

1278. CONSTANZE MOZART¹ TO BREITKOPF & HÄRTEL,² LEIPZIG

*Vienna / To / Messrs. Breitkopf & Härtel, / Leipzig / sent
1st Febr., 1800*

Most highly honoured sirs,

Vienna, 30th Jan., 1800

You have worked a miracle – you have raised the dead.³ [5] The person who owns and commissioned the *Requiem*, [5] whose name has remained completely secret since 1791, has made an appearance,⁴ not – (note my customary forthrightness!) – not, as it appears, in order to complain about you, but rather about me. With some variations, all *avertissementers*⁵ have stated that you published the *Requiem* from my copy.⁶ [10] And then it will certainly become difficult for me to defend myself at all, except with your letters in my hand, where you say the opposite to what you told the public, namely that you are not publishing from my copy because, according to your letters, it is so very poor.

Perhaps I can set your mind at rest for the meantime by informing you [15] that the anonymous person in question, who is of very high rank, has let it be understood that he would probably be willing to consider his claim satisfied by a number of copies. Yet he also spoke about 50 ducats,⁷ which was the price he paid.

Are you willing to give me a further 25 copies besides the ten promised? [20] If you wish, as proof of the truth of my statement, I can procure a receipt from a local man who holds public office and therefore has the reputation of being a trustworthy man. This receipt should specify that the 25 copies are set aside for this purpose – unless, on the other hand, you make them over to me entirely. [25] Perhaps I could become a few copies richer in the process – a poor substitute for all that I could have gained with this work!

What you certainly will obtain from this is the name of the as yet anonymous person⁸ for the biography.

But these later events need not be mentioned.

[30] I will be obliged to you if you are willing to make an announcement for my sake about where you got your two copies; I can make use of this information for a more complete appeasement. So now you do indeed see that the matter is being talked about after all. You always doubted this, and of course you wanted to take over all my liabilities for me, as I seem to remember you saying in one of your letters. But first I have to look and see where.

[35] I furthermore insist on what I can demand from you: that you should immediately send me the originals which you have not yet paid for, or send me the money at once and the originals later.

[. . .]⁹ copies of the *concerto* No. 1 arrived¹⁰ on [. . .]¹¹ Oct. I thank you for that as well as, once again, for the package from Hamburg.¹² [40] But of the copies mentioned, 9 were completely unusable and in poor condition!!

¹ BD: Nissen's handwriting, Constanze's signature. Nissen: cf. note No. 1224.

² BD: Founded as "Breitkopf" in 1719. On 1st November, 1795, Christoph Gottlob Breitkopf concluded a contract of partnership with Gottfried Christoph Härtel (1763-1827). This was followed in 1796 by a secret contract of sale in which the entire Breitkopf business was made over to Gottfried Christoph Härtel. The latter was also declared universal heir by Breitkopf shortly before his death in 1800.

³ BD: B & H had placed an advertisement in their journal. Count [Graf] von Walsegg-Stuppach, who purported to be the composer, then started a breach of contract action against Constanze.

⁴ BD: Actually the lawyer Dr. Johann Nepomuk Sortschan, as Walsegg's representative.

⁵ = "advertisers".

⁶ BD: Cf. note on No. 1260/4.

⁷ BD: 50 ducats = 225 florins. This was in fact only the initial deposit.

⁸ BD: Did Constanze know the person's identity? Abbé Stadler and Anton Herzog claimed that they had known the story of the *Requiem* since shortly after Mozart's death. In 1828, Johann Anton André wrote that he considered the story of the *Requiem* as being a "fairytale" invented by Mozart's widow.

I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect,
most highly honoured sirs,
Your most obedient servant
Constance Mozart

[45]

⁹ BD: Seal damage, c. 4 letters lost.

¹⁰ BD: Presumably in Frankfurt, for André, cf. Nos. 1263/63-69; 1272/2 ff.

¹¹ BD: Seal damage, c. 4 letters lost.

¹² BD: The personal items sent on to Constanze from Hamburg via Leipzig, cf. Nos. 1258/74-76; 1259/62-65; 1277/5-6.