

0431.¹ MOZART TO HIS FATHER, SALZBURG; POSTSCRIPT BY HIS MOTHER

*Monsieur
mon très cher Pére!*²

[Mannheim, 28th February, 1778]

We received your letter³ of the 23rd safely; I hope that I will receive the arias⁴ next Friday or Saturday,⁵ [5] although you did not make any more mention of them in your last letter, and I therefore do not know for certain if you sent them by post-coach on the 22nd;⁶ – I hope so, for I would like to play and sing them to *Mad. selle Weber*⁷ as long as I am here.

Yesterday I was at Raff's,⁸ and took him an aria⁹ which I had written for him in the last few days. [10] The words are: *Se al labro mio non credi, bella nemica mia* etc. etc. I do not think the text is by Metastasio.¹⁰ The aria was exceptionally to his liking. One has to treat a man like that quite specially. I deliberately chose this text because I knew that he already had an aria with these words, so he would find it easier and preferable to sing. [15] I said to him that he should tell me plainly if it is of no value to him or not to his liking; I would then change the aria as he wishes or write another one. God preserve us, said he, the aria must be left as it is, for it is very beautiful; I request only a little thing, sir, shorten it for me, for I now no longer have the stamina. With a willing heart, as much as you wish, sir, I answered, [20] I deliberately made it slightly longer, for one can always shorten, but adding on is not so easy. After he had sung the second part, he laid his eyeglasses down, looked at me with wide eyes, and said – – Beautiful, beautiful! That is a beautiful *seconda parte*;¹¹ and he sang it 3 times. As I left, he expressed his thanks very courteously to me, and I in return assured him [25] that I would arrange¹² the aria for him in such a way that he would certainly enjoy singing it,¹³ for I love an aria to be as accurately tailored to a singer as a well-made suit. I also wrote, as an exercise, the aria¹⁴ *Non sò d'onde viene* etc., which has been so beautifully set by Bach,¹⁵ because I like it so much and it is always in my ears, [30] for I wanted to try and see, despite all these things, if I am capable of writing an aria which does not resemble the one by Bach in any way. – – Nor does it even look at all like it, not at all.

I initially thought of writing this aria for Raff, but the beginning immediately seemed to me too high for Raff and I liked it too much to change it, [35] and also seemed to

¹ This letter contains passages in "family code"; these are marked with angle brackets < >.

² = "Monsieur, my very dear father".

³ BD: No. 0429.

⁴ BD: KV 208; Nos. 2, 3, 8, 10. For the last of these arias, three cadenzas (composed for Aloisia Weber?) exist. Cf. Nos. 0419/120; 0430/61 ff.

⁵ BD: 6th or 7th March, 1778.

⁶ BD: In No. 0425/62, Leopold spoke of sending them off on 23rd February, 1778.

⁷ BD: Wolfgang had made the acquaintance of Franz Fridolin Weber (1733-1779) and family in Mannheim. Cf. No. 0405/29. His main interest was in Aloisia Weber (c. 1760-1839), who was said to be 17 when Mozart met first her. She was already singing at court. The family moved to Munich in 1778. In 1779 she was given a leading position at the German Opera in Vienna [Deutsche Oper]. Cf. No. 0405/30.

⁸ BD: 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. Cf. No. 0120/54.

⁹ BD: KV 295.

¹⁰ BD: The text is taken from Metastasio's *Artaserse*, but in the setting by Johann Adolf Hasse (Act II, scene 14). This text was in fact has substitution for Metastasio's "*Dimmi che un empio sei*", and may have been by Antonio Salvi.

¹¹ = "Second part, second section."

¹² BD: Because of changes and cuts by Mozart, the autograph had been cut up and re-glued several times.

¹³ BD: Parallel to the following statement is found in No. 0220/6-7.

¹⁴ BD: "*Alcandro, lo confesso*" – "*Non so, d'onde viene*" KV 294, text by Metastasio.

