

Something for you alone!<sup>3</sup>Vienna, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1768

It is now time to give a longer and clearer account of our fortunate or unfortunate – I do not know which – circumstances and to hear your friendly opinion. If money constitutes the only blessedness of mankind, [5] then we are currently without doubt to be pitied, since we, as you know, have spent so much of ours that apparently little hope is left that we may recover again. If, on the other hand, health and skill in fields of knowledge are the highest good of man, we are |: God be praised :| still well situated. The most dangerous main storm has been weathered; [10] we are all, by the grace of God, well and my children have certainly not forgotten anything, but, as will become evident, have made great progress.

Now, nothing will be less comprehensible to you, I know, than how it can be that our project is not making better progress. I will explain it to you as best I can, [15] although I have to omit things that cannot be entrusted to the pen. That the Viennese, *in genere*,<sup>4</sup> are not hungry to see serious and sensible things and also have little or even no idea of them, and want to see nothing apart from tomfoolery, dancing, devils, ghosts, magic spells, buffoons, whether named Lipperl or *Bernardon*,<sup>5</sup> witches and apparitions – [20] all this is well-known, and their theatres prove it daily. A gentleman, even one with a medal ribbon, will clap his hands and, because of a buffoonish dirty joke or simple-minded tomfoolery, will laugh so much so that he almost gets out of breath. On the other hand, he will speak so loudly to a lady during the most serious scene, during the most touching and beautiful acting, and during language of the greatest sensibility, [25] that other honest people cannot understand a word. That, then, is the main ground. The budgeting of the court, which I cannot describe here, is a matter which brings many consequences with it – an explanation of this, illustrated with examples, would go too far – and is the second ground. Innumerable strange things arise out of these two grounds, [30] because everything depends on mere blind and random chance, and also often on an abominable baseness, though this is not given to all men, or even on very unabashed and audacious overblownness. Now, to get round to our business, many other adverse events have taken place. On our arrival, we had no alternative except to open up access to the court for ourselves. [35] But Her Majesty the Empress<sup>6</sup> has no music in her presence anymore,<sup>7</sup> she goes neither to the *opera* nor the theatre, and her way of life is so removed from the world that I cannot possibly describe it adequately. She had us brought to the Emperor.<sup>8</sup> But since this gentleman is in the highest degree shy about anything that may involve any expenditure, [40] there was such a long to-do until he came to a decision that, in the meantime, the sad event of the Betrothed Princess<sup>9</sup> and all the rest of it intervened, as you know from my letters. After our return from Moravia, we came to the highest personages without our even having thought about it. No sooner had the Empress been told what had happened to us in Ollnitz,<sup>10</sup> [45] and that we had returned, than we were given the day and

<sup>1</sup> BD: Original lost. Copyist B; NissenB.

<sup>2</sup> BD: Johann Lorenz Hagenauer (1712-1792), Salzburg merchant. Friend of the Mozarts and their landlord 1747-1773.

<sup>3</sup> BD: Contrary to the usual practice of circulating the letters. Leopold gets onto the subject of tight finances and offers in the course of the letter his explanation of this.

<sup>4</sup> In general.

<sup>5</sup> “Hannswurst”. BD: Hannswurst: Stock figure in German theatre, in No. 0956/83 equated by Leopold with “Pagliaccio”, typically employing coarse, improvised lines. “Lipperl” (= little Philip) and *Bernardon* were two variants.

<sup>6</sup> “S<sup>e</sup> Mayst: der Kayserin”. Empress Maria Theresia.

<sup>7</sup> BD: Since the death of her husband Francis [Franz] I of Lorraine in 1765.

<sup>8</sup> “Kayser”. Emperor Joseph II.

<sup>9</sup> “der Pinzessin Braut”. BD: Archduchess [Erzherzogin] Maria Josepha (1751-1767), cf. No. 0118/2.

