It may be therefore, that Chodowiecki painted this portrait from an engraving, which he described doing himself. [1] Interestingly, the artist and subject shared an interest in the lives of ordinary people and made it the focus of their artistic outputs.

[1] Völker, K., *Daniel N. Chodowiecki 1726-1801: Drawings from the Collection of the Veste Coburg*, 1989, p.7.