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MOZART'S  
LETTERS

Edited and Introduced by  
Eric Blom



中央音樂學院  
Wolfgang amadeo Mozart  
藏書

Selected from

The Letters of Mozart and His Family

Translated and Annotated by

Emily Anderson

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PELICAN BOOK

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# MOZART'S LETTERS



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PENGUIN BOOKS

## PREFACE

THE celebration of a great composer's anniversary by a vast increase in performances of his works is of doubtful value. If he is as great as Mozart, his music is always with us, and it does not suddenly become more lovable or interesting on his two-hundredth birthday. A good deal more is to be said for the publication of personal documents less frequently before the public, especially if they allow us to come into closer contact with an artist's personality, as Mozart's letters certainly do. They show in many ways an ordinary boy, youth and man, alert and attractive, but with various defects and blind spots surprising in a genius; and then, now and again, personal superiority shows in pages suddenly revealing quick-wittedness, decent behaviour, insight into character, or keen judgement of other people's music and his own. He is a variable person, difficult to size up all round, more difficult in some ways than his music is to understand and value; yet once the man is known more intimately than he can be before a reading of his own words, one cannot fail to penetrate several layers deeper into his work, though the ultimate mystery of the very greatest of it remains unfathomable. Even a mere selection from his correspondence, such as is here presented as a birthday gift, will do much to help the reader to better acquaintance, and he will rejoice in the odd circumstance that the gift is an unusual one, coming from the celebrant instead of being presented to him. Still, some profit will be his: he as well as his work will be loved the more by those who have come to know him more intimately through these pages.

An English translation of the Mozart letters need never be attempted again. Emily Anderson's is a classic. It is true that her version has no sort of feeling of the eighteenth-century manner which gives the originals a peculiarly engaging flavour; but although it is possible, for the purpose of quotation, to rewrite him in the English of Sheridan or thereabouts – I have tried it myself – to do anything of the kind on the large scale of a complete edition would be to weary the reader with an intolerably sustained effort of affection. Miss Anderson turns Mozart's epistolary usage – it can hardly be called a style – into plain, lucid, impeccable English, which can be taken in large doses without becoming

in the least oppressive. What is more, she always succeeds in giving the precise equivalent of the original.

The text of the letters, so far as it appears in this selection, is reproduced exactly as it stands in the Anderson edition published by Messrs Macmillan and Co. in 1938. There are, however, some typographical changes, made to conform either with certain editorial notions or with the 'house style' used in Pelican Books. They do not affect the translator's work or interfere in any way with its accuracy: they are concerned merely with such things as the use of capital and lower-case initials, and more particularly with that of italic type. In the present edition this is reserved entirely for foreign words and, on a larger scale, for the translation of phrases, passages, or whole letters written by Mozart in a language other than German – in fact in a language foreign to him. All the text in Roman type may be taken as being translated from the German; Latin or French words and short phrases are left in the original and printed in italics, as are also such Italian words as Miss Anderson chose to leave untranslated. An exception to these rules is made in the case of the expression 'a propos', which, not being used in its proper French sense, is left in Roman type. As used by Austrians, it does not refer to a subject just mentioned, in the sense of 'which reminds me', or 'as to that', but on the contrary introduces a new one. It could have been quite accurately translated as 'by the way' and is still so used in Austria today.

Words or sentences in angular brackets are transcribed from the cipher used by the Mozart family for secret messages. A specimen will be found on page 65; otherwise such passages are given in English only, but they are easily identifiable by those special brackets.

Where amendments occur in the text, they were supplied by Miss Anderson herself. All numbered footnotes are hers also, unless followed by the initials 'E.B.', in which case they are editorial. They are occasionally abbreviated, but never altered. The commentary and connecting narrative between the letters are entirely my own.

In conclusion I wish to acknowledge most gratefully the ready courtesy with which Messrs Macmillan consented to the use of their edition of the letters, as well as the help and advice most generously given by Miss Emily Anderson in order that this selection from her work should be as good as possible. Apart from one or two suggestions on which I was glad to act, she is not responsible for the actual choice of

the letters here given in full or in part. On the other hand she has not only agreed most willingly to this decimation of a work in three volumes, which includes letters of Mozart's family as well as his own, but has also most carefully gone through the proofs, very kindly making a considerable number of corrections, and offered valuable advice of various kinds. Without her help this edition would undoubtedly have been less acceptable than I hope it is now going to prove to a large number of readers among whom, I feel, Mozart will find many new friends.

