

0373. MARIA ANNA MOZART TO HER HUSBAND, SALZBURG; POSTSCRIPT BY MOZART

My dear husband,

Mohmheim, 14<sup>th</sup> Novem.  
Cathedral-Slime<sup>1</sup> 1777

I sent off one letter<sup>2</sup> just yesterday, and today I am starting another once again. In your letter<sup>3</sup> you asked if Wolfgang had gained Herr Raff's<sup>4</sup> favour. [5] I can tell you that he is a good, honest man, but otherwise cannot do anything. He sang this opera,<sup>5</sup> it is known that he was once a fine singer, but he has now been packed away, like Herr Meisner,<sup>6</sup> whom I would even rather prefer to hear than Herr Raff, but otherwise he is the most honest man in the world. I spoke with him at the concert, [10] he congratulated me on the skill of my son, and was very astonished at him, music director Holzbauer,<sup>7</sup> too, who likewise greatly esteems my son.

MOZART'S POSTSCRIPT:

<sup>8</sup>I, Johannes Chrisostomus Amadeus Wolfgangus Sigismundus Mozart, confess my guilt that, yesterday, and the day before, |: and often before, too :| I did not [15] come home until 12 o'clock at night, and that from 10 o'clock until the hour named, I was often at Can[n]abich's,<sup>9</sup> in the presence and *en compagnie*<sup>10</sup> with Canabich, his spouse<sup>11</sup> and his daughter,<sup>12</sup> the esteemed treasurer,<sup>13</sup> Raam<sup>14</sup> and Lang,<sup>15</sup> and – – made rhymes, without difficulty and quite easily; these were nothing but coarse items, namely about shit, shitting and kissing arses, [20] and truly in thought, word and – – but not in deed. But I would not have conducted myself so godlessly if the ringleader, namely the so-called Lisel |: Elisabetha Cannabich :| had not so strongly encouraged and incited me to do so; and I must confess that I had an ample portion of pleasure in it. I confess all these, my sins and

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<sup>1</sup> BD: This word is in Mozart's hand ("Dommschleim") and rhymes with "Mohmheim", his mother's spelling of Mannheim.

<sup>2</sup> BD: No. 0370; cf. No. 0370/113-115.

<sup>3</sup> BD: No. 0375/30-31. On the name "Sigismund(us)" cf. No. 0360/63.

<sup>4</sup> BD: Cf. No. 0365/30-31. Anton Raaff (1714-1797), son of a shepherd, originally intended for the priesthood, appeared as a singer in Bonn, Vienna, Paris, Lisbon, Madrid and Naples before a longer period of service in Mannheim and Munich.

<sup>5</sup> BD: *Gunther von Schwarzburg*, cf. Nos. 0363/81; 0366/14-15 .

<sup>6</sup> BD VII: Joseph Nikolaus Meissner (c. 1725-1795), son of the Salzburg court musician Niklas Meissner (c. 1691-1760). Employed in Salzburg from 1747, but often on tour. Reputed to sing everything from high tenor to deep bass, but cf. Mozart's judgement in No. 0453/83 ff. His sister also sang in Salzburg.

<sup>7</sup> BD: Ignaz Jakob Holzbauer (1711-1783), from 1753 senior music director [Oberkapellmeister] in Mannheim, composer. Stayed in Mannheim rather than moving to Munich with the Elector in 1778. Mozart was positively impressed by his singspiel *Günther von Schwarzburg* in 1777 (première 5 January 1777), cf. No. 0373/52; No. 0377/59 ff.

<sup>8</sup> BD: A parody on the Catholic pre-confessional prayer, with all personal names as in No. 0302/44.

<sup>9</sup> BD: (Johann) Christian (Innocenz Bonaventura) Cannabich (1731-1798). Joined the Mannheim court music at the age of 13. After the death of Toeschi (see above), he was sole music director to the Elector in Munich. The Cannabich family became particular friends of Mozart's in Mannheim in 1777/78.

<sup>10</sup> = "In the company".

<sup>11</sup> BD: Cf. No. 0057/13. Maria Elisabeth, née la Motte, married Cannabich in 1759.

<sup>12</sup> BD: Rosina Theresia Petronella (\* 1764), known as Rosa, daughter of Christian Cannabich. In 1777 she received lessons from Mozart, who dedicated the clavier sonata in C KV 309 (284b) to her.

<sup>13</sup> BD: Gres. Mozart met him again in Frankfurt, cf. No. 1138/21.

