

1085.<sup>1</sup> GOTTFRIED BARON VAN SWIETEN<sup>2</sup> TO MOZART,<sup>3</sup> VIENNA

[Vienna,] 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1789

Your idea, sir, of putting the text of the cold aria into a *recitative* is excellent and, in uncertainty as to whether you may have kept the words for yourself, I send them to you here in copy. A person who can clothe Handel so festively and tastefully [5] that, on the one hand, it pleases the fashionable coxcombs and, on the other hand, so that it does indeed always show itself in its sublimity, this person has sensed his value, has understood him, has reached the source of his expression, and can and will certainly draw on it in plenty. This is how I see what you have achieved, sir, and now I no longer need to speak of confidence in you, [10] but only of the wish to receive the recitative soon.

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<sup>1</sup> BD: Original unknown. Edition Niemetschek <sup>2</sup>/1808.

<sup>2</sup> BD: Gottfried Bernhard van Swieten (1733-1803), became a diplomat in 1755, served in numerous European cities. From 1777 he had educational responsibilities in Vienna. Owner of an enormously valuable library. Wrote the text for Haydn's "*Seven Last Words*" and "*The Seasons*". Acquainted with C. Ph. E. Bach. Met Mozart in Vienna in 1767, saw him regularly in Vienna, introduced him in his home to the music of Handel and Bach. Commissioned works from Mozart. Composed and conducted music himself.

<sup>3</sup> BD: The authenticity of this letter, which has been defended by Heinrich Schenker, is dubious, for the date on the letter (21<sup>st</sup> March, 1789) is later than the established date (6<sup>th</sup> March, 1789) of the first performance of Handel's *Messiah* in Mozart's arrangement. But Mozart cannot have composed the recitative after the first performance, for it is already headed "*Rezitativ*" in the relevant text booklet.