

0458.¹ MOZART TO HIS FATHER, SALZBURG

Monsieur
*mon très cher Père!*³

*Paris ce 3 de julliet*²
1778

I have to give you some very unpleasant and sad news, this is also the reason that I have not been able to reply sooner to your last letter⁴ dated the 11th. [5] –

My dear mother is very ill⁵ – as is her wont, she had her blood let,⁶ and this was also very necessary; and subsequently she was doing well – yet for some days afterwards she complained of shivering, and at the same time was feverish – developed diarrhoea, headaches – at the beginning we used only our household remedies, [10] *antispasmodic powder*,⁷ we would also have liked to use the black powder,⁸ but we had none left, and we could not get it here, nor is it known under the name *pulvis epilepticus*.⁹ – But because it got constantly worse – she could hardly speak, lost her hearing to the extent that one had to shout – *Baron Grim*¹⁰ sent his *doctor* here – [15] she is very weak, still has hot flushes, and is delirious – they are speaking of hope, but I do not have much – I have been between fear and hope day and night for a long time now – but I have surrendered myself entirely to God’s will – and hope that you and my dear sister will do the same; what other means do we have, then, of being calm? – calmer, I should say, for one cannot be entirely so; [20] – I am comforted, however it may turn out – because I know that God, who works all things for our best |: no matter how awry it may appear to us :, will have it so; for I believe |: and will not let myself be persuaded otherwise :| that no *doctor*, no person, no misfortune, no chance event can give or take anyone’s life, but only God – [25] these are only the *instruments* which he mostly uses – and not always these – we see, indeed, that people sag, fall down and are dead – once their time has come, at which point all medicines are in vain, they advance rather than hinder death – we have indeed seen this with our friend Hefner,¹¹ God rest his soul! – This does not mean that I am saying that my mother will and must die, [30] that all hope is lost – she could become hale and hearty again, but only if God wills it – for myself, since I have prayed to my God with all my strength for the health and life of my dear mother, I like to form such thoughts and consolations because afterwards I find myself heartier, calmer and comforted – for you will easily be able to imagine that I need this! [35] Now for something else; let us leave these mournful thoughts. Let us hope, but not too much; let us have our trust with God, and comfort ourselves with the thought that all goes well if it goes according to the will of the Almighty, since he knows best what is profitable and useful for both our temporal and eternal happiness and well-being. [40]

¹ BD: This letter, intended to prepare his father for the news of the death of his wife, was obviously interrupted two or three times. She died at 10:21 p.m. on 3rd July, 1778 (cf. Nos. 0459/15-16; 0462/6-7).

² Paris, 3rd July.

³ = “My very dear father”.

⁴ BD: No. 0452.

⁵ BD: At the time when Wolfgang wrote this letter, his mother was already dead.

⁶ BD: On 11th June, 1778; cf. No. 0453/5.

⁷ BD: Cf. No. 0081/25.

⁸ BD: Cf. No. 0036/13.

⁹ BD: Cf. No. 0448/243-245.

¹⁰ “Baron grim”. BD: Friedrich Melchior von Grimm (1723-1807), 1748 private secretary to the Saxon Count [Graf] Friese, with whom he moved to Paris, where he was in contact with the Encyclopaedists. Various publications, one of which, in 1763, mentioned the Mozart children. His relationship with Mozart broke down in 1778 during the latter’s stay in Paris.

¹¹ BD: Heinrich Wilhelm von Hef(f)ner († 1774), court councillor [Hofrat]. Knew Mozart from schooldays, when he was active on stage. Cf. Nos. 0241/54; 0363/107.

– I had to write a symphony¹² to open the *Concert Spirituel*.¹³ It was performed on Corpus Christi¹⁴ to all possible *aplausos*; there was even, as far as I have heard, a report about it in the *Couriere de L'europa*.¹⁵ – It has thus been exceptionally well received. At the rehearsal I was very anxious, [45] for I have never in all my days heard anything worse; you cannot imagine how they bungled and scratched their way through the *symphony* twice in a row. – I was indeed most anxious – I would have liked to rehearse it once again, but because they always rehearse so many things there was no more time; I therefore had to go to bed with an anxious heart [50] and with a dissatisfied and angry spirit. The next day I had decided not to go to the concert at all; in the evening, however, the weather turned out well, and I finally made my decision with the resolution that if it went as badly as at the rehearsal, I would certainly go into the orchestra and take the violin out of the hands of Herr *Lahoussè*,¹⁶ the leader, and direct personally. [55] I prayed to God for the grace that it might go well, for everything is to his highest honour and glory, and *ecce*,¹⁷ the *symphony* started, Raff was standing beside me, and then right in the middle of the first *Allegro* was a passage which I knew must surely please him, the whole audience were enraptured by it – and there was great *applaudissement* – but because I knew as I was writing it [60] what effect it would have, I included it once again at the end – then it was the same *Da capo*. The *Andante* was also well received, but the final *Allegro* especially so – Because I had heard that here all final *allegros*, like the opening ones, begin with all instruments at once and usually *unisono*, I therefore started with the two *violins* alone and only *piano* for 8 measures – immediately following that came a *forte* – [65] so the audience |: as I expected :| went sh in the *piano* – then at once came a *forte* – their hearing the *forte* and clapping their hands were one – after the symphony I therefore immediately went to the *Palais Royale*¹⁸ out of joy – had a good ice – prayed the Rosary that I had promised – and went home – as always, I most like being at home [70] and also always will most like being at home – or with a good, true, sincere German – who, if he is a bachelor, lives well for himself as a good Christian; if he is married, loves his wife and brings up his children well –

