

1771

0226. LEOPOLD MOZART TO PADRÉ GIOVANNI BATTISTA MARTINI,¹ BOLOGNA

The Very Reverend Padré Maestro
Most Esteemed Father,

Milan, 2nd January, 1771

Wishing a most happy New Year, I will not neglect to inform you that my son's opera² has been received most happily, [5] despite the great opposition of the hostile and envious, who, before seeing a single note, had spread word that it was a barbarous piece of German music without order or foundation, impossible for the orchestra to perform, in such terms as to cause half the city of Milan to doubt whether they would have anything as a first opera except a patchwork. Someone succeeded in bringing all his arias to the prima donna,³ and also the duetto, [10] all composed by Abbé Gasparini⁴ of Torino, that is, the arias written in Torino, to persuade her to take these arias, and to accept nothing by this boy, who will never be capable of writing a single good aria. But the prima donna declared that she first wanted to see the arias by my son, and, having seen them, declared herself happy, even more than happy. [15] Despite this, the slanderers never ceased to spread a most vicious prejudice against my son's opera, but the first instrumental rehearsal closed the mouths of those cruel and barbarous slanderers in such a way that not a single word more was heard. All the professors in the orchestra confirmed that the opera is easy to play, clear and open, and all the singers declared themselves happy. [20] The first opera in Milan usually has the misfortune, if it does not run aground, then at least of drawing little audience, since everyone is waiting for the second one. But the six performances completed to date have always been full, and every evening they make them repeat two arias, with much applause directed at the greater portion of the others. Dearest Sgr. Padré Maestro! [25] We hope to hear news of your good health, not doubting that we will yet receive the promised *Miserere* of your most virtuosic composing, and that piece à 16. Sgr. Giuseppe Prinsechi⁵ will assuredly pay the costs of the copying, and I shall not fail, as soon as I reach home, that is, towards Easter, to send everything that I believe to be pleasing to Your Fatherliness. [30] My son humbly kisses your hand and I declare myself united with him in all veneration and esteem,

Your Fatherliness'

most devoted and most dutiful servant,
Leopold Mozart mpa.⁶

¹ BD: Giovanni Battista Martini (1706-1784), specialist in the theory and history of music. Taught Mozart during his stay in Bologna in preparation for admission to the Accademia filarmonica.

² BD: Of the opera *Mitridate, Rè di Ponto*, KV 87 (74a); the composition is marked "opera seria". Libretto by Cigna-Santi, based on Parini's translation of Racine's *Mithridate*. First performance 26th December, 1770, in the Teatro Regio Ducal, which was opened in 1717 with Gasparini's *Costantino* and burned down completely in 1776. Cast list in BD V, p. 289.

³ BD: Antonia Bernasconi, cf. No. 0125/134 naming singers performing in Vienna.

⁴ BD: Probably Abbate Quiro Gasparini (c. 1725-1778), 1760-1770 director of music in Turin, or someone representing him. Cf. Nos. 0226/10; 0229/6.

⁵ BD: Giuseppe Prinsechi, merchant. Cf. No. 0171/47-48, 94.

⁶ "manu propria" = "in his own hand".