

Monsieur Le Baron![Mannheim, 24th November, 1778]

I have twice wanted to call on you, but never had the good fortune to find you at home; yesterday, although you were at home, I could nevertheless not speak to you! – I therefore beg your forgiveness for having to burden you unduly with some lines; – since it is an urgent wish of mine to state my position to you; – Herr Baron! You know me; – I am not moved by *self-interest*, especially when I know that I am able to do a favour to such a great lover and true connoisseur of music as yourself; – conversely, I also know that you will certainly not demand [10] that I should be out of pocket over this; – I therefore now take the liberty of speaking my final word on this matter since I cannot possibly stay here any longer in uncertainty – I commit myself to composing a *monodrama*² for 25 *louis d'or*³ – to staying here for two more months – to delivering everything in good order – attending all rehearsals *etc.*, [15] with the rider, however, that, whatever may happen, I shall have my payment by the end of January; – that I stipulate that I shall have free admission to performances – that is self-evident. – You see, my esteemed Baron, this is all I can do! – If you think it through carefully, you will see that I am certainly acting very *discreetly*; – [20] as far as your *opera*⁴ is concerned, I assure you that I would most heartily love to set it to music; – I could of course not undertake this work for 25 *louis d'or*, you yourself would have to grant me that; for |: calculated quite cautiously :| it is twice as much work as a *monodrama* – and what would most hold me back from it is that, as you said to yourself, [25] Gluck and Schweizer⁵ are actually already working on it; – yet, supposing you were prepared to give me 50 *louis d'or*⁶ for it, as an honest man I would quite certainly advise you against it: an *opera* without singers,⁷ either male or female! – What is one to do with that? – otherwise, if there is a prospect of its being performed during this time, as a favour to you I would not refuse to take on this work [30] – for it is no small job, I swear to you on my honour; – Now I have stated my thoughts to you clearly and honestly – I ask only for the soonest possible decision – if I could be informed of it before the end of today it would be all the more pleasing to me, as I have heard that someone is travelling to Munich entirely alone on the coming Thursday⁸ [35] and I would very much like to profit from the opportunity; – in the meantime I have the honour to remain, sir, with all respect,

Monsieur Le Baron!

⁹*Ce mecredi le 24 Nov.*^{bre}
1778

your most obedient servant,
Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

¹ BD: Cf. No. 0504/28-29. Wolfgang Heribert (1749-1806), Imperial Baron [Reichsfreiherr] von Dalberg, supervisor of the Mainz court music. Diplomat for Baden, 1778-1803 superintendent of the National Theatre [Nationaltheater] in Mannheim. Responsible for the first performances of Schiller's *Räuber* (1782) and *Fiesko* (1784).

² BD: Cf. No. 0504/29 ff.

³ BD: = 275 florins.

⁴ BD: *Cora*, "a musical drama", published in *Beitrag zur pfälzischen Bühne*, Mannheim, 1780.

⁵ BD: Dalberg was already negotiating with them. Anton Schweitzer (1735-1787), composer. Mozart met him in Mannheim, cf. Nos. 0074/15; 0907/51. Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787), composer. Cf. Nos. 0420/160-161; 0476/33 ff.; 0684/43-44 and 0731/18 ff. Wolfgang encountered Gluck in Vienna in 1768. Cf. Nos. 0125/110 ff.; 0135/35 ff. In his concert on 23rd 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.

⁶ BD: = 550 florins.

⁷ Assuming they have all gone to Munich with Elector Karl Theodor, who became Elector of Bavaria at the end of 1777.

⁸ BD: 26th November, 1778.

⁹ = "Wednesday, this 24th day of November".