

1228. CONSTANZE MOZART¹ TO BREITKOPF & HÄRTEL,² LEIPZIG

Most honoured Sirs,

Vienna, 27th October, 1798.

It was a pleasure to receive your letter of the 6th October³ and I make haste to answer you in all friendship or, which is the same thing, in all honesty. First of all, I ask you to accept my assurance [5] that I was, and will remain, very grateful indeed for all the honours which you showed towards me during my stay there; yet such things do not influence the transaction.

I give you my most sincere thanks for the account of what has come in from the concerto⁴ so far, and especially for the clarity of it all; [10] and here are my remarks on it.

There you put⁵ 2 guldens 40 kreuzers per copy to my account, yet in your previous account⁶ of 13th September, 1797, you put 2 Rthaler 16 groschens.

1. I request a suitable explanation of the source of this substantial difference. [15] In your earlier account I was to earn 901 Rthlr 8 gr.; according to the later one 909 fl. 10. kr.; and you set out the earlier one just as formally as the later one.

2. I request the return of my receipt, or the money order, for the 108 f. or 72 Rth. which you credited to my account under the date 14th October, 1796;⁷ and likewise

[20] 3. my receipt for the 27 fl. 45kr. or 18 Rth. 12 gr. of the 25th April, 1796,⁸ if hopefully a receipt for this little sum exists.

4. You say in the later account:

Sent to you via Magdeburg from Schmidt and Rau⁹ 6 copies.

In the earlier one the entry was simply:

[25] to Sievers¹⁰ in Magdeburg 6 copies.

As far as I understand the matter, these 6 copies are to be considered in the same way as the 206 and the 10 which you list at the end of my *debet*,¹¹ namely that you will guarantee me payment of all these 222 copies¹² or the copies themselves, for you are naturally responsible for those selling for you on commission. [30] In the meantime I would be very happy to hear

¹ BD: Nissen's handwriting, Constanze's signature. Nissen: cf. note No. 1224.

² BD: The firm "Breitkopf" was founded in 1719. It later became Breitkopf & Härtel: On 1st November, 1795, Christoph Gottlob Breitkopf concluded a contract of partnership with Gottfried Christoph Härtel (1763-1827). This was followed in 1796 by a secret contract of sale in which the entire Breitkopf business was made over to Gottfried Christoph Härtel. The latter was also declared universal heir by Breitkopf shortly before his death in 1800. Christopher Gottlob Breitkopf (1750-1800). He composed and was an outstanding player of the glass harmonica. His father, Johann Gottlob Immanuel Breitkopf (1719-1794), made the acquaintance of Mozart, as well as of Haydn and Gluck, on a visit to Vienna in 1786. Constanze probably met Ch. G. Breitkopf and his wife during her stay in Leipzig (November, 1795). Leopold Mozart's correspondence with J. G. I. Breitkopf started in the year 1772 (cf. No. 0263). He repeatedly tried to interest the publisher in his son's music, but apparently without success during Mozart's lifetime.

³ BD: No. 1227.

⁴ BD: KV 503.

⁵ BD: The following disputed points centre on different conversions of Reichsthalers (Imperial thalers) into guldens (≈ florins). Based on the rate 108 florins = 72 Rth. (line 18), the sum in line 11 should be 4 fl. and not 2 fl. 40 kreuzers. The sum in line 16 should be 1352 fl. and not 909 fl. 10 kr.

⁶ BD: No. 1222 (lost).

⁷ BD: No. 1219 (lost).

⁸ BD: No. 1218 (lost).

⁹ BD: Cf. note on No. 1224/34.

¹⁰ BD VI, p. 722: Joh. Fr. Lud. Sievers, not the Sievers referred to in BD VI, p. 457. Organist and cleric in Magdeburg Cathedral.

¹¹ = what is owed.