<sup>10</sup> BD: Olmütz, in Moravia. See Nos. 0121; 0122.

the hour when we should appear. But what use is all the astonishing graciousness, the indescribable affability! What is the outworking of it? Nothing more than a medal which, although beautiful, amounts to so little that I would not even wish to write down its value here. She leaves everything else to the Emperor, [50] and he writes it down in the book of forgetfulness and is quite convinced that he has paid us with his most gracious conversation. Now you will ask me what the rest of the nobility in Vienna are doing. – – – What are they doing? – – – They are all limiting their expenditure, as much as is possible, in order to please the Emperor. If the ruler is extravagant, [55] everyone goes on a merry round of spending. If, on the other hand, the ruler is frugal, everyone wants to be the best housekeeper. – – –

As long as Carnival lasts, people here think about nothing but dancing. In every corner there are *balls*, but *N.B.* all at vicious expense. Even the private ball at court is for cash. And who benefits from this? – – – The court! [60] For all dances, private *balls*, *balls*, and all spectacles are leased out. Others have the name and the profit is divided, so to speak, between the court and the leaseholder, so whoever goes to one is also rendering a good service to the court. This, then, is the political expenditure of the nobility. We have the greatest persons of the nobility as our protectors. [65] Prince Kaunitz; the Duke of Braganza,<sup>11</sup> Fräulein von Guttenberg, who is the left eye of the Empress; the Senior Stable Master, Count Dietrichstein,<sup>12</sup> for whom nothing is impossible with the Emperor, are our friends. But how events turn out! We have not been able to speak to Prince Kaunitz because he has the weakness of fearing smallpox so much that he shies away from people who still have even red marks on their face. [70] Consequently, since Wolfgangerl still has many red marks on his face which, although they are small, are easily visible in the cold, he merely informed us via his friend de Logier<sup>13</sup> that he would take care of our interests during Lent, since one cannot get the nobility together under one roof now during Carnival.

[75] Now, as I gave my best thought to the matter and reflected that I have already spent so much money and that it might perhaps be great foolishness if I travelled home now without waiting for anything else, a completely different event occurred. I discovered, namely, that all *clavier* players and composers in Vienna opposed our progress, [80] with the sole exception of Wagenseil,<sup>14</sup> but he, since he is at home ill, can contribute little or nothing to our advantage. The main maxim of these people was to avoid scrupulously any opportunity to see us and recognise Wolfgangerl's knowledge – and why? – – – So that they can always say, in the many cases in which they are asked [85] if they have heard the boy and what they think of him, that they have not heard him, and that it cannot possibly be true, that these are fake contests and harlequinades, that it is all fixed in advance, since they give him music to play that he already knows, that it is ridiculous to believe that he composes etc. etc. – – – [90] You see, that is the reason they flee from us. For anyone who has seen and heard it can no longer speak this way without placing himself in danger of losing his honour in the process.

I caught one of these people in a trap. We had arranged with someone to inform us quietly when he was there. [95] But his task was to go and fetch a really extraordinarily difficult *concerto* by this person which was to be put down in front of Wolfgangerl. So we joined them as well. And thus he had the opportunity to hear his *concerto* being played immediately by Wolfgang as if he knew it by heart. The astonishment of this *clavier* player and composer, the expressions and forms of speech [100] he used in his amazement revealed to us everything I have already said to you above. And finally he said: As an honest man, I

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<sup>11</sup> “Fürst Kaunitz; der duc of Braganza”. Cf. No. 0120/9.

<sup>12</sup> “obriststahlmeister graf dietrichstein”. BD: Johann Karl, Count [Graf], later Prince [Fürst] Dietrichstein (1728-1808).

<sup>13</sup> BD: Alexandre-Louis Laugier (1719?-1774), personal physician to Maria Theresia.