¹⁵ BD: Johann Christian Bach.

me better for a soprano because of the setting for the instruments, so I decided to write this aria for the Weber girl;¹⁶ I laid it aside, and settled on the words *se al labro* etc. for Raff. Yes, that was in vain; I would not have been able to write, the first aria kept coming into my head. I therefore wrote it, and settled my intentions on fitting it accurately to the Weber girl. [40] There is an *Andante sostenuto* : with a little recitative before it :| in the middle of the second part, *nel seno à destarmi*, then the *sostenuto* again. After finishing it, I said the following to *Mad.^{selle}* Weber: Learn the aria on your own, sing it according to your *gusto*¹⁷; then let me hear it, and afterwards I will tell you honestly, madam, [45] what I like and what I do not like. I went there 2 days later, and there she sang it to me and accompanied herself. But then I had to admit that she had sung it precisely as I had wished it and as I had wanted to teach it to her. This is now the best aria that she has; with this, she will bring honour to her name everywhere, wherever she goes. Yesterday, at Wendling's,¹⁸ I sketched the aria¹⁹ which I had promised her,²⁰ [50] with a short recitative. She had requested the words herself, from *Didone*: *Ah non lasciarmi nò*. She and her daughter²¹ are quite crazy about this aria. I have promised the daughter some more French *ariettes*, one²² of which I started today. Once they are ready, I will send them, like the first one,²³ on small format paper. [55] Of the 6 clavier sonatas,²⁴ there are still 2 I have to write,²⁵ but there is no hurry with them, for I cannot have them engraved²⁶ here: nothing can be done here with subscriptions, it is pure beggar's work, and the copper engraver will not engrave them at his expense; he wants a *moitié*²⁷ of the sales with me. I would thus rather have them engraved in Paris: there the engravers are glad if they get something new, and pay dutifully, [60] and there is a better possibility of doing something by subscription. I would have had the sonatas written out piece by piece and sent to you long since, but I thought I would rather send them to you once they have been engraved. I am looking forward to nothing more than the *Concert spirituelle*²⁸ in Paris, for I shall probably have to write something for it. [65] The orchestra is said to be so good and strong, and my main favourite kind of composition can be performed well there, namely choruses, and on this point I am glad indeed that the French attach great value to these. That is also the only thing that people have objected to in Piccini's²⁹ new opera, *Roland*,³⁰ namely that the choruses are apparently too naked and weak, and generally the music a little too uniform. Otherwise, however, it has found the approval of all. [70] The truth is, until now people in Paris have been accustomed to the

¹⁶ BD: In 1787, Mozart set the same text for the bass Johann Ignaz Ludwig Fischer (cf. No. 0615/25, 42).

¹⁷ = "taste, style".

¹⁸ BD: The flautist Johann Baptist Wendling (1723-1797); his brother was the violinist Franz Anton Wendling (1729-1786). For the various members of the family Mozart wrote KV 487a (295a), KV 307 (284d) and perhaps KV 368. He also wrote an instrumentation of a flute concerto by J.B. Wendling.

¹⁹ BD: "Basta, vincesti" – "Ah non lasciarmi". KV 486a (KV⁶: 295a). Text from Metastasio's *Didone abbandonata*.

²⁰ BD: Dorothea (I) Wendling, née Spurni, wife of the traverse flautist Johann Baptist Wendling, singer in the court music in Mannheim, later dedicated herself entirely to teaching.

²¹ BD: Elisabeth Augusta Wendling (II), (1752-1794), daughter of Johann Baptist Wendling and his wife Dorothea (I). ("Gustl", cf. No. 0419/75-76).

²² BD: "Dans un bois solitaire" KV 308 (295b).

²³ BD: KV 307 (284d). Cf. No. 0419/76, 123.

²⁴ BD: Of the six sonatas later dedicated to the Electress [Kurfürstin] Elisabeth Auguste (cf. No. 0363/84-85), those written in Mannheim were: KV 301 (293a); 302 (293b); 303 (293c); 305 (293d).

²⁵ BD: KV 304 (300c), KV 306 (300l): written in Paris that spring.

²⁶ BD: Presumably Wolfgang had been negotiating with Michael Goetz († 1810), publisher in Mannheim. Goetz published a reprint of KV³: Anh. 294d (KV⁶: Anh. C 30.01) in 1800.

²⁷ = "Half share".

²⁸ BD: The *Concert spirituel*, the first commercial concert series in Paris, was founded by Anne Danican-Philidor in 1725. It comprised a chorus and orchestra and performed in *Les Tuilleries*.

²⁹ BD: Nicola Piccinni (1728-1806); cf. No. 0158/56.