¹² BD VI, p. 722: Referring to the concerto KV 503, consisting of 206 + 10 + 6 (cf. lines 25, 26). Despite Constanze's demands for information about "Herr Sievers", the fate of the six remains unclear. Five of the remaining 216 were sold, 211 were sold to André (cf. No. 1262/104-105). André received a further 28 copies "from Berlin" (cf. Nos. 1273/34 ff.; 1285/3 ff.; 1292/48-49).

an explanation. Quite generally, I request information on all the circumstances to do with Herr Sievers. On his behalf you have put 7 fl. 50 kr. to my account. What is this money for? It certainly cannot be for the 6 copies. If you yourself cannot say exactly, I should be very obliged to you [35] if you would not shrink from taking the trouble of asking Messrs. Schmidt and Rau.

5. Might I suggest buying from me all still available copies of the concerto mentioned¹³ and graciously informing me what you wish to give me for them as a round sum or per copy. I certainly wish to be fair. As far as the price is concerned, [40] I would furthermore point out that Herr Böheim in Berlin, as well as *Concha*,¹⁴ advertised the concerto for 3 Rthlrs. and really did sell it at this price too, although more cheaply previously, although there is no question of doing this, since we can only talk about the most recent or the now current prices.

6. In my previous letter I had already asked you to send the money set aside for me at the same time along with the account. [45] You will have been of the opinion that I should first agree that your account is correct. In the meantime, since you write that you will send the money or a money order to me here the moment I demand it, I expect you to send Herr Wapler¹⁵ the instruction to pay me with the next post. [50] I will then provisionally put the 111 fl. 22 kr. which you have already set aside for me

[IN THE MARGIN:

according to the frequently mentioned account that came with your letter of the 6th of October.]

to your account in our interim invoice.

[55] As far as the Bandl-Terzett¹⁶ is concerned, you will remember that from the very beginning, as soon as you amicably suggested to me that you would print it so that I might extract some profit from it, and all this without any profit on your part, only for my benefit, I gratefully made this declaration: [60] I do not want it free; I wish to pay for paper and printing, and only then, in return, will the copies remain mine. You yourself changed my mind by outlining to me how much profit I could make proportionately with this trifling piece, seeing that you had sold more than 3000 copies of *The Magic Flute*.¹⁷ Your express words to me were, I will have the trio printed and it shall cost you nothing at all. Such were the words exchanged between Herr Breitkopf and myself. [65] What would have moved me to hand over the music free of charge to you, gentlemen, as wealthy men, or in return for a few copies – when I am a widow and mother of under-age and poor children? I would have sinned against the latter and against myself if I had not demanded a certain fee. Nor would anything else have been worthy of yourselves, [70] and, on the least reflection over our relative situations, you would certainly not have allowed yourselves such a thing either. I immediately requested some copies on Swiss paper, and then, since I had not settled a fee, I left the rest to you to sell on commission, asking you to fix the selling price, and you fixed it at 12 groschens. [75] Even from this discussion between us over the selling price, [75] one could conclude that the copies were not yours, for otherwise what business of mine is the price? I

¹³ BD: KV 503.

¹⁴ BD: F. M. Boheim in Berlin; Concha, also Berlin, published in Mozart's name the song *Vergiss mein nicht* by Gottfried von Jacquin (KV App. 246 (KV⁶: C 8.06).

¹⁵ BD: Publisher in Vienna. Freemason. Publications included a book on mineralogy and the text of Handel's *Messiah*.

¹⁶ BD: "Bandel Terzett" ≈ "Ribbon Trio". KV 441. A humorous trio for soprano, tenor and bass with accompanying strings, composed by Mozart (in Vienna in 1783, it is said) Breitkopf did in fact fulfil his promise (lines 11-12) to print it without any costs for Constanze in 1795 (cf. No.1217): *Das Bändchen*, with piano accompaniment. Constanze was still criticising him for the (supposed?) delay in publication in 1790 (cf. Nos. 1224/24-25; 1226/10-11; 1228/55 ff.).

¹⁷ BD: A keyboard reduction of the opera, published in 2 volumes in 1794.

cannot tell you how deeply affected I was by this verbal proof of your friendship. And now we should entirely forget this matter between us if you [80] pay me for 7 hundred copies at the price mentioned; unless you feel constrained in your conscience to pay me even more. That cannot be described as an immodest request. Who knows how many copies of it you have sold! Perhaps as many as of *The Magic Flute*? I would likewise ask you to pay the money accruing to me from the latter via Herr Wapler with the next post. [85]

8. We had agreed to settle our accounts every half year or during the Fair. If you are not going to buy the concerto¹⁸ from me, I would ask you to keep to these intervals again.

