Letters of an Observant Traveller

Concerning

MUSIC

Written to his Friends by

Johann Friedrich Reichardt

Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1774-1776

Translated by John B. Rutledge

TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

I have attempted to render Reichardt's letters into a classically flavored English. His letters are not highly polished, and the translation attempts to reflect this. What Reichardt says of Pergolesi--each piece looks like a first draft--is true of his own letters. At the same time, however, they have a quality of ardency, strongly felt emotions and opinions that compensates for their first-draft character. Reichardt's occasional lack of consistency is repeated in the English, down to the use of space-saving abbreviations for names; I have filled in his elipses and anonymizing where this has become common knowledge, but could not undertake lengthy research nor the time to footnote all the figures mentioned in his text. Occasionally I have added the first names of people mentioned by him only by family name, particularly when it was required to make the meaning clear (as in the case of Bach). When an original German word was not fully captured by the English or when the meaning was subject to various interpretations, I have included it in brackets next to the English word.

I hope that this translation, by serving up Reichardt in clear English, will aid all those wishing to understand Reichardt's musical and literary ideas better and will facilitate the comparison of Reichardt to other figures, such as Burney, with whom comparision is justifiable.

Thanks to Paul Corneilson for a very attentive reading and attention to English idiom and musical terminology. This project was begun in 1975 and "completed" in 1991. This translation lacks the benefits of a professional copy editor to harmonize and unify all the various conventions. Nevertheless, I believe that it will serve to convey Reichardt's observations and ideas and a flavor of his age to anyone willing to pick up an admittedly imperfect translation.

John B. Rutledge

LETTERS OF AN OBSERVANT TRAVELLER CONCERNING

M U S I C

Written to his friends by

Johann Friedrich Reichardt

Pt. I

FOREWORD

I herewith present to the public a portion of the letters which I wrote to my friends on my previous journeys; and as I now offer them to the general public, I have attempted, in so far as my small learning and the disquietude of the journey allowed, to enrich their contents. In them it will be seen that I have not only reported about the most notable men in each locality and tried to deduce their character and merits from their works, but that I have also written on them at some length, if it happened that the performance of a piece led me to general observations. I have tried to make my comments intelligible and informative not just for the connoisseur and the artist, but also for the amateur.

We are greatly lacking in writers who take the effect and performance of musical pieces as the subject of their investigations; and yet these things are extremely important for the composer to know, especially for the composer for the theater. People with knowledge and experience in these matters are either too complacent or too self-seeking to share them with the public; and so the composers who do not have the opportunity to hear many and different kinds of music in different places--and how few have it!--remain ignorant of such matters. They often take the greatest of pains in working out the harmony of their pieces, thereby gaining the approval of knowledgeable people; but if the works are performed, they have no effect--the listener does not like them. Why is that?--They write for the eye, without regard for the ear. But for which of the senses is music written?--Here one can recognize the imperfection of many of our rules, according to which the very thing that wins approval from the strict theorist can often be extremely unpleasant to the ear, and conversely, that which is beautiful

to the ear will be faulted by the critic's eye. But in works of music is it not right that the eye should observe things only with reference to the ear?--To do this, however, much experience is necessary. One must hear all sorts of music, observing carefully, at the same time, what creates the best effect and what interferes with the effect, and searching for the reason. It is just the same with performance on instruments.

I hope that the reader will find some pleasant and useful observations on these two points in my letters; and if I am not deceived in my estimation of Italy, I believe I can promise my reader even more in future volumes. The first three or four parts will concern the present state of music in Germany. I shall not merely relate historically and without selectivity what I have heard and seen in three years, as Mr. Burney did, but rather I shall choose with more care for the reader only those things which will be of certain interest to him. In general, however, I regard the historical portion of my letters as simply the occasion to speak of experiences and their cause, which I either had myself or have received from communications with the worthiest and greatest men of our times. To share these with others gives pleasant satisfaction to my ever-fervent desire to be of service, and in doing so, to earn the approval of my contemporaries.