³⁰ BD: *Roland*, text by Quinault, Piccinni's first opera for Paris; the ballet was by Noverre, cf. No. 0430/182.

choruses by Gluck. Just rely on me, I will make all the efforts of which I am capable to bring honour to the name of Mozart. Nor do I have any worries in this regard. From previous letters you will have seen³¹ everything as it is and as it was meant; I beg you, sir, do not allow the thought that I would forget you to come into your head often! [75] — for I cannot stand it. My main intention was, is and always will be to make every effort so that we may come together soon and happily — but the watchword here is patience; you yourself know better than I how matters often go awry — yet they shall get back on course again. Just be patient. Let us put our hopes in God, [80] He will not abandon us. It will not fail on my account. How, indeed, can you have doubts about me? — Is it not my priority, then, that I should work with all my strength so that, the sooner the better, I should have the happiness and delight of embracing wholeheartedly the best and dearest of fathers? — You see! — There is indeed nothing in the world without self-interest! — If, for example, there should be war³² in *<Bavaria>*, [85] follow us here immediately, I beg you. I have placed my trust in 3 friends, and these are strong and insuperable friends, namely in God, in your head, and in my head. Our heads are of course different, yet each in its field very good, serviceable and useful, and in the course of time I hope my head may yet gradually reach the level of yours in the field [90] where yours currently outweighs mine. Now may life go truly well with you! Be high-spirited and carefree. Bear in mind that you have a son who has never knowingly forgotten his filial duty towards you and who will make every effort to become ever more worthy of such a good father, and who will remain unchangingly, sir, your most obedient

[95]

Wolfgang Mozart

I embrace my sister with my whole heart.

To all good friends, both gentlemen and ladies, my compliments, especially to Herr Bullinger.³³ If you have perhaps not sent the arias off yet, I beg you to do this as soon as possible. [100] You would thus bring me pleasure indeed. Ah, if only *<the Elector³⁴ of Bavaria had not died>*, I would have filled out the Mass³⁵ and performed it. I was just in the right frame of mind for it, and then Old Rags³⁶ brought the accursed Dr. Sanftl³⁷ along! —

MARIA ANNA MOZART'S POSTSCRIPT:

[105] My dear husband, we are now gradually getting ourselves ready for our departure. If we can only find the right buyer for the coach³⁸ I will be happier, but I very much doubt that we will get much for it, but we will do our best and not spare any effort to get 50 florins for it anyway. They are not prepared to put an estimate of more than 4 carlins³⁹ on it,

³¹ BD: Cf. Nos. 0426/5 ff.; 0428/13 ff.

³² BD: As part of the dispute following the Bavarian Succession in 1777, Austrian troops had taken possession of various territories, affecting Salzburg as well. Cf. No. 0404/41 ff.

³³ BD: Abbé Franz Joseph Johann Nepomuk Bullinger (1744-1810), Jesuit, private tutor, friend of the Mozart family in Salzburg, where he seems to have arrived between 1774 and 1776. House tutor to Count [Graf] Leopold Ferdinand Arco, later to Count [Graf] Sigmund ("Sigerl") Lodron. Mozart called him "his best of all friends" (cf. Nos. 0331/5; 0459/1).

³⁴ "Curfirst". BD: Elector [Kurfürst] Maximilian III Joseph of Bavaria (1727-1777) was also an outstanding viola da gamba player as well as a composer. Cf. No. 0337/90. The childless Maximilian III Joseph was succeeded by Karl Theodor in December, 1777: the lands of Bavaria and the Palatinate were re-united for the first time since the Treaty of Pavia in 1329.

³⁵ BD: Cf. note on No. 0388/90. Of the "Mass" mentioned here, probably only the Kyrie (KV 322/296a) was written; cf. Nos. 0423/56; 1446.

³⁶ "Plunder". BD: Polite vocabulary substitution for "devil". Cf. No. 0347/180.

³⁷ BD: Dr. Sännftel; cf. allegations of his role in the Elector's death in No. 0399/84.

³⁸ BD: The family chaise, with which Wolfgang and his mother reached Mannheim. There had been differing instructions on whether to sell it or not. Cf. No. 0426/86.

³⁹ BD: 44 florins.

[110] and find much to take exception to in it. It is in truth always like this if one wants to sell something, and particularly so here, where the interested people are looking for double and triple advantage and are not inclined to do the least favour free of charge. I will be happy once I am away from here. I am looking forward to that moment with longing, which, if God so wills, should happen in a fortnight at the latest. [115] In the meantime, I look forward with longing to your letters and what you still have to write to us, and rest assured that everything is to happen according to your wishes and directions. Keep well, both of you, I kiss you many 10 000 times and remain, as always, your faithful wife,

Maria Anna Mozart

[120] All imaginable good wishes to all good friends.