And now to the main matter.

[90] It is most certainly gratifying to me if the works of my late husband are published in a manner worthy of him, and it is of course to my advantage to enter into relations with a respected publishing house such as yours, gentlemen, rather than with some other. And you likewise appreciate that you cannot bring out anything complete and correct without me. [95] The advantage is therefore mutual, and I therefore do not doubt that we shall come to an agreement.

This first of all entails, however, knowing what you wish to obtain from me. So that I can inform you of this, I would ask you to send me

9. A catalogue¹⁹ of everything that you have. [100] Then we will have an overview more quickly. In view of the sheer quantity, it is too burdensome for me, especially in such haste, to have a comprehensive catalogue drawn up. While you send me yours in the meantime, I will have mine made, and when yours comes, I will be able to do my work all the faster. What you will mainly get from me are sacred works, [105] operas, oratorios, serenades, symphonies, pieces for outdoor wind ensemble.²⁰ As soon as you have taken the first step on your side, and I reply telling you what you can count on obtaining from me, we can then, and only then, talk about payment. – Let me go on to name other things that you can obtain from me: items for wind instruments such as clarinet and hunting horn, [110] pieces for keyboard, Italian, German and French songs, arias, duets, trios, quartets, single choruses and finales. – Why should we fail to agree? You will be fair, and so will I.

As far as the outline of his life²¹ is concerned, I know of no-one except my friends the Niemetscheks²² and the necrologist,²³ with the latter I am dissatisfied. [115] But I pledge to supply you with new material and unknown anecdotes,²⁴ no doubt also with letters.

For 6 ducats I can offer you a copper engraving I had made of the best portrait;²⁵ it cost 10.²⁶

So that you may get the most complete picture of my thoughts regarding your suggestion, [120] I additionally enclose for you the copy of my letter of 26th May, which it appears you have not received. From it you would already have learned of my decision not to

¹⁸ BD: KV 503.

¹⁹ BD: Constanze is still unwilling to send Stadler's catalogue (line 122), but wants to know which autographs B & H have (cf. No. 1237/17 ff.). It is not clear how B & H could have come into the possession of autographs without Constanze knowing.

²⁰ "harmoniestücke".

²¹ BD: Cf. No. 1227.

²² BD: Franz Xaver Niemetschek (1766-1849), professor of philosophy and pedagogy in Prague, later a professor in Vienna, where he died. Not only did he write a biography of Mozart published in Prague (Widtmann) in two impressions (1796/7 and 1808) and for which Constanze supplied a large quantity of notes and letter material, but he is also said to have played the major role in preparing Breitkopf & Härtel's complete edition of Mozart's works.

²³ BD: Schlichtegroll wrote an article on Mozart ("*Necrology*") following his death, drawing on information provided by Nannerl (cf. Note on No. 1208); when this was published separately as a monograph, Constanze bought up all 600 copies.

²⁴ BD: These then appeared in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, first year, nos. 19 and 50.

²⁵ BD: Engraved by Klemens Kohl after Leonhard Posch, Vienna, 1793.

²⁶ BD: "6" and "10" ducats = 27 and 45 florins.

hand over the thematic catalogue²⁷ for the time being, a point on which the writer²⁸ of my letter²⁹ of 1st September expressed himself according to his own opinion, but not according to mine. [125]

And with that I commend myself to you, sirs, and expect from you a communication just as open, amicable and satisfactory as mine, one which enables me not only to establish the correctness of your accounts of 6th October and to clear up your doubts on other points, [130] but will also, by your agreement with my well-founded demands and expectations in the light of the past, confirm the fairness of my thoughts for the immediately imminent future. If I am in error in anything here, I will happily accept correction. I have the honour of being, with much respect,

[135]

most honoured sirs,
your most obedient servant
Constance Mozart

²⁷ BD: Cf. line 99.

²⁸ BD: Constanze was to conceal Nissen and his role for some time.

²⁹ BD: No. 1226.