January 1956

ERIC BLOM

## THE LETTERS



## THE LETTERS

THE first letter written by Mozart that has been preserved is one addressed to an unknown girl friend, probably a child of about his own age, in 1769, when he was thirteen. It is of no interest except that it shows that the boy was learning Latin: he gives her a Latin sentence and asks her to read it, for she has told him that she understands the language. But this is no certain indication of his proficiency, since, as has been suggested, he may have copied the words from a school book.

The selection from the letters in this book has been made in such a way as to throw light on Mozart as a personality and an artist and, at the same time, to tell the story of his life in his own words, so far as they exist. Comments are interspersed to make a connected brief biography and to provide explanatory notes on the contents of the letters.

The events preceding the first letter here published, dating from December 1769, are briefly as follows:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born at Salzburg on 27 January 1756. He was the son of Leopold Mozart, then aged thirty-seven, a Bavarian violinist and minor composer of Augsburg, engaged as court musician in the service of the Archbishop Sigismund von Schrattenbach at Salzburg. His wife was Maria Anna, born Pertl, an Austrian. They had seven children, but only two survived: Wolfgang and his elder sister, also called Maria Anna, or Marianne (nicknamed Nannerl), born on 30 July 1751.

At the age of four the boy began to play the clavier and about a year later to try his hand at composition, his small pieces being written down by his father. Early in 1762 Leopold took the children to Munich to show off their musical gifts before the electoral court, and in September they visited Vienna to appear at the imperial court and at fashionable parties. By the time he was seven Wolfgang also played the violin, and some of his small clavier pieces appeared in print as curiosities. In the summer of 1763 began a long concert tour, which took the whole family across Europe and lasted until November 1766, with a long sojourn (April 1764 to July 1765) in London. They went through southern Germany to Brussels and Paris, where they remained from November 1763 to April 1764, playing at many concerts, appearing before the court at Versailles and creating a furore. In London also the children played at



court and in public, and Wolfgang came under the influence of John Christian Bach and began to compose symphonies and sonatas. On the return journey Holland was visited from September 1765 to May 1766. A shorter visit to Paris and Versailles followed, and in July they once more began to travel: by way of Dijon and Lyons to Switzerland, then southern Germany again, with a lengthy visit to Munich to end with before their return home at the end of November 1766. As the mother did not stay at home there are no family letters to record these travels, but fortunately Leopold wrote in great detail about them to his Salzburg friend Lorenz Hagenauer.

Wolfgang, now eleven, began to take up composition on a larger scale. He produced the first part of an oratorio, 'Die Schuldigkeit des ersten Gebotes', the other two being written by older court composers – Michael Haydn and the organist Adlgasser. In May 1767 followed a Latin school play set to music by Wolfgang, 'Apollo et Hyacinthus', which was performed by students of the University. He also wrote two symphonies and his first four piano concertos, but the latter were adaptations of sonata movement by other composers.

In September 1767 came another visit to Vienna; but the court went into mourning for the death of a princess from smallpox. Both the Mozart children caught the disease and were taken to Olomouc, where they were looked after during a dangerous attack. Back in Vienna in January 1768, they were sent for by the Empress Maria Theresa, and the Emperor Joseph II commissioned an Italian comic opera, 'La finta semplice', from Wolfgang, but could not prevent the intrigues which led to the abandonment of its production. Less important but more successful was the little German operetta 'Bastien und Bastienne', performed privately at Dr Franz Anton Mesmer's, the healer by magnetism.

On the family's return to Salzburg in January 1769 the Archbishop commanded a performance of 'La finta semplice' there and took a benevolent interest in Wolfgang's compositions for the church: several masses date from this period. But there was no holding Leopold Mozart at home so long as he had a child prodigy to show off before the world at large, and that world had not yet included Italy, the most important country for a musician to visit. He obtained leave again – and it is extraordinary how easily that seemed to be done as long as Schrattenbach was archbishop – and Wolfgang was taken away from home again early in December. Fortunately for posterity the mother and sister both

stayed behind this time, and that meant a spate of letters from father and son which – or a great many of which – have been preserved. And here we come upon the first letter to be included in this selection.

## TO HIS MOTHER

Wörgl, 13 December 1769

Dearest Mamma!