R E I C H A R D T

FIRST LETTER.

To Mr. Sch*** Kr**.

Berlin.

Sad and bleak is the path to Elysium, which itself then appears all the more glorious and charming. And yet, my friend, if in your first moment of rapture the shade of Homer or Virgil appeared to you, would you not first rush to embrace these blessed spirits rather than roam through the pleasant fields and valleys? Thus it was with me as well. Hardly had I arrived in beautiful Königstadt,[1] my rapacious gaze set upon its many beauties, glancing from one object to another and wanting to devour all it spied, hardly had I thought one single thought through, when I learned that the opera was to begin in two hours, and, indeed, an opera by Hasse. Need I add, that I thought no longer either of beautiful buildings[2] or of anything else,[3] but after I had embraced our mutual friend S***, I hurried

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[1]The author is honored to proclaim that he will never be so charmed by any other large city, no matter how beautiful it may be. Now that he has seen many large cities and found in all of them frequent misfortune and untold disorder, he has come to agree with his friend Rousseau, that all the splendor and all the diversions of a large city are nothing compared to a green meadow or a merry harvest dance; all the art of a thousand hands is nothing to the charm of smiling Nature. And whoever does not sense this, as sung in the works of Weisse and Hiller, is heartily to be pitied.

[2]It is true that Berlin has buildings which are rivalled by few others of any great city. The Great Castle, the Opera House, the Catholic Church, St. Peter's Church, the Armory, and the many palaces are all specimens of the noblest, richest and best taste.

[3]The Tiergarten, made up of various kinds of woods, containing fir, spruce, oak and boxwood groves among many other kinds, is a great jewel of the city. The swan-inhabited Spree flows along its side, and the fir and spruce trees are reflected in its clear waters. Innumerable parks have been cleared out and a few reservoirs increase its beauty and show that Art has here

immediately to the Opera House. Although I had almost two hours before the opera began, I by no means wasted this time, but spent it rather in viewing the interior arrangement of this beautiful and sublime building. Serious majesty characterizes this example of the noblest taste in architecture.

Suddenly I was startled by the sound of military music coming from above. I first sought its source in the niches at the sides of the curtain. The performers were not so poetically placed, but stood rather in the first row of the balcony close to the stage. I have always heard that music at the beginning of a battle sounds very confused and dissonant, for fear makes hands and lips tremble. They seemed to be imitating such music here. It was not long, however, until they began a beautiful and fiery symphony by the late Concertmaster Graun,[4] of which, however, only the first movement was performed. The curtain rose and one could see the most artistic and magnificent decorations by the masterful hand of Mr. Gagliari, an artist from Turin. But I did not stare too long, for I was soon captured by sounds which demanded all my attention and I was all ears. It was the first opera by Hasse I had ever seen, although

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offered Nature the hand of friendship. Unfortunately, however, the many beauties being put to no use testify also thatArt's hands, usually so helpful, are bound. To describe the great beauty of the Tiergarten succinctly, I would have to say that it deserves to be sung of by Ramler. The cool shadows of the Tiergarten would show him more gratitude than do the heroes of many of his excellent odes; if they but knew the remembrancer of their heroic deeds, these men would not envy the Roman his poet.

[4]In his musical journal Mr. Burney has done this estimable man great injustice. He does not find in his works that fire, which I, as a careful investigator, have found in very few other symphonies. Yet they must be performed as I have heard them conducted by Graun himself. Nor does Mr. B[urney] think his violin concerto a masterpiece, which in its own way it truly is. He is totally lacking in imagination, says Burney,--in imagination, exactly the thing for which those who know him well most admire in him! Has Mr. B[urney] every heard any of his works? Surely not. For all his opinions are merely copied down from whomever he met, and this too was no doubt told him, probably by someone jealous of that great man.

