

1320. CONSTANZE MOZART¹ TO BREITKOPF & HÄRTEL,² LEIPZIG

Vienna / To / Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel, / Leipzig

Most highly honoured sirs,

[Vienna, 16th November, 1800]

Although I believe I can be entirely convinced that the six *sonatas*³ I sent to you on 25th Febr., 1799 are truly by my blessedly departed husband, [5] I nevertheless felt such scruples arising in me on reading through our correspondence that I feel bound to make the following proposal to you.

What gives rise to my scruples is that you declare them to be so very poor and so completely unworthy of Mozart. Out of respect for him, therefore, [10] I find it desirable that they should not come out under his name. On the other side, it is likewise important for you, who wish to publish only the choice works by this man, not to offend the taste of your subscribers with poor works.

I therefore offer to return the twelve ducats⁴ you paid [15] and would ask you to draw up a payment order in my name for this sum. But I am quite happy to leave the *sonatas* to you, just as they are, as your property.

In return, your obligation is simply not to publish them as Mozart's work, which I will neither do nor allow to be done, at least not without a public disavowal. [20] If, after scrutinising them again, you nevertheless hold them to be Mozart's work, I am in this case even willing to allow you to publish them as such. Only I wish to withdraw entirely from any involvement and to have nothing at all to answer for if another should subsequently come forward as their author. Since they are supposedly not so very poor, it might be, contrary to all appearances, quite possible that they are not by Mozart. [25]

I expect a declaration of agreement and an acceptance of the obligation not to publish them as Mozart's work, or at least to exempt me from all responsibility in the sense of my statements above, and in return I have pleasure in paying the 54 fl.

[30] But since I am offering this freely and you are as a result being spared any losses, I simultaneously declare that I believe and consider myself, as by a warning and objection, to have been exempted herewith from all responsibility, and that you have to take upon yourselves all consequences which could arise if you do not take heed of my warning.

[35] If you would be so favourably disposed as to set my mind at rest with the next post, I would consider it a special sign of friendship.

I have the honour to [be],⁵ with great respect,

Vienna, 16th Nov., 1800.

Your

most obedient servant

Constance Mozart

[40]

Postscript.

If in the meantime you wish to use the *sonatas*, whether under Mozart's name or not, perhaps I may hope that you will not deduct anything from me for it. At the same time, I am also quite

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: This letter concentrates entirely on the question of the authenticity of the so-called *Romantic Sonatas* for keyboard and violin KV 55-60 (209c-h), (KV⁶: Anh. C 23.01- 23.06). Cf. No. 1236/2; 1321/4-23.

⁴ BD: = 54 florins.

⁵ BD: Seal damage; one word lost.

happy to pay. [45] The main thing is simply to exempt me entirely from any responsibility, for which I shall be very obliged to you, despite which I give my word of honour that nothing except scruples due to an external cause have prompted me to write this, nothing except your critique of these *sonatas*.