Now I give you a piece of news that you perhaps already know, namely that the godless archscoundrel *Voltaire*¹⁹ has, so to speak, groaned his last like beast [75] – that is the reward! – To Thresel²⁰ you owe, as you said in your letter, wages for 5 quarters – That I do not like being here you will long have noticed yourself – I have so many reasons, and yet they are of no use because I am in fact now here. – There is nothing lacking on my part, and there never will be, I will do what I can with all my strength [80] – Now, God will turn everything for the best! – I have something in mind²¹ for which I am grateful to God every day – if his divine will is so, it will come to pass, if not I am content anyway – I have then at least played my part – once the way is clear for all of this and it has happened as I would wish it, you must then play your part as well, otherwise the whole work would be imperfect [85] – what I hope for from your kindness is that you will surely do this too – only do not

¹² BD: KV 297 (300a). Gluck expressed great admiration for it in 1783 (cf. No. 0731/16 ff.).

¹³ BD: The *Concert spirituel*, the first commercial concert series in Paris, was founded by Anne Danican-Philidor in 1725. It featured a chorus and orchestra performing in *Les Tuileries*.

¹⁴ BD: 18th June, 1778.

¹⁵ BD: *Courier de l'Europe*, London, 26th June, 1778. Cf. Deutsch Dok p. 158.

¹⁶ BD: Pierre La Houssaye (1735-1818), pupil of Tartini. 1772 conductor of the Italian opera in London, 1777-1782 conductor of the *Concert Spirituel* in Paris.

¹⁷ = “Behold”.

¹⁸ BD: Numerous cafe-owners rented rooms in this palace built 1629-34 for Cardinal Richelieu. The “Café du Caveau” was regularly frequented by Gluck, Grétry, Philidor, Sacchini, Piccinni.

¹⁹ BD: The sharp words no doubt referring to Voltaire's attitude to the Catholic church and his general conduct, which contrasted to the ideals outlined in line 71.

²⁰ BD: Therese Pänckl, serving girl in the Mozart household.

²¹ BD: Intentions to marry? Cf. Nos. 0377/34 ff.; 0471/115 ff.

pursue useless thoughts for now, for I would ask you in advance to allow me graciously not set out my ideas clearly before their time.

²²With the *opera* it is as follows: it is very difficult to find a good *poem*. [90] The old ones, which are the best, are not tailored to the *modern* style, and the new ones are all useless; for *poesy*, which was the only thing of which the French were able to be proud, is now becoming worse every day – and *poesy*, as I say, is the only thing here that ought to be good – because they do not understand music – There are now 2 operas *in aria* which I could write [95] one *endeuxacts*, the other *en trois*.²³ The one *en deux* is *Alexandre et Roxeane* – but the *poet* who is writing it is still in the country – the one *en trois* is *Demofont*²⁴ | by *Metastasio* | in translation, and mixed with choruses and dances and generally arranged for the French stage.²⁵ Of this, too, I have likewise been unable to see anything –

[100] Write to me please, saying whether you have the concertos by Schrötter²⁶ in *Salzbourg*? – the sonatas by Hüllmandel?²⁷ – I wanted to buy them and send them to you. Both *œuvres* are very beautiful – Regarding *Versailles*,²⁸ it was never in my thoughts²⁹ – I also listened to the advice of *Baron Grimm* and other good friends on it – they all thought as I did.

[105] There is little money, one has to languish for six months in a place where there is otherwise nothing to be earned, and bury one's talent. For anyone in royal service is forgotten in *Paris*. And then organist! – I would be very glad of entering good service, but nothing except a music director, and well-paid.

Now live very well indeed – take care of your health, [110] rely on God – there you must indeed find comfort; my dear mother is in the hands of the Almighty – if he wishes to grant her to us longer, as I hope, we will thank him for this grace, but if he wishes to take her to herself, all our fears, worries and despair are of no avail – rather, let us surrender ourselves to his divine will in the complete conviction that it will be for our good [115] because he does nothing without a reason – so may life go very well for you indeed, dearest Papa; look after your health for me, I kiss your hands 1000 times and embrace my sister with my whole heart and am, sir, your most obedient son,

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

²² BD: Answer to Leopold's observation in No. 0452/111 that nothing more was being said about the French opera.

²³ *En deux acts* = in two acts; *en trois* = in three. BD: Prospects of a composition in two acts are raised in Nos. 0440/90 ff.; 0449/96 ff.

²⁴ BD: *Demofonte*, text Metastasio. Mozart composed several arias for it: KV 71, 77 (73e), 82 (73o), 83 (73p), taking the texts from the Turin edition of Metastasio's works given to him by Karl, Count [Graf] Firmian on 7th February, 1770. It was translated by Jean-François Marmontel (1723-1799).

²⁵ BD: This text was set later by Cherubini in 1788 and Johann Christoph Vogel in 1789.

²⁶ BD: Johann Samuel Schröter (1752-1788). The concertos were probably *6 concertos for the harpsichord pianoforte* with accompanying parts for two violins and bass, opus 3, published in Paris around 1775. Mozart wrote cadenzas to 3 of his concertos: KV 624-626a Anh. [= KV⁶: II] D, F, G, H.

²⁷ BD: Nicolas-Joseph Hüllmandel (1751-1823). Nephew of Jean-Joseph Rodolphe, cf. No. 0449/101. Settled in Paris in 1776, published various sonatas for keyboard and violin and for keyboard alone, dedicated to the Duc de Guines (cf. No. 0440/13).

²⁸ BD: Possible work as organist in Versailles is mentioned in Nos. 0449/101 ff.; 0450/231 ff.

²⁹ BD: Similar formulation to that in No. 0426/7-8; again, possibly disingenuous.