I knew them well from scores and from having compared them with Graun's. I do not wish to dissect the beauty of this opera, but only want to tell you that it had the most lively effect on me. And as an undeniable proof of its general effect, I noted that almost every person in the audience had picked up a few themes and that these were being sung by almost everyone when it was over. This is unerring proof that when a melody has an effect on the layman and stays in his mind, it is natural and not forced. Such melody is not Hasse's gift alone; Graun and others have it as well. But one thing which I find only in Hasse is this: the musical thought, once it has made an impression, can never be forgotten. What is the reason for this? I think it is because the musical idea is so perfectly suited to that point in the plot where it occurs and to the character of the person who sings it, that we automatically think of the plot and the person each time we hear or think of the musical idea. In this way the idea is engraved more deeply in our hearts each time we hear it, and who could forget it then? But I will now tell you nothing more about the compositions of this great master because I will later compare him with the immortal Graun.

How shall I describe for you the rapturous tones of one such as Mlle. Schmähling[5] or Conciolini? Anything I could say could but imperfectly express the sentiment which she caused to

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[5]Mlle. Schmähling, or now more properly Madame Mara, has greatly improved in the five years that she has been in Berlin. Her voice, her interpretation, her gestures have all changed to her great advantage. Her voice, which used to have a certain clarity verging on shrillness, has now become softer and more pleasant. To persons who know instruments I could not make this any more clear than to say she had at first the tone of a Stainer violin, but now she has more the tone of an instrument from Cremona or, more precisely, an agreeable mixture of both (which I have long been trying to put in my violin and finally did get into it). In her manner of rendition she patterned herself after Conciolini and after her husband, both of whom are perfect adagio singers, the latter as much with his violoncello as the former with his supple throat. The best teachers of gesture she could have had were Porporino and even her husband, certainly one of the great geniuses: for who has not heard of the art of that singer. And anyone who saw Mr. Mara act at the private performances of Prince Heinrich will grant him the reputation of a perfect actor.

flow in me the first time I heard her. In view of the great range of her voice, its agility and finish, one could say of her what the author of a good work says of Voltaire: "It is a swallow in flight which touches the surface of the broad stream with ease and grace, drinks and bathes while flying." Her singing is often expressive and touching, even though she is surpassed in this by Conciolini, whose singing is melting tenderness itself. Porporino, who has a beautiful and unusual contralto voice, showed himself to have not only a good sense of interpretation, but also to be a perfect actor, a merit which one so very seldom finds in singers.

The orchestra played with great energy. One could tell from the precision of the ensemble's interpretation that almost all had profited from our great Benda and from Graun. But if I am to express my feelings entirely, I did not find enough exactitude with respect to the forte and the piano.

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I must express myself more clearly on this point.

In order to be perfectly precise about the forte and piano it does not suffice merely to play the ritornellos strongly and to play softly when the voice part begins. That they did well enough, but the fine gradations of loud and soft were lacking. The forte and piano in an adagio movement is quite different from that in an allegro. Just as a painter uses a very different degree of light and shade when presenting a sad scene than when painting a merry feast or wild battle. Each of those degrees has its own special shading as the voice part rises and falls. The meaning of each piece, the situation of the characters in the story, indeed, even the natural voice of each singer and the key signature of the particular aria must all be examined most carefully. For this one needs the true and extremely fine sensitivity and the untiring industry of Pisendel,[6] who took almost unbelievable pains with every opera, with every church cantata that was performed under him, and who, to the great admiration of Hasse, never failed to catch the right tempo of an aria and to write out the forte and piano above all the voice parts and even the bow strokes, so that in

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[6]Pisendel was Concertmaster there, as Hasse was still in Dresden.

the select orchestra which the Dresden court then had, the greatest discipline and precision necessarily prevailed.