My heart is completely enchanted with all these pleasures, because it is so jolly on this journey, because it is so warm in the carriage and because our coachman is a fine fellow who, when the road gives him the slightest chance, drives so fast. Papa will have already described the journey to Mamma. The reason why I am writing to Mamma is to show her that I know my duty and that I am with the deepest respect her devoted son

WOLFGANG MOZART

The stages after Wörgl included Innsbruck and Bozen. After a short stay at Rovereto Leopold and Wolfgang proceeded to Verona, where Wolfgang made a sensation playing the organ at the church of San Tommaso and had his portrait painted by request, probably by Gianbettino Cignaroli.

## TO HIS SISTER

Verona, 7 January 1770

Dearest Sister!

I have had an aching feeling, because I have been so long waiting in vain for an answer. I have had good reason, too, because I have not yet received your letter. Here ends the German booby and the Italian one begins. *You are more fluent in Italian than I had imagined. Please tell me the reason why you did not go to the play which the courtiers acted? At present we are always hearing operas. One of them is 'Ruggiero'. Oronte, father of Bradamante, is a prince. Signor Afferi takes this part. He is a fine singer, a baritone, but forced when he sings falsetto, but not as much as Tibaldi in Vienna. Bradamante, daughter of Oronte, is in love with Ruggiero (she is to marry Leone,*

but she does not want him). *Her part is sung by a poor Baroness, who has had a great misfortune, but I don't know what it was. She is singing under an assumed name, but I do not know it. Her voice is tolerably good and she has not a bad presence, but she sings devilishly out of tune. The part of Ruggiero, a rich prince, who is in love with Bradamante, is sung by a castrato, who sings rather in the manner of Manzuoli and has a very fine powerful voice and is already old. He is fifty-five and has a flexible throat. Leone, who is to marry Bradamante, is very rich, but whether he is rich off the stage, I do not know. His part is sung by a woman, Afferi's wife. She has a most beautiful voice, but there is so much whispering in the theatre that you can't hear anything. Irene's part is sung by a sister of Lolli, the great violinist, whom we heard in Vienna. She has a muffled voice and always sings a semiquaver too late or too soon. The part of Ganno is taken by someone whose name I do not know. He is singing for the first time. After each act there is a ballet. There is a good dancer here called Monsieur Ruesler. He is a German and dances very well. One of the last times we were at the opera (but not the very last time) we asked M. Ruesler to come up to our *palco* (for we have a free entrance to the *palco* of Marchese Carlotti, as we have the key) and there we had a talk with him. A propos, everyone is masked now and it is really very convenient when you wear your mask, as you have the advantage of not having to take off your hat when you are greeted and of not having to address the person by name. You just say, 'servitore umilissimo, Signora Maschera'. *Cospetto di Bacco*, what fun! But the funniest thing of all is that we go to bed between seven and half past seven. If you guess this I shall certainly say that you are the mother of all guessers. Kiss my mother's hand for me. I kiss you a thousand times and assure you that I shall always remain,*

your sincere brother

WOLFGANG MOZART

*Portez-vous bien et aimez-moi toujours.*

Mozart appears in his early years to have written much more frequently to his sister than to his mother; but most of these letters are

postscripts to Leopold's addressed to his wife, so that the letters as a whole were really intended for both mother and sister.

This letter shows that Mozart even in his boyhood knew Italian very well. There were always Italian musicians at the Salzburg archiepiscopal court, where he must have picked it up easily, being a quick linguist; he also wrote French fluently. His sister was not at the court, of course, hence perhaps his astonishment at her Italian, but it was probably talked a good deal at home for fun.

The 'Ruggiero' they heard cannot have been a setting of Metastasio's libretto, the first setting of which, by Hasse, dates from 1770. It was probably Pietro Guglielmi's work of the same name.

The Mozarts went on to Mantua, where they arrived on 10 January. It was very cold and the inns were expensive, so that, Leopold says, they are not likely to make any profit. On 23 January they arrived at Milan, where they stayed at the Augustinian monastery, but by no means free of charge, as Leopold complains.

## TO HIS SISTER

Milan, 26 January 1770

I rejoice with my whole heart that you had such a good time during that sleigh-drive and I wish you a thousand opportunities of amusement so that you may spend your life very merrily. But one thing distresses me, and that is, that you have made Herr von Mölk<sup>1</sup> sigh and suffer so frightfully and that you did not go sleigh-driving with him, so that he might have upset you. How many handkerchiefs will he not have used that day, weeping on your account. No doubt he will have previously taken an ounce of tartar, which will have purged his wretchedly dirty body. I have no news except that Herr Gellert, the poet, has died at Leipzig and since his death has written no more poetry. Just before I began this letter I composed an aria from 'Demetrio', which begins: 'Misero tu non sei' . . .

