

1773

0275. LEOPOLD MOZART TO HIS WIFE, SALZBURG

*À Madame / Madame Marie Anne / Mozart / à / Salzbourg / par Mantova / Insprugg*¹

A Blessed New Year!

Milan, 2nd January,
1773.

[5] Last time I forgot my New Year wishes because I was not only in haste, but also in confusion, distracted in my thoughts and writing just at the moment that we had to leave for the theatre. The *opera*² went well, although various very vexing circumstances arose on the first night. The first circumstance was that [10] the *opera* should usually start one hour after the prayer bells, but this time 3 hours after the prayer bells, consequently starting around 8 o'clock German time³ and not ending until 2 after midnight. The Archduke⁴ did not rise from his midday meal until shortly before the prayer bell and then still had 5 letters or New Year wishes to write in his own hand to His Majesty the Emperor, [15] the Empress,⁵ and *N.B.* he writes very slowly etc. etc.

Now just imagine, the whole theatre was so full at half past 5 that no-one more could get in. On the first night, the singers, both gentlemen and ladies, are in great fear over showing themselves to such an impressive *audience*. The frightened singers had to wait in their fear, [20] the *orchestra* and the entire *audience* waited 3 hours for the beginning of the *opera* in impatience and also in the heat, many remaining standing.

Secondly, it must be said that the *tenor*,⁶ whom we had to take in our need, is a church singer from *Lodi*,⁷ who has never acted in such an impressive theatre, who has perhaps twice had the role of the leading *tenor* in *Lodi*, [25] was finally engaged only a week before the *opera*. Where the *prima donna*⁸ has to expect a *gesture* of anger from him during her first *aria*, this man made the angry *gesture* so exaggeratedly that it looked as if he wanted to slap her ear and knock her nose off with his fist and moved the *audience* to laughter. Involved in her singing, [30] *Sig^a. de Amicis* did not immediately notice why the *audience* were laughing and she was put off, and initially did not know who was being laughed at and did not sing well during the whole first evening because in addition jealousy came in on top of this, because the *primo uomo*,⁹ whenever he came on stage, was greeted by clapping from the Archduchess.¹⁰ This was a *castrato* trick, [35] for he arranged for the Archduchess to be told that his fear was such that he would not be able sing, with the aim of causing the court to give him *courage* and *applauso*. In order to comfort *de Amicis* again, they called her to court towards noon on the immediately following day

¹ BD: Innsbruck. Note (by Frau Mozart? Nannerl?) beside the address: "N:° 10 from Milan".

² BD: *Lucio Silla* KV 135, the first opera of the season in Milan, première 26th December, 1772.

³ BD: In some Italian regions the hours were counted starting with the evening, i.e. from around 17:30.

⁴ "Erzherzog". BD: Ferdinand, son of Maria Theresia; Wolfgang wrote *Ascanio in Alba* KV 111 for his wedding celebrations in 1771.

⁵ "S^r: May: den Kayser, Kayserin". BD: Joseph II, Ferdinand's brother, and Maria Theresia.

⁶ BD: On the search for a replacement tenor, cf. Nos. 0269/15; 0270/5, 23.

⁷ BD: Lodi is south-east of Milan on the road to Bologna. It was therefore the "courier" sent to Bologna who had found him. It was in Lodi that Mozart wrote his first string quartet, KV 80/73f, in March, 1770. Cf. No. 0439/17-18.

⁸ = "leading lady". BD: Anna Lucia de Amicis, met the Mozarts in Mainz and Naples, cf. Nos. 0060/29-31; 0188/54; 0269/19.

⁹ = "leading man".

¹⁰ BD: Maria Beatrice Ricciardi of the d'Este family, married Ferdinand in 1771.

and she had an audience of a whole hour with both Royal Highnesses,¹¹ and only then did the *opera* start to go well, and whereas the theatre is otherwise very empty during the first *opera*, [40] the first 6 evenings |: today will be the seventh :| were so full that one can hardly squeeze in,¹² and usually the *prima donna* has had to repeat most of her *arias*. *Madame d'Aste*,¹³ from whose house I am writing, commends herself and wishes a happy New Year. We commend ourselves to all good friends, both gentlemen and ladies, within and beyond the house. [45] We kiss you many 1 000 000 times and I am as always your
Mzt

Wolfgang commends himself quite especially. We are well, praise God.

¹¹ “Königl Hoheiten”.

¹² BD: Similar reports are given in Nos. 0277/9; 0279/13-14. Nevertheless, this was the last opera Mozart wrote for Italy.

¹³ BD: Marianne d’Asti von Asteburg, daughter of Leopold Troger, cf. No. 0224/8-9. Leopold Troger was a court official to the Governor General [Generalgouverneur] in Milan. His sister lived in Salzburg (cf. No. 0160/55), he visited her in 1771. Cf. No. 0155/41.