I am not referring here to crescendo and decrescendo[7] on a long note or on many notes in succession, which, if I may so express it, spans the entire range of a bright or dark color, and which is done so masterfully in Mannheim: I do not speak of these, for Hasse and Graun never used them. And why?--That I have not been able to ferret out. Why they did not use forte and piano in rapid alternation (which now has become so fashionable) so that any two notes could be strong or weak--why they did not do so I can very well explain to myself from their proper sensitivity and fine taste. Only someone whose taste is completely dulled and spoiled requires the strongest spices in his food to find it tasty. And what sort of a taste is it that finds pleasure in the vivid depiction of a sick person in the violent contortions of fever? What is such taste if not feverish contortion? Would the painter, who knows that beautiful Nature is the field from which he is to present us paintings and that good taste banishes from Art everything repulsive, would he treat such a subject? Should not the musician be just as well-versed in his Ramler and Batteux as the poet and painter? In Nature he has the most noble means for studying mankind. But alas in music we do not yet have a Ramler or a Batteux. Everyone calculates, everyone racks his brain over harmony--wonderful! Let me be the first to say that we can never be thankful enough to people such as Bach, Marpurg or Kirnberger for their thoroughly instructive works. One should study the nature of song, of expression, and above all, the effect. We have the most marvelous works of all kinds from which Bach, Schwanenberger, Agricola, Homilius and many more are able to extract and formulate the most excellent and reliable rules, in so far as human differences allow. These worthy men are lacking neither in necessary basic knowledge, nor in sufficient experience. How easy this must have been for Capellmeister Schwanenberger, who had acquired a wealth of knowledge and experience from his eight-year stay in Italy (which he used to advantage) without making of him--what

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[7]It is said that when Jommelli first used this in Rome, the audience gradually rose from their seats during the crescendo and breathed again only at the diminuendo and then noticed that they were out of breath. I experienced this latter effect upon myself in Mannheim.

praise!--a partisan. Yet for his neglect of them he deserved to be punished, and was punished. For, lo and behold, a long-winded Englishman came and told us things, of which only a small portion merited inclusion in the notes of a good book of its nature. Woe to him, who, not knowing with whom he is dealing, shall read that little history[8] which threatens us poor Germans with a second round of blows. The punishment was, I should think, severe enough for that good man. But if he is not yet moved by that to write, then we must conceal from him for a while the fact that he is one of the best and most agreeable composers and at the same time a perfect virtuoso at the keyboard. Perhaps this will move him, from annoyance, at least, to show us that he has yet other aspects for which he can gain our approval, even though now his admirable modesty prevents him from doing so. And then these gentlemen—Ihope you will permit me to address you as a group--prefer to try to gain a reputation and popular approval by a good opera or a good piece of church music, which costs them less effort because of their fecund genius. To be sure, in the beginning only a small number of men would grant them the thanks and honor due such a difficult book; but--without casting aspersions on their excellent works--they would be better assured of eternal remembrance by such a work than by their compositions, which will have to suffer the sad fate of all fashions, at least for a while. But human passions and feelings have ever been the same, and shall remain so. And did you think you could deduce your rules from such elements, gentlemen?

I beg indulgence for my excesses. I shall now return to my letter.

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The following week an opera by Graun was produced. There were many pleasing and charming things about it, but it did not have as great an effect as Hasse's, although it was more industriously composed and even better presented. Mr. Agricola, who now has taken over for the late Capellmeister Graun, wrote a superb aria especially for Mlle. Schmähling, and for Mr.

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[8]Mr. Burney has promised a history of music, which no doubt will consist of little stories like his journal, and for which, alas, two translation mills in Germany are already waiting.

Conciolini they borrowed a genuinely touching aria[9] from Hasse's version of the same opera. Both were at the full height of their powers. A few arias by the great and sublime author of the Brandenburg History were incorporated into this opera, among them one which truly revealed a noble spirit. Given all this, why was it that this opera had less effect than Hasse's? It seems to me that there was more boldness and strength in expression, more diversity in the melody and more cleverness and less labor in the accompaniment. Since this, in my opinion, distinguishes all of Hasse's works for the stage from Graun's, it deserves closer scrutiny.