1. Anton Joseph, son of Court Chancellor Felix von Mölk, was a friend of Mozart and in love with Nannerl.

The opera at Mantua was charming. They played 'Demetrio'. The *prima donna* sings well, but very softly; and when you do not see her acting, but only singing, you would think that she is not singing at all. For she cannot open her mouth, but whines out everything. However, we are quite accustomed to that now. The *seconda donna* looks like a grenadier and has a powerful voice too, and, I must say, does not sing badly, seeing that she is acting for the first time. The *primo uomo*, *il musico*, sings beautifully, though his voice is uneven. His name is Caselli. *Il secondo uomo* is already old and I do not like him. His name is —. As for the tenors, one is called Otini.<sup>1</sup> He does not sing badly, but rather heavily like all Italian tenors, and he is a great friend of ours. I do not know the name of the other one. He is still young, but not particularly good. *Primo ballerino* — good. *Prima ballerina* — good, and it is said that she is not hideous, but I have not seen her close to. The rest are quite ordinary. A *grottesco* was there who jumps well, but cannot write as I do, I mean, as sows piddle. The orchestra was not bad. In Cremona it is good. The first violin is called Spagnoletto. The *prima donna* is not bad; she is quite old, I should say, and not good-looking; she acts better than she sings, and she is the wife of a violinist called Masi, who plays in the orchestra. The opera was: 'La Clemenza di Tito'. *Seconda donna*, young, not at all bad on the stage, but nothing out of the ordinary. *Primo uomo*, *musico*, Ciconnani — a delightful voice and a beautiful *cantabile*. The other two *castrati*, young and passable. The tenor's name is — *I don't know it*. He has a pleasant way with him, and resembles as though he were his natural son, Leroy in Vienna, who came to Geneva.

*Ballerino primo*, good. *Ballerina prima*, good but very plain. There was a woman dancer there, who did not dance badly and, what is very remarkable, was not bad-looking on the stage and off it. The others were quite ordinary. A *grottesco* was there too, who whenever he jumped let off a fart. As for Milan I really cannot tell you very much. We have not yet been to the opera, but we have heard that it has not been a success. Aprile, *primo uomo*, sings well

1. Appears in [Leopold's] *Reiseaufzeichnungen*, p. 50, as 'Uttini'.

and has a beautiful even voice. We heard him in a church, when there happened to be a great festival. Madame Piccinelli from Paris, who sang at our concert, is acting in the opera. Monsieur Pick<sup>1</sup>, who danced in Vienna, is dancing here too. The opera is called: 'Didone abbandonata'. This opera will soon come to an end and Signor Piccinni, who is writing the next opera, is here. I have heard that his is called: 'Cesare in Egitto'. Here there are also *feste di ballo* which begin as soon as the opera is over. The wife of Count von Firmian's steward is a Viennese. Last Friday we dined there and we are dining there again next Sunday. Farewell. Kiss my mother's hands a thousand times *on my behalf*. I remain, true till death, your brother

WOLFGANG DE MOZART  
The Honourable Highdale,  
Friend of the Counting-house.

Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (b. 1715) had died on 13 December 1769. Mozart's reference to him is a specimen of his often rather feeble jokes.

The aria from 'Demetrio', from Metastasio's libretto, has not been preserved. It was Hasse's setting which the Mozarts had heard at Mantua. The description of the rather obscure cast is of no special interest, except as a sample of Mozart's lively gifts of observation and expression.

The reference to Cremona shows that the weather was still cold and the roads were icy, for Leopold wrote home before their departure that they would go by way of that town if it were so, but through Brescia if there were a thaw and the roads were muddy.

'La clemenza di Tito' was Hasse's setting of Metastasio's libretto, an altered version of which Mozart himself composed in the last year of his life.

Giuseppe Aprile (1738-1814) was a famous male contralto.

'Didone abbandonata' was another libretto by Metastasio, set by innumerable composers. It is tantalizing that Mozart so often refers to operas without giving the composer's name. This setting of 'Didone' was by one Ignazio Celionat of Turin, who was quite unknown and

1. His real name was Le Picq.

therefore of no interest to the Mozarts. Niccolò Piccinni (1728-1800), on the other hand, was famous. It was he who was soon to be made into Gluck's rival by the Parisian musicians. 'Cesare in Egitto' was eventually called 'Cesare e Cleopatra'.

