

[Salzburg, 17th September, 1755]

*Plur: [ime] R[everen]do: Relig[iosissim]o: ac Clariss[im]o: / Domino Patri
Meinrado Spies O:[rdinis] S:[ancti] P:[atris] / Benedicti in Celeb:[ri] et
Imp:[eriali] Monasterio / Ursinensi Professo[ri] Col:[legii] nec non
p:[er idem] t.[empus] Subpriori / dig[ni]ss[im]o: / Ursinium³*

[5] Most Venerable and Most Learned
especially Honoured Sir,
Father Meinrade!

What? Do I see a letter again for the first time in 3 years? There is something exceptionally fishy about this! - - That is what will inevitably go through your mind when your glance falls on this communication of mine. [10] My most obedient thanks to you for the thorough reminders you gave me in your kind reply. The few errors pointed out are the nauseous fruit of my sanguine temperament, which urges me onwards so forcefully that little or nothing of what I write shows the required attention and patience. I recently found out, while reading through the preface or precursory comments in Fridrich Wilhelm Marpurg's Historical-Critical [15] Contributions on the Reception of Music, Part One,⁴ that in music there is a wish for instructions for the violin and for other instruments besides. I have been so bold as to write a Violin School which also really is being printed. But as to whether it will stand the test which Herr Marpurg demands, [20] namely that it should be written in keeping with the manner in which Herr Bach has written about the clavier and Herr Quan[t]z about the flute – it is precisely there that I must have my doubts, because I know how much I get carried away by my inconstant temperament. It comforts me that people will look on me, as a beginner, with greater consideration and consequently judge the errors of my immature writings with a somewhat milder verdict. [25] I commend it to your compassion if it ever comes into your hands. The printer will probably not deliver it to me before the New Year. In what state, now, is the *Music Society*? I have the impression it is perhaps even stagnating, as there are no more public announcements about it? It would be truly regrettable if such beneficial strivings were not supported. [30] Only this is the way things go in the world. Perhaps it would gain more momentum if good practical music masters in the service of great rulers would join it too. Practical music really has changed very much in a few years, and whatever is intended to touch the hearts of listeners depends on a good, beautiful and natural manner of performance. The gentleness and vigour [35] which one now has to apply not only in entire passages, but also in single notes; the different manners of joining and combining notes, some of which are *égales*, some *inégaies*; or, on the other hand, the otherwise customary manner of detaching, and many other things of this kind: all these bring out properly the affect in otherwise well-constructed compositions and *ergo* have to be done. And how can one decide on all this by theory alone? [40] Believe me, in the world as it is, the best harmony no longer touches people, one wants to hear melody performed in the most noble manner, yes, in a constantly

¹ Text in BD VIII, p. 48.

² BD: Leopold Mozart (1719-1787), born in Augsburg as son of a bookbinder. Started studies in law and philosophy in Salzburg, but neglected these and became a professional musician. Married Maria Anna Pertl in 1747. Only two of their seven children survived infancy. From 1763 until his death, he was *Vizekapellmeister* [deputy director of music] at the Prince-Archbishop's court in Salzburg.

³ = "To the most reverent, religious and distinguished gentleman, Father Meinrad Spies, of the Order of the Holy Father Benedict in the famous and Imperial monastery of Irsee, College Professor and of course simultaneously the most worthy Subprior. In Irsee."

⁴ BD VIII: Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, *Historisch-kritische Beyträge zur Aufnahme der Musik*, Berlin, 1754.

entirely new and unexpected way, if one is to feel that the music has truly reached one's heart.
Excuse my taking the liberty of composing such a long letter. I commend myself and expire,
[45]
Salzb., 17th *Sep*:^{*bris*}
1755

Most Venerable Sir,
as your most devoted Leopold Mozart *mpa*⁵

⁵ *Manu propria* = in his own hand.