If one troubles to compare Hasse's and Graun's version of the same opera, one will discover that Hasse always surpasses Graun in the expression of strong emotions such as pride, hate, anger, rage, despair and so forth; on the other hand, Graun always outdoes Hasse in expressing the gentle and touching side of things. Even in sorrow and affliction Hasse retains a certain loftiness and vigour which is peculiarly his own, and he can never reduce himself to simple, unartificial plaintiveness or tenderness. Graun, on the other hand, is so ingenuous and at the same time so touching in such songs, that every listener is moved--and who is not moved to tears by him?--and everyone believes himself to be singing a part in sympathy with the distress of the person on the stage. The true character of these two great men seems to be depicted by this comparison, for everyone who has known them for some time agrees that Hasse was always the more ardent man and in his youth was a passionate lover. Graun, on the other hand, was a more sociable man, a gentle friend. Hasse has a livelier and more fiery imagination; in most of his works one sees that in composing he is more of an actor than Graun and that he can place himself in the situation of the hero whose pain, anger and despair he is supposed to transpose into music. Can anyone not see in Artemisia's excellent and masterly monologue[10] at the end of the piece that the composer himself is struggling with the most extreme pain! that he himself is enraged! that he first laments then raves

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[9]And yet people said that it was done because Graun's music was too touching for the King.

[10]Sarete paghi alfin, implacabili dei? I heard Mlle. Schröter sing this recitative in Leipzig with so much expression, that this sensitive singer wrung hot tears and cold chills from me!

again, and finally cries out breathlessly to the gods:--rendete mi il mio ben, numi tiranni, etc.?--A composer who was not himself an actor, that is, one who did not feel the whole plot while writing it, who did not sing and act it out, would have made an aria di bravura of this. But in the preceding recitative she exhausted herself and poured out all her sufferings in reproaching the gods in ways which only her most unfortunate situation could have taught her. Also, Hasse worked for the stage with more enthusiasm, whereas Graun would often put his opera off until the last minute, and then composed in the greatest haste. It is known that Graun completed every aria first in his head or at the fortepiano, then wrote it out neatly without ever changing a note. Thus the first score was the performance score. He could do this all the more easily because he had mastered harmony. Hasse often struck out things from his score, but how? Although I am not at all inclined to maintain that Hasse is Graun's equal in theoretical knowledge,[11] yet he certainly has enough knowledge to be able to do that too. Of course, it is true that every composer has his own style[12] of writing; yet Hasse always thought of the effect[13] and devoted his

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[11]The extent to which Graun surpassed Hasse in knowledge of harmony is demonstrated by the duets, trios, etc. in his operas. They are the best models we have, and the public cannot be grateful enough to Mr. Hartung in Königsberg and Mr. Decker in Berlin for making these masterpieces known, for they do the German nation honor. It is now up to the public to show that it has the good sense to value the grace and excellence of these pieces. That certainly is my wish, as it must be that of everyone who loves music! Such men will thereby be encouraged to continue to offer excellent works to the public; furthermore, the works of Handel, Homilius, Agricola, Rolle, among many others would become more generally known.

[12]To be sure, Graun's style of composing would be alien to the fiery genius of Hasse, for when Hasse has understood the real substance of a plot, having read the scene many times and having begun unconsciously to sing it, then inspiration whispers the notes to him; the flow of his thoughts is then too strong to be halted by the necessity of adding the harmony bar by bar, line by line.

inexhaustible energies to it, sacrificing everything for it in so far as possible without casting aside good taste and correct harmony. Furthermore, the conditions under which they lived must also be taken into account so as not to be unfair to Graun when comparing him with Hasse. For even though both men are unquestionably geniuses, though different in that genius, nevertheless there are many circumstances working to Graun's disadvantage, and these must be taken into consideration with respect to his compositions for the theater, and I want to acquaint you with them as much as possible.

