

0447. MOZART TO HIS FATHER, SALZBURG

*Monsieur / Monsieur Leopold Mozart / maitre de la Chapelle de S:A:R: /
L'archeveque de salzbourg / à / Salzbourg. / par Strassbourg / Augspurg*

*Mon Très cher Père!*¹

Paris le 1 May. 1778

We have received your letter² of the 12th April safely; that was precisely the reason [5] why I have taken so long to write back to you, because I wanted to wait for a letter from you, sir, and you must not be offended if I occasionally keep you waiting a long time for a letter; letters come dear here, and if one has nothing at all urgent to write, it is of course not worthwhile parting with 24 or more *sous*. [10] My thinking was always that I should delay writing until I can write with something new and with more about our circumstances; but now I am nevertheless forced to give you news of a few and furthermore dubious matters. The little *violoncellist Zygmontofsky*³ and his simple father is here, which I will perhaps already have written to you about – – [15] I do it only in passing because it just occurred to me that I saw him in that place about which I now want to inform you, that is, in the home of *Mad. la Duchesse de Chabot*.⁴ *M.^{sr} Grimm*⁵ gave me a letter for her, and then I took a coach⁶ to get there. The content of this letter was mainly to recommend me to the *Duchesse de Bourbon*⁷ |: who was in the convent back then :| [20] and to make me acquainted with her anew. Then a week went past without the least news; she had already given me an appointment there more than a week previously, and so I kept my word and came. There I had to wait half an hour in an ice-cold, unheated room which was not provided with a fireplace. [25] Finally, *Duchesse Chabot* came with the greatest courtesy and asked me to put up with the *clavier*, since none of hers were in order. I would like to try, I said, I was most heartily willing to play something, but now it was impossible since I could not feel my fingers for cold, and asked her that she might at least have me brought to a room where there is a fireplace with a fire in it. [30] *O oui Monsieur, vous avés raison*.⁸ That was all her answer, then she sat down and began to draw for a whole hour *en compagnie*⁹ of other gentlemen, who all sat in a circle around a large table. There I had the honour of waiting for a whole hour. The windows and doors were open. The cold was not only in my hands, but also my whole body and feet, [35] and at once my head also began to hurt. So there was

¹ = “Monsieur Leopold Mozart, music director to His Royal Highness the Archbishop of Salzburg in Salzburg. Via Strasbourg, Augsburg. My very dear father!”

² BD: No. 0446.

³ BD: Heard by the Mozarts as a virtuoso in a concert in Salzburg on 31 May, 1777. Otherwise nothing is known about him.

⁴ “Duchesse de chabot”. BD: Elisabeth-Louise de La Rochefoucauld, Duchesse de Chabot, wife of Louis-Antoine-Auguste de Rohan, Duc de Chabot. Cf. Nos. 008/19; 0417/110.

⁵ BD: Friedrich Melchior von Grimm (1723-1807), 1748 private secretary to the Saxon Count [Graf] Friese, with whom he moved to Paris, where he was in contact with the Encyclopaedists. Various publications, one of which, in 1763, mentioned the Mozart children. His relationship with Mozart broke down in 1778 during the latter’s stay in Paris.

⁶ BD: The town palace of the Duke was on the Place Royale.

⁷ “Duchesse de Bourbon”. Cf. Nos. 0076/15; 0417/136-139; 0420/90-95; 0447/19. BD: Louise-Marie-Thérèse-Bathilde d’Orleans (1750-1822), Duchesse de Bourbon, daughter of the Duc d’Orleans and sister of the Duc de Châtres. In Nos. 0417/136 and 0420/92 referred to as “*Mademoiselle d’Orleans*” and “*former Mademoiselle d’Orleans*” respectively. In 1763 she was in a nunnery (Rue de Charonne, cf. Nos. 0417/136; 0420/92) and gave Wolfgang “a little keyboard piece” (cf. Nos. 0417/138-139; 0420/92-93): “*Rondeau de la composition de S. A. Mademoiselle qui prend la liberté de presenter son ouvrage à M. Wolfgang Mozart*”. She later married the Duc de Bourbon, the son of the Prince de Condé (cf. Nos. 0074/45; 0417/137-138; 0420/93-95).

⁸ = “Oh yes, monsieur, you are right.”

⁹ = “In the company.”

