



CONTE KUENBURG

# Castel Sallegg

## Line: Serenis

Leopoldine

Alto Adige Pinot Bianco DOC

## **Leopoldine Baroness v. Waidek (1840 – 1891)**

Singer, lover, companion

### **In the beginning was the voice**

As fate would have it, an unlikely encounter occurs in Graz in 1863: The paths of Leopoldine Hofmann and Archduke Heinrich, son of Archduke Rainer and his wife Elisabeth of Savoy-Carignano, cross. The result is a love that springs up in both their hearts and will last a lifetime.

“Bold and brave and of the people” – the meaning of her name suggests a premonition of her fate. Leopoldine follows a path through life that her parents Anna and Ignaz Hofmann would not have thought possible when their daughter was born in Krems in 1840.

At an early age Leopoldine sings in the choir of the parish church in Krems. And people take note of her voice: “She possesses a delightfully sweet and mellow voice that has a distinctive melodious quality even as she speaks.” Her parents enable her to train as a singer at the Vienna Conservatory, where she acquits herself with grace and bravura. An engagement at the Graz Opera follows, where her roles include Pamina in Mozart’s Magic Flute and Ortrud in Wagner’s Lohengrin. Her stage presence inspires the audience: “A bright radiance with mild, calm clarity – not dazzling, but appealing.” Leopoldine also charms a distinguished visitor to the opera, Archduke Heinrich. At first it is glances they exchange. The glances are soon followed by letters. Love blossoms, and Heinrich asks for her hand in marriage.

Many months will pass before the astutely arranged marriage between a commoner and the Archduke can take place in Bolzano. The lovers marry in amorganatic ceremony. Heinrich initially loses his rank and property until the Emperor reinstates him in the Imperial family following the birth of his daughter Maria Raineria and raises Leopoldine to the nobility as Freifrau (Baroness) von Waidek. They live happily in Bolzano, where they entertain on a small scale, and in Sallegg Castle, where they invite people to help with the grape harvest. Just as touching as their enduring love is their death: In one and the same night they both die of pneumonia in Vienna in 1891.

*Leopoldine Baroness v. Waidek is the great-great-grandmother of the present owner Georg Graf Kuenburg.*

