

1289. CONSTANZE MOZART¹ TO BREITKOPF & HÄRTEL,² LEIPZIG

Most highly honoured sirs,

Vienna, 5th March, 1800.

I have received your letter of 20th February,³ but perhaps have not understood it properly everywhere; some parts of it, at least, are inexplicable. You send me an announcement⁴ which you have signed, [5] and want me to sign it in my own hand. What can you need or use my counter-signature for? Your names are so favourably and generally known that all confirmations of your declarations are superfluous, and it seems to me that, on the contrary, it would be doing yourself wrong if you had them confirmed, for then it would have course look as if you, quite unfairly towards yourselves, doubted your own reputation with the public. [10] And how can I sign what you have announced in your name?

I say this subject to the condition that I could confirm the entire content of your announcement. But – how can I know that you have all the pieces listed there? How can I attest that a dead man had determined in his soul [15] that certain major works were not for publication? How can I sign and say that you have consented to something which is entirely at my disposal? In any case – by the way, you know my sentiments, and I am not retracting an iota of my last letter of 15th February⁵ – could I hold it to your credit, could I recognise that you had my interests at heart, [20] when you allowed me – I borrow this expression – to sell what you considered to be worth little or nothing, which I had offered to you three times, because you did not want to buy something that you felt was too expensive? Moreover, I cannot affirm your statement that Herr A.⁶ bought the rest – in the sense in which the readers would understand the term – of Mozart's manuscripts. [25] I can judge, and I have also told you in writing, to what a very high degree my stock of manuscripts approached completeness. Mozart's own *thematic* catalogue and other reliable notes showed myself and *André*, who has both, the truth of this: but it was in the workgroup *Sonatas*, as I had always informed you, that I was poorest.

[30] But leaving all this aside: – I will never publish a declaration that is disobliging to Herr *André*, but the declaration that you desire has that very characteristic; nothing in the world can entitle me to do that. But I remain convinced that you will immediately drop the idea of your own accord. And it is to this, and only to this, that one can apply what you saw fit to say, namely that I am risking being judged unfavourably by the public – a judgement, by the way, which I would find absolutely puzzling. Yes, I risk it, I deserve it, if I sell to A. today, then tomorrow denigrate the wares in public and thus hinder him in his speculation, not to mention the fact that I would thus compromise myself in yet another way. Put yourselves in *André's* situation, *André* in yours: [40] what would you, *André*, think of me? I repeat it: this is the only kind of behaviour that can disadvantage me in the opinion of the public, for since when has honest business been dangerous to one's reputation? You know how much I wished to conclude this business with you: you knew – assuming, as I certainly deserve, that you believed me – [45] that was on the point of concluding it with someone else – now, if anyone has damaged his standing in the eyes of the public because the business was not concluded

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

² BD: Founded as "Breitkopf" in 1719. 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.

³ BD: No. 1283a (lost).

⁴ BD: In the *Intelligenzblatt* of the AmZ of the same date in response to *André's* declaration of 31st January, 1800 (*Frankfurter Staats-Ristretto*).

⁵ BD: No. 1283.

⁶ BD: The publisher Johann Anton *André*, to whom Constance had sold all the Mozart manuscripts in her possession.

with you, then it is not I. My selling the works to *André* cannot possibly constitute a lack of respect towards the public. [50] What you said about him as a pirate⁷ is out of place here. [50] I say it with regret, but it is the truth: – we see here not the pirate *André*, but the editor, with the best possible legal entitlement, of an almost complete collection of exclusively authentic and perfectly correct works, an editor who perhaps also commends himself by the fact that he does not collect subscribers and that with this edition he furthermore gained favour in advance by paying the *honorarium* for everything. [55] Unfortunately!: – This is precisely the result of your wishes.

For a long time now, Herr *A.* too has been pressing for a declaration on my part: until now I have always held back with this and am trying to continue to do so – partly out of respect for you, gentlemen, [60] partly because so far I have not seen any necessity to confirm his, and finally because I do not like making public declarations, although I am capable of overcoming this disinclination when there are very important reasons, and I shall furthermore attest to you personally, at any time you wish, other advantageous details which I am capable of judging.