*altum silentium*¹⁰ and for a long time, because of the cold, headache and boredom, I had no idea what I should do. I often thought: If it wasn't for *M.^{sr} Grimm* I would be gone this instant. Finally, to keep the story short, I played on the miserable, abysmal *pianforte*. [40] But the worst thing of all was that *Mad.^{me}* and all the gentlemen did not refrain from their drawing for a moment, but continued all the time, and so I had to play for the chairs, table and walls. Under these circumstances, which had turned so vile, my patience left me – so I started the Fischer variations,¹¹ played half of it and stood up. Then came eulogies aplenty. But I said what was to be said, [45] namely that I could do no honour to myself with this *clavier*, and I would very much prefer to choose another day when a better *clavier* is there. But she did not give way, I had to wait a further half hour until the master of the house¹² came. But he sat down beside me and listened with unbroken attention, and I – I forgot as a result all the cold and headache and played, despite the dismal *clavier*, [50] just – as I play when I am in a good mood. ¹³Give me the best *clavier* in Europe, but people as listeners who understand nothing, or do not wish to understand anything, and who do not join with me in feeling what I play, I will then lose all joy. Afterwards, I told *M.^{sr} Grim* everything. You write to me that I will dutifully pay my visits in order to make acquaintanceships [55] and to renew the old ones again. This is not possible, however. On foot all these places are too far away – or too filthy, for there is indescribable mud in Paris. Driving in a coach – one immediately has the honour of vapourising 4 to 5 *livres*¹⁴ driving every day, and for nothing, for the people simply pay compliments and that is the end of it. Appoint me to come on such and such a day, and I will play; then the talk is of: [60] *O c'est un Prodiges*,¹⁵ *c'est inconcevable, c'est étonnant*,¹⁶ and with that *addieu*. In this way I threw away enough money with coaches at the beginning – and often for nothing, because I did not find the people at home. Only someone who is here can believe how fatal this is. Paris has changed much in every way. The French show far less politeness than 15 years ago. They are now truly bordering on coarseness, [65] and they are abominably arrogant.

Now I must provide you with a description of the *Concert Spirituel*.¹⁷ In passing, I must briefly say that my work for the choruses¹⁸ was in vain, so to speak, for the *Miserere* by Holzbauer¹⁹ was long anyway and was not greatly liked,²⁰ so only 2 instead of 4 of my choruses were performed [70] and consequently the best missed out. This did not mean very much, however, for many did not know that it included something by me. Otherwise, however, there was great applause at the rehearsal, and I myself |: for I hold nothing of praise in Paris :| am very satisfied with my choruses. [75] Now, however, there is again a great complication concerning the *Sinfonie Concertante*,²¹ but there I believe there is something else getting in the way again. Once again I simply have my enemies here, but

¹⁰ = “Complete silence.”

¹¹ BD: KV 179 (189a).

¹² BD: Cf. notes on lines 17, 24-25.

¹³ BD: Cf. note on No. 0489. The album leaf with an almost identical text has been proved spurious.

¹⁴ BD: 4 *livres* = 1 florin 20 *kreuzers*.

¹⁵ BD: Cf. the London concert advertising of 1765, where Wolfgang and Nannerl were praised as “Prodigies of Nature”.

¹⁶ = “Oh, he is a prodigy, it is inconceivable, it is astonishing.”

¹⁷ BD: Cf. No. 0383/65. The *Concert spirituel*, the first commercial concert series in Paris, was founded by Anne Danican-Philidor in 1725. It featured a chorus and orchestra performing in *Les Tuileries*.

¹⁸ BD: Writing new chorus material for Holzbauer's *Miserere*: KV Anh 1 (297a), cf. No. 0440/66 ff.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ BD: It was performed during Holy Week: probably on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday (16th or 17th April).

²¹ BD: KV Appendix 9 (KV⁶ 297B). Cf. No. 0440/95.

where have I not had them? – this is, however, a good sign. I had to write the *Sinfonie* in the greatest of haste,²² applied myself to it very diligently, and the 4 *concertante* players²³ were, and still are, completely enamoured of it. *Le Gros*²⁴ has it for 4 days for copying, [80] but I always find it still lying in the same place. Finally, on the second-last day, I do not find it – but search thoroughly through the music – and find it hidden. I do nothing at that moment. I ask *Le Gros*: *Apropós*,²⁵ have you already handed the *Sinf. Concertant* in at the copyist's? – No – I forgot to. Because, naturally, I cannot give him the order to have it copied and performed, [85] I said nothing. On the two days on which it should have been performed I went to the *Concert*. There Ram²⁶ and *Punto*²⁷ came to me, were very heated, and asked me Why, then, is my *Sinfoni Concert.* not being performed? – That I do not know. This is the first that I have heard of it. I know nothing about it. Ram became as wild as a fox, and denigrated *Le Gros* in the music room in French, [90] that his behaviour was not fine *etc.* What vexes me most in the whole matter is that *Le Gros* did not say a single word to me, I was the only one who was not allowed to know about it – if he had at least made an excuse that the time was too short for him, or something of that kind, but nothing at all – but I believe the reason²⁸ behind it is *Cambini*,²⁹ [95] an Italian *maestro* here, for, quite innocently, I put him in the shade during the first meeting with *Le Gros*. He had written *quartetti*, of which I had heard one in Mannheim, which are nicely done indeed, and I accordingly praised them to him, and then I played the beginning. But Ritter,³⁰ Ram and *Punto* were there and would not leave me in peace until I continued, [100] making up myself what I did not know. That, then, was exactly what I did, and *Cambini* was completely beside himself, and could not restrain himself from saying: *questa è una gran testa!*³¹ Well, that will not have been to his liking. If this were a place where the people had ears, hearts to feel, and understood only a little about music, and had *gusto*,³² [105] I would laugh heartily at all these things, but as it is, I am amongst nothing but brutes and animals |: as far as music is concerned :|. But how else could it be, for they are of course no different in all their activities, enthusiasms and passions – there is of course no place in the world like Paris. You should not think that I am going to excesses when I speak about the music here this way. [110] Turn to whomsoever you like – only not to a native Frenchman – and |: if it is someone to whom one can turn in trust :| he will say the same. Now, here I am. I must hold it out, and that is to please you. I will thank God Almighty if I get away from

²² BD: Probably between 5th and 20th April. Legros had obviously given Wolfgang a definite date for the performance.

