

0633. MOZART TO HIS FATHER, SALZBURG

À / Monsieur / Monsieur Leopold Mozart / maitre de la Chapelle de
S: / A: R: l'archeveque de et à / Salzbourg.

Vienne ce 13 d'octobre
1781:

Mon très cher Père!¹

[5] I join with Fräulein von Auerhammer in thanking you for the *concertos*. – Yesterday morning M:^{sr} Marchal brought the young Herr von Mayern² to my room, and in the afternoon I drove out and collected my things. – M:^{sr} Marchal has hopes of a post with Count Jean Esterhazy³ as Court Administrator⁴ – and Count Kobenzel⁵ has provided him with a written recommendation for the Count. – He said to me: *J'ai donné une lettre à Monsieur votre protégé*. – and when he once again returned to the subject of Marchal, he said to him; *d'abord que J'aurai de reponse, Je le dirai à M:^{sr} Mozart votre protecteur*.⁶ –

Now, regarding the text of the *opera*. – [15] As far as Stephani's⁷ work is concerned, you are of course right. – Yet the poetry is quite in accord with the stupid, coarse and malicious *Osmin*. – And I am well aware that the kind of verse in it does not belong to the best – yet it has become so fittingly united with my musical ideas |: which were already strolling around in my head beforehand :| that I had to be pleased with them; [20] – and would wager that in this performance – no one will find they miss anything. – As far as the poetry in the piece itself is concerned, I really could not look down on it: – Belmont's *aria*, o wie ängstlich etc., could hardly be written better for the music. – With the exception of the hui and kummer ruht in meinem schoos⁸ |: for grief – cannot find rest :|, [25] the *aria* is otherwise not bad, especially the first part. – And I must speculate: – the poetry in an *opera* must quite simply be the obedient daughter of the music. – Why, then, are the Italian comic operas so liked everywhere? – With all the wretchedness as far as the libretto is concerned! – even in *Paris* – of which I was a witness myself – because there the music reigns [30] – and for that one forgets everything – All the more clearly, then, an *opera* in which the plot of the piece has been worked out well must please, but where the words are only written for the music and not with words placed here and there for the sake of a miserable rhyme |: which indeed, by God, contribute nothing at all to the value of a theatrical performance, whatever it may be, but certainly work rather to its detriment [35] :| – or whole stanzas which spoil the composer's entire *idea*. – Verses are no doubt the most indispensable element for the music – but rhymes – for the sake of rhymes is the most damaging; – the gentlemen who approach their work so *pedantically* will always come to grief along with the music. –

¹ = “To Monsieur Leopold Mozart, Music Director to His Royal Highness the Archbishop of and in Salzburg. / Vienna, this 13th day of October, 1781. / My very dear father!”

² BD: “Marchal” not identified; “Mayern”: probably a son in the Salzburg family Mayr where Nannerl gave lessons.

³ “grafen”. BD: Johann Nepomuk, Count [Graf] Esterházy (1764-1840), one of the most active supporters of music in Viennese society, Worshipful Master of the lodge “Zur gekrönten Hoffnung”.

⁴ “Hofmeister”.

⁵ “Graf”. BD: Johann Philipp, Count [Graf] Cobenzl (1741-1810), from 1779 Court and State Vice-Chancellor, nephew of Johann Karl.

⁶ = “I have given a letter to your esteemed protégé.” “As soon as I have a reply, I will tell M:^{sr} Mozart, your protector.”

⁷ BD: (Johann) Gottlieb Stephanie (1741-1800), (“the Younger”), studied law, became a soldier, was an amateur actor with Johann Anton Mesmer in 1768, became member of the Burgtheater company, Vienna, in 1769. At least 32 of his stage works were put on there in 393 performances between 1776 and 1846. Collaborated with Mozart on the libretto of the *Abduction*.

⁸ “Hui” was a call associated with hunting (cf. No. 0629/53); “Grief finds in my bosom rest”. The word “ruht” (“rests”) was left in; Mozart expressed the restlessness coming from grief.

[40] The best thing is when a good composer, who understands the stage and is capable of suggesting something himself, and a clever poet, as a true Phoenix, come together. – Then one has no need to be anxious about the approval of the ignorant. – The poets seem to me almost like the trumpeters with the antics of their craft! – [45] If we composers were always as faithful in following our rules |: which were thoroughly good back then when people still knew better :|, we would produce music as unfit for use as they produce unfit librettos. –

Now, it seems to me, I have blabbered enough mindless rubbish to you; now I must enquire about what is most on my heart, [50] namely your health, my own, best of fathers! – In my last letter I suggested two different remedies for dizziness, which, if you are not familiar with them, may perhaps appear to you to be not suitable. – But I was assured that they would certainly bring great success, and the pleasure of seeing you healthy made this assurance so credible and certain for me [55] that I could not possibly refrain from suggesting it from a good heart, with the most ardent wish that you might not have need of them – and in the contrary case that they might be of such benefit as to restore you completely. – My sister will, I hope, recover more each day. – I kiss her with my whole heart, and I kiss your hands, [60] my dearest, best of fathers, and am, sir, eternally your

As soon as I have received the watch
I will give you yours
in return. *Adieu.*

most obedient son,
W. A. Mozart