

1410.<sup>1</sup> GEORG NIKOLAUS NISSEN<sup>2</sup> TO FRANZ XAVER WOLFGANG MOZART,<sup>3</sup> PODKAMIA<sup>4</sup>

Dear Wolf

[Salzburg, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1826]

It will be your inclination anyway to find a place for the present letter among your most important papers, those you always have to hand, and to make sure of its preservation in the most careful way humanly possible. [5] But in addition I expressly ask you to do so, and I would order you to do so if I had a right to command my stepson, now that he has become a man. I am doing everything that depends on me: I am assuring you and myself of the arrival of the letter by using registered post. Everyone finds, or says out of politeness, that I look very well: even my physician says so. [10] In the meantime I have reached my 66<sup>th</sup> year, and as a rule I have a feeling in my head every day which I must take to be a symptom of the danger of apoplexy,<sup>5</sup> which could equally easily occur soon or at a more distant time. In case it is soon, I am writing out the following solemn declaration in the very moment in which I have the delight of the thoughts coming into my mind. [15] In the case mentioned I ask you, yes, would wish to make it your duty, to make all possible public use of it, thus in print as well, and to make use of it in as many different places as possible as soon as it can be of the least value to you, as soon as you have the least inclination to do so. Under either of these two conditions, nothing in the world must, should, hold you back. It is only while I live that you shall undertake no part of it. [20] It is only while I live that I shall be the one to determine the time to make the public announcement, and will arrange it myself. But you can already talk about the matter itself now, at every opportunity in person and in private letters: that is, concerning that share in business transactions which is entirely and exclusively mine,<sup>6</sup> for most of our regular friends in Vienna, [25] the matter has long been known. But, regarding my solemn declaration, you shall not mention a syllable as long as I live, and no-one except you is receiving it unsealed. I need not tell you what might possibly move you or me to make such a public announcement at some point: you are certain to judge it perfectly. [30] I would very much like it, when the announcement is made after my death, if this whole letter, which remains a secret while I live, were also to be read and printed. You will probably have to obtain certification, preferably from a public authority, regarding the authenticity of my handwriting. I would already save you this trouble today and include certification, [35] were I not hurrying to do what cannot be done without me and would not be done if I went off with death during the time that I was applying for the certification. Since I will be depositing the same declaration in several places, including with a very imposing authority, sealed, but with relevant instructions written on it regarding opening it after my death, and since I will then probably have it witnessed, [40] everything here will be set in perfect order (and very quickly). After my death, but only at the moment when you have made use of it, inform your mother: it is not fitting that she should suddenly read of it in print. But as long as I live there is no need for your mother to know a word of all of this. Anything that brings my death to her

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<sup>1</sup> Text in BD VI, p. 619-21.

<sup>2</sup> BD: Georg Nikolaus Nissen (1761-1826), secretary to the Holstein Legation in Regensburg and then to the Danish Legation in Vienna. Met Constanze at the end of 1797, was either her landlord or cohabitant. Nissen advised Constanze in all business matters from 1798 onwards, especially with the publishers Breitkopf & Härtel and André. The letters, often formulated by him and signed by Constanze, reveal an experienced, if cautious, businessman. Cf. No. 1224 for longer note.

<sup>3</sup> BD: Franz Xaver Wolfgang (1791-1844), Mozart's youngest and second surviving son, virtuoso and composer. 1808-1811 private music teacher in Podkamina [Pidkamin], Galicia.

<sup>4</sup> = Pidkamin, Ukraine.

<sup>5</sup> BD: Nissen died on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1826, from respiratory failure and was buried in Leopold Mozart's grave at St. Sebastian's in Salzburg.

<sup>6</sup> Erich Valentin, *Das Testament der Constanze Mozart-Nissen - mit biographischen Notizen über Constanze und Georg Nikolaus Nissen*, in: Mozart Neues Mozart-Jahrbuch, Regensburg, 1942, states that Nissen left a total of 7449 florins 44½ kreuzers.

mind, even though far away, [45] saddens her too much, just as it makes me unhappy to imagine, even remotely vividly, being separated from her. I therefore adjure you in your next letter simply to say, for my sake, that you have received my letter of 5<sup>th</sup> March, but not an iota about the content. You shall learn where I deposit the others. – You, my friend, can consider this letter with the declaration, [50] on the strength of my charge to you in this letter, almost like a codicil to my testament. Did I inform you that this testament is in the hands of my cousin Cäcilia, née Dyrhoff, or of her spouse, the merchant Jens Schonstrup in Copenhagen? Copenhagen city council has a copy of it in its archive; [55] you can obtain an attested copy of it if the original should be lost by the time of my death |: S. and his wife are old :|. Otherwise I have an extract of the essence, moreover signed by witnesses, among my things here in two little quarto books which I intend your mother to keep forever, and which I have furthermore, I believe, deposited somewhere and enacted that they should be sent to your mother on my death and to you or your brother on the death of both of us. The testament is dated 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1815. [60] It was on the 13<sup>th</sup> of the same month that His Majesty my king confirmed it.

Your Nissen

or, as I occasionally sign myself, Nihsen.