<sup>14</sup> BD: Friedrich Ramm (1744 – after 1808), oboist, joined the court music in Mannheim aged 14, was in Paris with Mozart, went to Munich with the court in 1778. Mozart met him in Mannheim in 1777 and wrote the oboe quartet KV 370 (368b) for him in 1781. Cf. No. 0363/18, 19.

<sup>15</sup> BD VIII: Cf. No. 0363/18, 19. One of the brothers Franz Joseph Lang (1751-1816) or Martin Lang, horn players.

transgressions, from the bottom of my heart and, [25] in the hope of needing to confess them often, I resolutely undertake to improve even further the sinful life which I have begun. I therefore crave holy dispensation, if it can be something easy; if not, it's all the same to me, for the game will certainly go on. *Lusus enim suum habet ambitum*,<sup>16</sup> pronounces the singer Meissner<sup>17</sup> of blessed memory, Chap: 9: pag: 24,<sup>18</sup> and, moreover, [30] Saint Ascenditor,<sup>19</sup> patron saint of roux soup coffee, mouldy lemonade, almond milk without almonds and, especially, strawberry ice cream full of pieces of ice, since he himself was a great connoisseur and artist in frozen things. As soon as possible, I will copy out, on small paper, the sonata<sup>20</sup> which I have written for Mad:<sup>sellé</sup> Canabich [35] and send it to my sister. 3 days ago, I started to teach Mad:<sup>sellé</sup> Rose the sonata; today we finished the first *allegro*. The *andante* will cause us the most trouble, for it is full of expression, and must be played accurately with *gusto*<sup>21</sup>, *forte* and *piano*, as written. She is very able, and learns very easily. [40] The right hand is very good, but the left is unfortunately completely ruined. I can say that I often feel very sorry for her when I see how she often has to make such great efforts that she is completely out of breath, and that not for lack of ability, but because she cannot do otherwise, because she is already so accustomed to it, since no-one has ever shown her anything else. I also said to her mother and herself [45] that if I were to be her teacher formally, I would lock away all her music, conceal the keyboard with a handkerchief, and would have her practice so long with the right and left hands, starting very slowly, with nothing but passage-work, trills, mordants etc., until the hand was completely trained, then after that I would be confident of making a true clavier player out of her. For it is a pity. [50] She has so much genius,<sup>22</sup> she reads very passably at sight, she has a great deal of natural lightness, and she plays with a great deal of feeling. And both of them agreed with me. Now for the opera.<sup>23</sup> Very briefly: the music by Holzbauer is very beautiful. The poetry does not deserve such music. What amazes me most is that such an old man<sup>24</sup> as Holzbauer still has such mental powers, [55] for it is unbelievable how much fire is in the music. The *primadonna* was Mad. Elisabetha Wendling,<sup>25</sup> the wife not of the traverse flautist, but of the violinist. She is always indisposed and, furthermore, the opera was not written for her, but for certain Danzi,<sup>26</sup> who is now in England, consequently not for her voice, but too high. Herr Raaf once sang 4 arias, [60] totalling perhaps around 450 measures, in such a way that one noticed that his voice was the biggest reason why he sings so badly. Anyone who hears him starting an aria, and does not in that same moment keep in mind that it is Raaf singing, the once so famous tenor, must necessarily laugh heartily. For this is quite certainly the case: I thought to myself, [65] if I did not know at this moment that this is Raaf,<sup>27</sup> I would bend double with laughter, but, as it is – – I simply pull out my handkerchief and snort it full. And, as people here tell me themselves, he has never at any

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<sup>16</sup> = “For a game goes its own way.”

<sup>17</sup> BD: Salzburg court musician Niklas Meissner (c. 1691-1760), father of the Joseph Nikolaus Meissner mentioned in line 8.

<sup>18</sup> BD: Wolfgang imitates Leopold's phrase of No. 0102/144.

<sup>19</sup> BD: Ascenditor (“climber” in Latin) = Steiger/Staiger (“climber” in German) = proprietor († 1781) of the first coffee house in Salzburg. Here Mozart lists some of the products of Staiger's coffee house.

<sup>20</sup> BD: KV 309 (284b).

<sup>21</sup> = “taste, style”.

<sup>22</sup> Presumably a significant natural affinity for music, not “genius” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century sense.

<sup>23</sup> BD: Cf. line 6.

<sup>24</sup> BD: At that point 66 years old.

<sup>25</sup> BD: Elisabeth Augusta Wendling (I), wife of violinist Franz Anton Wendling (1729-1786). Cf. No. 0057/2-6.