Hasse became famous in Italy almost with his very first works, and was soon highly thought of; this encouraged him no little bit. And how much his love for Signorina Faustine, his wife, then one of the best singers in Italy--how much that must have contributed! When he went to Dresden, he found the most glamorous court then existing, perhaps, in all of Europe. There he enjoyed great financial reward but even greater honor. He worked independently, bound by no one's taste or will; he wrote as he felt and as he wanted. He did not have to avoid writing difficult things for voices and orchestra, because he knew he could depend on both. At the same time he had the proud and uplifting pleasure of knowing that his works were performed in Italy and at most of the courts in Germany with the same approbation that they received in Dresden. Thus he composed for all his contemporaries rather than for a king.

Graun, by contrast, was less generally known, and wrote merely to suit the taste of his king. Whatever the King did not like was blotted out, even if it were the best piece in the opera. The King, in some ways too full of his own ideas and too monotonous in matters of taste, did not allow Graun the freedom and variety which are so very necessary in creating a pleasant three-hour-long entertainment and often quite essential for a lively performance. And the strangest thing was that the King was always willing to grant Hasse this freedom. As far as the

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[13]It is amazing to hear this venerable man speak about the theater. No other composer, I believe, has had as much experience as he, nor has anyone studied more the effect, nor with better results. And it is this which most distinguishes him from all other composers, and at which he is superior to all. Even his least significant works often have a greater effect than the best and most carefully composed works by others.

men and their orchestras were concerned, the real connoisseurs, who knew both, always gave preference to Dresden, under the famous Concertmeister Pisendel, no matter how good Berlin was. One thing that must have depressed Graun was that he saw Hasse's operas performed at his own King's court with great approval, even greater than for his own. And yet in many pieces he had to take care not to do the same thing that Hasse had done. If one further assumes a difference in the genius of the two great men beyond their circumstances, need anyone still ask why Hasse has more boldness and fire in expression?

But Hasse is also more diverse melodically. Once again there are circumstances which keep us from ascribing more power of imagination to Hasse than to Graun. Hasse went frequently to Italy, where he continually heard new works; from these he drew, like the clever bee from blossoms and flowers, the best juices, and from them he prepared, like the bee, a sweet delicacy which one may enjoy without inquiring which fields and flowers it comes from. If one looks closely at the operas, one finds whole sections, even similar sections, which Hasse incorporated into his operas, using them better than the original composers. Whenever he took note of one melody or another, he also noted, with great acuity, what was wrong with it; he then corrected it, used it perfectly well, thereby making it his own property. Graun was not so fortunate. Although he travelled but little, he did study the best works, but what a difference between hearing music and reading it! Especially with regard to the melody and even more with regard to the effect. Graun was able to train himself to be one of the greatest harmonists of our time, but in works for the theater this helps as much as it would landscape painter to understand architecture perfectly. True, it delights us to catch sight of a beautiful temple in the background, or to see a castle of an old German prince on the steep cliffs beneath which a rolling stream surges; but if the painter neglects the meadows and valleys, the hills and forest and sky, then we owe him little thanks for the beautiful buildings which make Nature look dark and dreary when they should only serve as a contrast to smiling Nature.

To this may be added another circumstance. No one can accuse Graun of neglecting secondary roles; painters also place secondary figures in the shade so that the main figure stands out all the more. But permit me one question: Is that any reason why the secondary characters must all look alike?

