

0239. LEOPOLD MOZART TO CONTE GIOVANNI LUCA PALLAVICINI,¹ BOLOGNA

²Excellency!

[Salzburg, 19th July, 1771]

I have never experienced such pain in my heart, however great, as that which I feel in reproving myself for having deserved, in some manner, the opprobrious title of an ungrateful creature, having until this hour neglected to send to Your Excellency some news of ourselves. [5] My limited abilities in writing Italian caused me to defer fulfilling my duty from one day to the next, more than persuaded that Your Excellency has never lacked sincere reports about the reception of my son in Milan, reports which are reliable, impartial and therefore of greater value, according to the proverb *Propria laus sordet*³ etc.

[10] Now that we are safe and sound in Salzburg, thanks be to God, I take the liberty of inconveniencing Your Excellency with the present missive⁴ and of notifying you that hardly had we reached home, when a letter came from the theatre in Milan in which it was agreed that my son should write the opera for Carnival 1773, and a little later he was called to present himself in Milan at the beginning of the coming month of September to write the serenata,⁵ [15] or theatrical cantata, for the marriage⁶ of His Royal Highness the Archduke Ferdinando,⁷ an event conferring all the more honour, inasmuch as the most aged of the maestri, Sgr. Adolf Hasse,⁸ known as The Saxon, will write the opera,⁹ and the youngest maestro will write the *serenata*, while a certain Abbé Porini¹⁰ is currently writing the poetry of this cantata, which, as I am informed from Vienna, will be completed by the middle of the coming month [20] and will be titled Ascanio in Alba.

In the meantime, my son is composing an oratorio¹¹ by Metastasio for Padua, commissioned by Sgr. Don Giuseppe Ximenes of the Princes of Aragon.¹² I will send this oratorio, passing by way of Verona, to Padua to be copied, and, returning from Milan, we shall go to Padua¹³ to examine it.

[25] Speaking as father and son, we thank Your Excellency for so many favours received and humbly send our most devoted respects to Your Excellency, to Her Excellency and Benefactress the Countess and to the most illustrious young Count¹⁴ and we beg you to extend to us your favour, declaring ourselves, together with my son, with all zeal and devotion,

Your Excellency's

[30] most humble, most devoted and most obliged
Salzburg, 19th July, 1771 servant

¹ BD: Field marshal Conte [Count] Gian Luca Pallavicini-Centurioni; Leopold and Wolfgang were guests on his country estate near Bologna for some weeks (cf. No. 0171/6, 8, 12).

² The letter is entirely in Italian.

³ = "Self-praise is vile".

⁴ BD: Cf. note on No. 0236/50, the commission for *Ascanio in Alba* KV 111.

⁵ BD: *Ascanio in Alba* KV 111.

⁶ BD: Cf. No. 0236/15. The upcoming marriage of Maria Beatrice Ricciardi with Archduke Ferdinand, the son of Maria Theresia. The marriage would bring Modena under the control of the Habsburgs, thus forming a connection between Tuscany and Lombardy. The suggestion may have come from the Governor general of Milan, Count Firmian, but more probably from Maria Beatrice herself after a concert given by Mozart on 18th February, 1770 (cf. No. 0155/41-42).

⁷ BD: Parini.

⁸ BD: Johann Adolf Hasse (1699-1783), back in Vienna since 1764. Leopold Mozart heard his opera *Demetrio* in Mantua in 1770 (cf. No. 0158/22).

⁹ BD: *Ruggiero ovvero L'eroica gratitudine*, text by Metastasio. Hasse's last opera.

¹⁰ BD: Giuseppe Parini (1729-1799), cf. No. 0246/16 ff.

¹¹ BD: The "azione sacra" *Betulia liberata* KV 118 (74c). Cf. No. 0236/17.

¹² BD: Cf. No. 0236/17.

¹³ BD: This did not take place.

¹⁴ BD: "Countess", "young Count": cf. No. 0172/5.

Leopold Mozart mp¹⁵

¹⁵ mp = manu propria = in his own hand.