²³ BD: Cf. No. 0440/95-96. Wendling (flute), Ramm (oboe), Punto (horn) and Ritter (bassoon)

²⁴ BD: Cf. No. 0440/11. Joseph le Gros, originally a singer, made his debut at the Paris Opera in 1764, director of the *Concert spirituel* 1777-1791.

²⁵ Here: = “By the way”.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ BD: Jan Václav (Johann Wenzel) (1746-1803), one of the most important horn virtuosos of the 18th century. He was a serf on the estate of Count [Graf] Johann Joseph Thun (“the old Count Thun”, cf. No. 0766/20), and arranged music lessons for him; he was then one of the Count's musicians 1763-1766. At this point he led and changed his name, to avoid being traced by the Count, to Giovanni Punto. 1769-1774 he played at the Elector's court in Mainz. In 1778 he gave concerts in Paris.

²⁸ BD: It seems slightly improbable that the occurrence described here would have influenced Legros negatively against Mozart.

²⁹ BD VIII: Giuseppe Maria Cambini (1746-1825), violinist, pupil of Tartini and Padre Martini. From 1770 in Paris, where his symphonies were performed in the Concert Spirituel. His appreciation of Mozart is shown by the copy in his own hand of the string quartet KV 478.

³⁰ BD: Cf. No. 0383/76. Georg Wenzel Ritter (1748-1808), from 1764 bassoonist in Mannheim. Went to Munich with the Elector in 1778. In 1788 he went to Berlin. Cf. No. 0057/9.

³¹ = “This is a great mind.”

³² = “Taste/style”.

here with a healthy *gusto*. I pray to God every day that he give me the grace to hold out here manfully, [115] that I may bring honour to myself and to the whole German nation, since all things are to his greater honour and glory, and that he permits me to make my fortune, to earn money dutifully, so that I am in a position to help you out from under the cloud of your present circumstances, and to bring it about that we may soon be able to come together and live contentedly with one another. [120] Otherwise may his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.³³ For you, dearest Papa, my request is that you should in the meantime make efforts to let me set eyes on Italy³⁴ soon, so that I can finally come alive fully again after this. Please grant me this joy, sir, I beg you.

Now, however, I ask you to stay in the best of spirits – [125] I will hack my way out of here any way I can. If only I come through it intact. *Addieu*. I kiss your hands 1000 times and I embrace my sister with my whole heart and am, sir, your most obedient son,

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

MARIA ANNA MOZART'S POSTSCRIPT ON THE ENVELOPE:

My dear husband, I hope you and Nannerl find yourselves in good health. I have been plagued with toothache, headaches, pains in my throat and in my ears for 3 weeks now. [130] Now, praise be to God, it is better again. I am not getting out much at all; at the same time, the rooms are cold, even if a fire is burning; one has to get used to it again. If by any chance Count Wolfegg³⁵ should travel to Paris and could bring a black powder³⁶ and a digestive powder³⁷ with him for me, I would much appreciate it, for I have almost used it all up. [135] Let all my acquaintances know that *Monsieur Henna*³⁸ and his wife also send their compliments, he often calls on me. *Adio*, keep well, both of you, I kiss you many 100 000 times and remain

your faithful wife,
Maria Anna Mozart

³³ BD: Cf. Similar phrasing in No. 0435/95.

³⁴ BD: Leopold had raised the prospect of another Italian tour, e.g. No. 0422/237-238.

³⁵ “graf wolfegg”. BD: Anton Willibald, Count [Graf] von Waldburg zu Wolfegg und Wandsee (1729-1821), hereditary seneschal [Rechtserbtruchsess], cathedral canon in Salzburg, high official. Supposedly Provincial Director, under the name “Prunelius”, of the Salzburg Illuminati lodge “Apollo”.

³⁶ BD: Cf. No. 0036/13: *pulvis epilepticus niger*, cf. No. 0448/243-245.

³⁷ BD: Cf. No. 0092/143. Cf. Acta Mozartiana 2. Jg. 1955, Heft 1, p. 3 ff.

³⁸ BD: Probably Franz Joseph (François-Joseph) Haina (1720-1780), born near Prague, husband of the music publisher Gertrude Haina, nee Brockmüller: they were the first publishers of KV 179 (189a); 180 (173c); 254; 309 (284b); 310 (300d); 311 (284c); 354 (299a), cf. No. 617/66-68. Horn player to Baron Bagge, later trumpeter in royal service. Friend of Mozart in Paris in 1778, especially during the last days of his mother's life. Cf. No. 0084/18.