<sup>26</sup> BD: Franziska Dorothea Lebrun, née Danzi (1756-1791), sister of the cellist and composer Franz Danzi (1763-1826). Met Mozart again later in Vienna.

<sup>27</sup> BD: Raaff (cf. line 5) later caused Mozart worries (in *Idomeneo*, cf. No. 0570/8-10) with his lack of acting skills. Metastasio praised his singing, but saw him as a cold actor.

time been an actor: one must just hear him, and not see him. Nor does he have a good stage presence at all. In the opera he had to die, and sing at the same time, in a long <sup>28</sup> slow aria, [70] and he died with a smile <sup>ter</sup> on his face, and towards the end of the aria his voice failed so much that it was unbearable. I sat next to the flautist Wendling in the orchestra. I said to him, because he had previously raised the criticism that it is unnatural to sing until one dies: It can in fact hardly come soon enough. Then I said to him, Have a little patience, now it will soon be all over for him, [75] for I can hear it. Me too, said he, and laughed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> lady, a certain Mad:<sup>selle</sup> Strasser<sup>29</sup> |: but not one of the Strasser girls :| sings very well, and is a splendid *actrice*.

There is a German national theatre<sup>30</sup> which is permanently resident, as in Munich. Germans *Singspiels* are put on occasionally, but the ladies and gentlemen singing there are miserable. [80] Yesterday I dined with Baron and Baroness von Hagen,<sup>31</sup> Senior Master of the Hunt. 3 days ago I was at the home of Herr Schmalz,<sup>32</sup> merchant, to whom I had a letter of introduction from Herr Herzog, or, rather, Nocker and Schidl.<sup>33</sup> I thought I was going to find a highly courteous, orderly man there. I handed the letter over to him. He read it through, bowed slightly towards me, [85] and – – said nothing. Finally, I said |: after much apologising that I had not already called to pay my respects to him a long time ago :| that I had had an opportunity to be heard by the Elector. Indeed? – – altum silentium<sup>34</sup>! I said nothing. He said nothing. Finally I said, I will not inconvenience you any longer, I have the honour – – Here he interrupted me: [90] If I can be of service to you in any way, then – – Before I travel on, I will allow myself the liberty of asking – – with money? – – Yes, if you like, the – – Yes, I cannot do that, there is nothing in the letter about money. I cannot give you money, but otherwise – – But otherwise you cannot be of any service to me, I don't know with what else. I have the honour of commending myself. [95] Yesterday I sent a letter<sup>35</sup> to Herr Herzog in Augspurg<sup>36</sup> with the whole story. Now we have to wait for an answer; consequently, Papa can continue to write to Mannheim. Now I ask that my compliments be given to all good friends, both ladies and gentlemen. I kiss Papa's hands 100 000 times, and I embrace my sister from the bottom of my heart, and am the younger brother and father,

[100]

Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart

Because Papa wrote in his last letter:

I am as always the same husband and son.

Today is the 16<sup>th</sup>, on which it was written out, the letter, otherwise he does not know when it was sent off, the letter. [105] <sup>37</sup>Have you finished it yet? – The letter? – – – Yes, Mama, I have finished it now, the letter.

<sup>28</sup> The bracket and the indication “ter” require, as in musical notation, the word to be heard three times: “long, long, long”.

<sup>29</sup> BD: Barbara Strasser, married the bass Johann Ignaz Ludwig Fischer (1745-1825), the first Osmin in the *Abduction from the Seraglio*, in 1779.

<sup>30</sup> BD: Built 1775-1777. Mozart was in contact with the manager, Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg, in 1778.

<sup>31</sup> “Baron und Baronesse”. BD: Franz Karl Joseph, Baron [Freiherr] von Hacke (1745-1780), senior master of the hunt [Oberstjägersmeister] and senior forester [Oberstforstmeister], and his wife Amöna.

<sup>32</sup> BD: Dietrich Heinrich Schmalz (1720-1797), son of the banker Philipp Lorenz Schmalz.

<sup>33</sup> BD: Nocker and Schiedl, bankers in Augsburg; Herzog was a shareholder. Cf. No. 0051/10.

<sup>34</sup> = “Absolute silence.”

<sup>35</sup> BD: No. 0372, lost.

<sup>36</sup> Augsburg, where Leopold was born and his brother still lived.

<sup>37</sup> BD: Dialogue between mother and son, cf. No. 0371/2-4.