

Milan, 15th Dec., 1770

On the 12th was the first rehearsal² with instruments, but with only 16 persons, in order to see if everything is written correctly. On the 17th there will be the first rehearsal with the whole *orchestra*, which consists of 14 *firsts* and 14 *seconds*, [5] thus 28 *violins*, 2 *claviers*, 6 *contrabasses*, 2 *violoncelli*, 2 *bassoons*, 6 *violas*, 2 *oboes* and 2 *flauti traversi*, which, if no *flauti* are scored, always play with 4 *oboes*,³ 4 *corni di caccia*, and 2 *clarini* etc., thus 60 persons. Before the first rehearsal with the small *orchestra* had taken place, there had been no lack of people who, with satirical tongues, [10] had even in advance proclaimed that the music was something juvenile and miserable, thus, so to speak, prophesying, since they maintained that it was impossible for such a young boy, and, on top of that, a German, to write an Italian *opera*,⁴ and that, although they recognised him as a great *virtuoso*, he could not possibly sufficiently understand, and have insight into, the *chiaro ed oscuro*⁵ needed for *opera*. [15] All these people have fallen silent since the evening of the first small rehearsal, and are not uttering a syllable more. The *copyist* is entirely happy, which is a very good portent in Italy, since the *copyist*, if the music turns out well, sometimes makes more money from selling and sending the *arias* than the music director does from the *composition*. [20] The singers, both female and male, are very satisfied and completely happy; in particular, the *prima donna*⁶ and the *primo uomo*⁷ are overjoyed with the *duetto*,⁸ and the *primo uomo* said that if this *duetto* fails to please, he wants to have himself castrated once again. Enough! Now it depends on the *caprice* of the whole *audience*. In the matter itself [25] apart from the little bit of vanity and honour, the outcome is no longer of great importance to us. We have already undertaken much in this world of wonders, and God has always stood by us. Now we are standing on the threshold of this enterprise, by no means so insignificant in view of certain circumstances, and God will be with us now as well. A few days back it snowed, or snowed, how ever you best understand it, [30] here for the first time, after which came dry weather, and the water on the streets and on the soil was frozen. So just imagine the cold without heating ovens. The words for this are: Oh, thou terrible cold in this warm land! Yet it is only our hands that suffer most, since the felt shoes retain the warmth for the feet and the furs for the body. Today the cold eased [35] because it rained a little.

Look around for good linen for making shirts, since, as soon as we arrive, with God's help, shirts will have to be made for *Don Amadeo*. They are all too short⁹ and will hardly last until we reach home, since the sleeves are all too short.

[40] My letter to His High Princely Grace¹⁰ will hopefully have arrived. I will let both of you know as soon as the *opera* goes on stage. On St. Stephen's Day,¹¹ a full hour after *Ave Maria*, you can in your minds imagine or picture *maestro Amadeo* at the keyboard in the *orchestra*, but me up in a box or *balco* as a spectator and, in thought, [40] wish him a

¹ BD: Original lost. NissenB.

² BD: For 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.

³ BD: i.e. the 2 oboists and the 2 (primarily) flautists combining as 4 oboists. The total number of players is therefore 56 and not 60.

⁴ BD: Cf. No. 0053/40-42.

⁵ BD: = "light and shade" ≈ nuancing.

⁶ BD: Antonia Bernasconi, cf. No. 0125/134 naming singers performing in Vienna.

⁷ BD: Pietro Benedetti, known as Sartorini, whom the Mozarts had met again in Rome (cf. No. 0192/13) and who sang in Mozart's *Mitridate* in Milan in 1770. Cf. Nos. 0166/37; 0219/20-21.

⁸ BD: *Se viver non degg'io*, No. 18: Aspasia, Sifare. Cf. No. 0225/12-13.

⁹ BD: On his growth during the journey cf. Nos. 0199/59-60; 0224/43-45.

¹⁰ "S^r: Hochf: Gnaden". The Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Leopold's employer.

¹¹ BD: 26th December.

successful performance, also praying a few Our Fathers for it. We kiss both of you 1000000 times and I am as always your

Mozart.

To all friends, both gentlemen and ladies, inside and beyond the house, all the good wishes imaginable. When, then, is Saint *Victoria*?¹² Tell me when you write.

¹² BD: Victoria's name-day is 23rd December. Leopold was presumably intending to send congratulations to Maria Viktoria Robinig von Rottenfeld (†1783), wife of factory owner Georg Joseph Robinig von Rottenfeld (1710-1760), member of the air-rifle club and frequent guest at the Mozarts' and her daughter, Maria Aloisia Viktoria. These congratulations, however, once again arrive only in the "octave" (cf. No. 0119/3), as the period of eight days beginning with a church feast-day is termed.