[65] You yourselves, gentlemen, could certainly not do such a thing – but – I read your journal regularly – should it ever come to my attention that a reviewer or any person believing to be of service to you by producing something – I could say: thinking something up – by which even the least shadow is cast on my behaviour – although I personally cannot imagine anything of this kind as being within the realm of possibility – this would, for example, be such a case where I would immediately put my disinclination aside and your friend would have been of very poor service to you. I would be left with no choice but to justify myself by presenting the truth, and what would the public say, among other things, to the fact that you have now asked me for a *Concerto* in C major,⁸ [75] announcing it as “still completely unknown, from the music to be found in many hands and which you could easily have, which have been promised to you etc., but which you prefer to purchase from me out of friendship”? – that you wanted to give me 5 ducats⁹ for it (which, as you know, were multiplied to 10 ducats, not by my fault but in a manner which by chance became legally correct, [80] very much against your will and after you had put up resistance for some months) and that for this one *Concerto* alone, since it makes up a complete volume, you would therefore perhaps gain thousands of ducats for the 5 or 10, if I calculate on the basis of even only one third of your subscribers? [85] Rather, would the public not be astonished, after this and similar procedures, that I did not conclude the business immediately in *November* of last year,¹⁰ as I could have, but instead demanded a deferral period of two months in order to make the most pressing proposals to you three times after your rejection of them?

It would be to my liking if, as you have already declared to me often in writing and now in public as well, [90] you do not lose anything by my transaction with *A.*, yes, as you say, even gain from a business point of view. But by what misfortune, which seems to me always no less disadvantageous for you than for me, does it happen that you have held back such satisfactory and more than satisfactory proposals as your present ones until just the moment that you are not in a position to fulfil them? That would have been an answer to my proposal! I read appreciatively in your letter that you were generally thinking of granting me an *honorarium* of 4 to 5 thalers¹¹ from each sheet in your future volumes. Since you go on to inform me that you publish an average of 14 volumes per year, it becomes clear, calculating from only 20 sheets per volume and a honorarium of only 4 ½ thalers, [100] that I would already have 1260 thalers in the first year and would have had the sum requested by the end of the second year. All in all, since you yourselves speak of the many years in which I would

⁷ BD: Cf. No. 1293/14-15.

⁸ BD: Not identifiable.

⁹ BD: 5 ducats = 22.5 florins.

¹⁰ BD: Cf. No. 1262.

have enjoyed this profit – what in the world, then, could have persuaded you to refuse me the sum requested, with which, by your own calculation, you would have made enormous savings? [105]

It would be against my character, even if it were not in conflict with my duty, to prejudice your edition in any manner at all, inasmuch as the sale, against my wishes but due to your will alone, went according to the nature of the business. [110] But in this regard I have only minimally the same duties towards *André* as towards yourselves. Secondary intentions – to quote your somewhat incomprehensible expression – never conflict in any way at all with the openness of my judgement when justice demands that I express it: I would then bear witness to the truth at my own cost. What you say this time “about your and my good project” [115] does not at all exclude the possibility that *André* too can have a good project, as he indeed has.

As you correctly note, I have been deprived of the means (yet not quite completely) of continuing – I am simply copying out your words – to impose obligations of gratitude on you, [120] and I must regret that I myself am unable to use the new opportunity now given me to earn your kind promises with a favourable answer. Nor am I even a whit more impartial and truthful than before: this was always my behaviour towards you. I have never written anything to you which I could not consider to be the truth.

Give me other opportunities, I beg you, to be useful to you; [125] you will see how I see seize them with joy. I find it very pleasing that you promise me that with such certainty, and I eagerly await your suggestion for an alternative and continuing correspondence with advantages for myself, as you have promised me once you have received my answer. Even without making any personal profit, I would have been delighted to be useful to you, but better is of course better. [130]

I am sorry that the essence of my answer had to turn out as it is: once again, put yourself in *André's* place or mine.

In the last week I have already shown my respect and zeal for you on two occasions, [135] first of all with a quantity of notes¹² for the biography, and afterwards with a wide-ranging evaluation of all Mozart's fragments; you will have received both of these via Herr Traeg. Today I am simply using part of the remaining space to tell you that Mozart transcribed several *fugues* by Sebastian Bach for the *violin*, and had also started transcribing one by Handel;¹³

and that *Endimione*, which is the work of Haydn,¹⁴ was by accident erroneously listed among his major works in the catalogue I sent you on 1st May, 1799.

[145] I have the honour to be, with my customary high regard for you,
my most honoured sirs'

most obedient servant,
Constance Mozart

The announcement is being returned to you with this.

¹¹ BD: 1 thaler = approx. 2.25 florins.

¹² BD: Cf. Nos. 1288/2-6; 1223/85 ff.

¹³ BD: KV Anh. 77 (405a) is reminiscent of the beginning of a fugue theme used several times by Handel in the fugue studies in the Fitzwilliam manuscripts. The whole of the Mozart piece, however, does not appear to be by Handel.

¹⁴ BD: A serenata by Michael Haydn.