#### TO HIS MOTHER AND SISTER

Milan, 10 February 1770

Talk of the devil and he will appear. Thanks and praise be to God, I am quite well and I can scarcely await the hour when I shall receive an answer from you. I kiss Mamma's hand and to my sister I send a pock-mark of a kiss and I remain the same old . . . old what? . . . the same old buffoon,

WOLFGANG in GERMANY, AMADEO in ITALY,  
DE MOZARTINI

At the dress rehearsal of 'Cesare in Egitto' they met Piccinni. At a concert at Count Firmian's house, at which the Duke and Princess of Modena, the future bride of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, were present, four settings of arias by Metastasio by Wolfgang were performed as tests of his ability to write dramatic music, for he was to be commissioned to write an opera for Christmas.

On 15 March, on the way to Parma, Mozart wrote his first string Quartet (K.80) at an inn at Lodi. At Parma he heard the soprano Lucrezia Aguiari (1743-83) and noted down a passage in which she displayed her agility and the unbelievably high range of her voice. Leopold and Wolfgang arrived at Bologna on 24 March and both wrote home at once.

#### TO HIS SISTER

Bologna, 24 March 1770

Oh you busy thing!

As I have been idle for so long, I have been thinking that it would not be a bad idea if I did some work again for a short while. Every post-day, when letters arrive from Germany, I enjoy eating and drinking far more than usual. Please write and tell me who is

singing in the oratorios and let me know their titles as well. Tell me also how you like Haydn's<sup>1</sup> minuets and whether they are better than his earlier ones. . . .

I shall soon send you a minuet which Mr Pick danced in the theatre and which everyone danced to afterwards at the *feste di ballo* in Milan, solely in order that you may see how slowly people dance here. The minuet itself is very beautiful. It comes, of course, from Vienna and was most certainly composed by Deller or Starzer.<sup>2</sup> It has plenty of notes. Why? Because it is a stage minuet which is danced slowly. The minuets in Milan, in fact the Italian minuets generally, have plenty of notes, are played slowly, and have several bars, e.g., the first part has sixteen, the second twenty or twenty-four. . . .

The description of the slow stage minuets is interesting because Mozart wrote just such a minuet, which is danced on the stage, for 'Don Giovanni' later on. His symphonic and chamber-music minuets are usually faster.

The end of this letter is taken up with the passage sung by Lucrezia Aguiari.

At Bologna Mozart met Padre Giovanni Battista Martini (1706-84), the composer and a great musical scholar, and Farinelli (Carlo Broschi, 1705-82), the celebrated male soprano, who had retired to a villa near Bologna which he had built for himself. Martini attended Mozart's concert, although he never went to others, having been greatly impressed by the results of various musical tests to which he had subjected the young genius.

On 30 March father and son arrived at Florence. Nardini, the famous violinist, played at Wolfgang's concert, and the latter made friends with Thomas Linley, then aged fourteen (see his letter of 10 September 1770). On 11 April they reached Rome, in time for the Holy Week celebrations.

1. Michael Haydn.

2. Florian Deller (1729-73) and Joseph Starzer (1726-87) were well-known composers of ballet music in Vienna.



# TO HIS SISTER

Rome, 25 April 1770

*My dear Sister,*

*I assure you that every post-day I look forward with an incredible eagerness to receiving some letters from Salzburg. Yesterday we were at San Lorenzo and heard vespers, and this morning the mass which was sung, and in the evening the second vespers, because it is the festival of the Madonna del Buon Consiglio. During the last few days we have been to the Campidoglio and have seen several fine things. If I were to write down all that I have seen, this small sheet would not suffice. I have played at two concerts and to-morrow I am playing at another. This evening we saw a contralto singer, a castrato, who was very like Signor Meisner, whom by the way we shall have the honour of meeting at Naples. Immediately after lunch we play boccia. That is a game which I have learnt in Rome. When I come home, I shall teach it to you. . . . When I have finished this letter I shall finish a symphony which I have begun. The aria is finished. A symphony is being copied (my father is the copyist, for we do not wish to give it out to be copied, as it would be stolen). My greetings to all my friends and please kiss Mamma's hands for me, for I am (Tra la liera)*

WOLFGANGO in GERMANIA,  
AMADEO MOZART in ITALIA

*ROMA caput mundi,*

*25 April 1770,*

*and next year 1771.*

*Behind as in front*

*And double in the middle.*

*I kiss you both.*

The two symphonies mentioned (unless they are one and the same) could have been any of K.81, 84, 95, or 97, all in D major. The aria was K.82, 'Se ardire, e speranza' (Metastasio).

The remark at the end refers to the date 1771: two ones flanking double seven.