<sup>14</sup> BD: Georg Christoph Wagenseil (1715-1775), music teacher to the Empress Maria Theresia and her children. His compositions for keyboard were familiar to Mozart from the notebook Leopold compiled for Nannerl; he learned to play two scherzos by Wagenseil in a short time on 24<sup>th</sup> January and on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1761.

can say nothing other than that this boy is greatest man presently living in the world. It was impossible to believe. – – – Now, in order to convince the *public*, which is the real priority, I have suddenly decided to make everything [105] depend on something quite exceptional, namely that he should write an *opera* for the theatre. – – – And what kind of stir do you think has arisen in secret among these composers? – – – What? – – – Today we are to see a *Gluck*,<sup>15</sup> and tomorrow a boy of 12 sitting at the *clavier* and conducting his *opera*? [110] – – – Yes, despite all the enviers! I have even brought *Gluck* over to our side to the extent that, even if it is not wholehearted, he cannot let this show, for our protectors are also his. And in order to make sure of the *actors*, who are generally the greatest vexation for the composer, [115] I took up the matter with them myself, and one of them had to confess all the plans to me. But the first thought of having Wolfgang write an *opera* was given to me, to tell the truth, by the Emperor himself when he twice asked Wolfgang if he was inclined to write an *opera* and to conduct it himself. He answered yes, of course, but the Emperor could say nothing more, [120] for the opera is *Affligio's*<sup>16</sup> business, he said. The consequences |: if God lends help to bring it to completion |: of this undertaking are so great, but also so easy to comprehend, that they require no explanation. But now I must not be grudging with money, for it will doubtless return today or tomorrow. He who dares nothing gains nothing. I must get the matter into the public eye. [125] It must be make or break! And what is more suitable for this than the theatre? But the *opera* will not be until after Easter, that goes without saying. I will write at the next opportunity for permission to stay here longer. – – – But it is not an *opera seria*, for it can no longer become an *opera seria* now; nor do people like it here, but rather an *opera buffa*.<sup>17</sup> But not a short *opera buffa*, [130] but one 2½ to 3 hours long. For there are no singers here for serious *opera*; even the sad *opera Alceste* by *Gluck* was performed entirely by *opera buffa* singers. But now he, too, is writing an *opera buffa*,<sup>18</sup> for there are excellent people here for *opera buffa*:<sup>19</sup> *Sgr. Caribaldi*,<sup>20</sup> *Sgr. Caratoli*,<sup>21</sup> *Sgr. Poggi*, *Sgr. Laschi*, *Sgr. Polini*;<sup>22</sup> *Srga. Bernasconi*, *Srga. Eberhardi*,<sup>23</sup> *Srga. Baglioni*. [135] What do you say, sir? Is not the glory of having written an *opera* for the Vienna theatre the best way not only gaining a reputation in Germany, but also in Italy? I wish you well.

3<sup>rd</sup> Februarii, 1768

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<sup>15</sup> BD: Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787). In No. 0125/110 ff., Leopold seems to think Gluck would soon be on his side in supporting *La finta giardiniera*, but in No. 0135/35 ff. he sees them as being amongst those composers undermining the possible success of the opera. In Nos. 0420/160-161 and 0476/33 ff., he again sees Gluck as one of Wolfgang's opponents. On the other hand, in Nos. 0684/43-44 and 0731/18 ff., the relationship seemed mutually positive. In his concert on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1783, Mozart improvised variations on "*Unser dummen Pöbel meint*" from Gluck's singspiel *La Rencontre imprévue* in honour of the composer present in the audience.

<sup>16</sup> BD: Giuseppe Affligio (also Afflisio, actually Marcati) (1719-1787), from 1767 the only person in charge of "spectacles" in Vienna, manager of the Burgtheater and the Kärntnertheater. For the accusations against him cf. No. 0139.

<sup>17</sup> BD: *La finta giardiniera* KV 51 (46a), text by Goldoni, revised by Coltellini. Despite all efforts in Vienna, the first performance was in 1769 in Salzburg.

<sup>18</sup> BD: As far as is known, Gluck never carried out this plan.

<sup>19</sup> BD: Most of those named here had provisionally been given roles in *La finta giardiniera*, cf. BD V, p. 187.

<sup>20</sup> BD: Garibaldi.

<sup>21</sup> BD: Francesco Caratoli (c. 1705-1772), *basso buffo* from Modena. The reports of his death in Nos. 0230/10 and 0231/18 are false.

<sup>22</sup> BD: Pulini.

<sup>23</sup> BD: Eberardi.