Nevertheless, Hasse must be praised for writing pleasing melody and for giving variety to the minor figures, and

moreover, with almost inexhaustible richness in every aria. Nobility and the sublime are always retained for his main characters. The result is that Hasse's listener remains constantly alert, always finds some new pleasure, and does not know how the hours passed so quickly. With Graun on the other hand, the so-called amateur who has no knowledge of harmony--but if you do know harmony, then Graun is your man--this amateur often complains of boredom, and will say, "I've heard this opera before," even if it is being performed for the first time. Take the score of any opera by Hasse you will, compare it with one by Graun, and you will be convinced of the truth of these observations. While you have the scores in your hands, look at the accompaniment of the voices in each. In style they are almost alike, but note Hasse's cleverness in one particular spot. The two violins play in unison and do so from the beginning. Why? So that the theme can be impressed on the listener's mind all the better. The bass plays relatively slower so that the upper voices may be clearly heard. "Well, now, the viola will probably fill it out enough to make a compact little three-part movement." Indeed, but you see, it plays a few notes now and again which are not contained in the upper voice or the lower voice; otherwise it plays with the bass. "Well, that must sound pretty thin." Do you think so? Don't you know that the composer for the theater is, in such cases, just like a scenery painter who has to paint everything in broad strokes, so that from a distance, where the spectator perceives it, it will appear to be that which it is supposed to be?

Now examine an aria by Graun. What a piece of workmanship! How beautifully the voices imitate each other! That section you liked so much in the ritornello is now taken by the voices in three-part imitation. It is a joy to hear them quarreling so, but we have overlooked the singer entirely! "Don't you understand that he's annoyed that the other parts have more to do than he has, that they're putting him in the shade, that no one's listening to him?" How did that song go? Don't you remember it? No, I was all confused, it was unclear.

This is a fitting point for the story of the two Greek sculptors who were asked to produce a goddess to be placed at a considerable height in the temple. And so they did. The two statues were brought before the people and no sooner were the covers removed than the people rushed to one of the statues and cried: That is beauty! That is art! How much labor was expended on this one! But that one over there, fie on it with

its distorted face! What a high forehead it has! And that nose and all that space between the nose and the mouth. Whoever saw a goddess with a face like that! The cleverer artist made no reply, but demanded that both statues be placed in position. His was first put aloft. As it got further and further from the ground, it seemed to undergo a transformation. The people marvelled and sounded bewildered, but when the statue had reached the heights, they fell silent and stood there as if fixed, dazzled by its beauty. Meanwhile the other statue is placed in its position; it too is transformed, since no one recognizes it anymore. Its features are confused and indistinct. To be sure, the harmony of the larger parts can still be seen, but the expressivity, the soul which once seemed to dwell in the face, is now lost. The artist realizes his error and disappears from sight, while the other one is surrounded in triumph by the people and crowned with praise and honor which will accompany him to the end of his life.

I have attempted--in so far as the brevity of time and my meager knowledge allowed--to make a comparison of Hasse and Graun in their theatrical works. Still you do not know these two men, our Graun especially, in full. You have seen how circumstances were against him. The lack of opportunity to hear different kinds of music (from which alone one can learn about effect), constraint from the King, resulting in a lack of enthusiasm for the theater, insufficient pay and respect for his services--all these and other private matters played their necessary part in allowing Hasse, who encountered no obstacles, to surpass him in this area. Let us leave the theater now and hear these two men in church, where nothing stands in Graun's way; rather, his great musical erudition works there to his advantage. It is here that one sees Graun in his true greatness. Anyone who does not profoundly respect him in the area of church music is ignorant, insensitive, and partisan. However, I have perhaps already imposed on your patience for today, and so I shall save this abundant material for another letter. Moreover, I hope to hear the masterpiece of Graun's spirit within a few days. Being thus inspired, perhaps I will be supplied by him with the words with which to sing his praise. I, who am otherwise too different from him in spirit, would not presume to pass judgment on him, had not Nature endowed me with sensitivity and had not good fortune led me to someone who corrected that sensitivity, thus filling my whole soul with love, respect and gratitude for him.

SECOND LETTER.

To Mr. Sch*** Kr [a title?]. in K[--].

