Lorenzo Da Ponte

The role of a famous librettist, who cooperated with Mozart, often is underestimated. As for his biographies, biography by Sheila Hodges can be considered as an essential research contrary to some other works.

Emanuelle Conegliano (Lorenzo Da Ponte from the age of fourteen), the son of the converted Jew, was born in 1749. Italian literature and languages were his preferable subjects while studying in the seminaries. He was ordained at the age of twenty four, and after half a year escaped to Venice, where he began to improvise with the verses and the musical accompaniment. There he had some love affairs; he was accused of sedition (due to some poems) and banished from Venice in 1779. In 1783, he obtained a job of librettist in Italian Opera troupe in Vienna. Some years later, he met Mozart, and they produced together “The Marriage of Figaro” in 1786, then “Don Giovanni” (1787) and “Cosi fan Tutte” (1790). Their opera buffa becomes tragicomedy. Elegant verses, clear strong plots, and interesting characters were his main contribution to their mutual cooperation; despite the possibilities of Mozart’s influence on his texts (because of Mozart’s deep understanding of life), his contribution is significant.

He had a lot of enemies and after the death of Joseph II, he had to leave the Vienna in 1790. During the second period of his life, he got married and had five children. Since 1792, he lived in London, where after six years working as a librettist in a King’s theater, he tried to go into business but unsuccessfully. He immigrated to the USA hiding from the debtors in 1805. He was the first professor of Italian at Columbia University and the first supplier of the
Library of Congress with the Italian literature. Moreover, he made considerable efforts popularizing the Italian opera in America - in 1833, there was built Italian Opera House (it was existed for three years). He died in 1838.