Berlin.

I have just returned from one of the local "amateur concerts" where I heard Graun's masterpiece *Der Tod Jesu* very well performed in many respects. Before I hazard a comparison between Graun and Hasse as I promised, I want to say a few words about the concert and today's performance which provide me with the opportunity for a few practical applications.

These concerts are weekly and are organized by Mr. Ernst Benda, son of the meritorious Mr. Joseph Benda, and by Mr. Bachmann, likewise a member o the Royal Orchestra, for the pleasure of amateur musicians and at the same time, to give them cause to practice. Mr. Nikolai, who has good taste and a fine understanding of music, has taken great pains to see that they do not cease to improve. To be sure, in a concert in which amateurs are allowed to play and in which the majority of the performers are amateurs one does not find that perfect order and smoothness which can be expected only from a well-rehearsed ensemble. However, when larger works are performed, several rehearsals are usually held, and in such cases no honest and impartial critic could deny them his approval. It is truly remarkable that so heterogeneous a group could play with the high degree of unanimity and precision that one really finds there. The performance of Graun's passion was certain proof of this. With the exception of one aria in which the tempo was wrong, they performed so well that Graun himself, had he been present, might have been satisfied with it .

I do not point out their mistakes just to have something to criticize, for believe me, it is one of my greatest pleasures in life to see or hear something perfect, and it never stirs me to envy, but rather to imitation. Likewise, you may well believe that I am happy to be silent about the mistakes of my fellow men, if I see that calling them to attention will serve no purpose. That is the case here, because it leads me to a few remarks about their understanding of the proper tempo of each individual section.

Anyone who intended to direct such a musical organization would have to know the following: the first thing--properly

speaking, a prerequisite--is proper sensitivity [*Gefühl*]. Whoever does not have it should have nothing to do with directing. Of course there are varying degrees of proper sensitivity, and it would be asking too much if only those persons with the never-failing sensitivity and understanding of a Pisendel or a Springer[14] were to be entrusted with that office; for Nature has endowed only a few so richly. Perhaps it is possible to begin with a deficient sensitivity and by great effort to build it up and to make it more perfect, but the certainty which comes from a totally convincing intuition [Gefühl] and which enables one to say, "This is how it must be!"--this probably cannot be taught. To have certainty of this magnitude even the most correct and most acute sensitivity is not in itself sufficient, for experience and thoughtful consideration are also necessary.

In such cases the conductor will have to think about the following things: first, he must regard the nature of the piece that he is to conduct, whether it be church music, theater, concert or dance music. Then he tries to discern the character of the entire work, whether it is a passion or a joyful song of the shepherds at the manger in Bethlehem, and whether the plot is a sad or a happy one. In the case of concerted music he will have to pay especial attention to the character of the composer: thus he will have to devote far more attention to the seminal works of someone such as C. P. E. Bach than to more ordinary pieces by others. In dance music he observes, as he did with the other forms, whether it is serious or gay, but at the same time he must not lose sight of the dancer whom he is to lead and whom he must at the same time follow, as the kind of dance or even the pantomime of the person acting or dancing requires.

The third thing which must be observed is the meaning of each individual section. Here the solo voice of the first violin will not be enough for him; rather, he will have to rely on the score, especially with vocal works. He will first read the words, but they will not be the decisive factor; rather, we will look for the relationship of the particular aria to the work as a whole so that he can find the way the composer understood the words when setting them. Once he understands how the composer gave expression to the words, and if his sensitivity to music is correct, then the first tempo he seizes upon is sure to be right.

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[14]He was a conductor in Petersburg for a long time.

Yet before he settles on this interpretation, there remains one other thing to investigate: whether the composer has created difficulties for the singer or instrumentalist which will prohibit the piece from being performed at the appropriate tempo. If he finds this to be the case, the composer--as punishment for not better studying voice and instrumentation--will have to be content to hear his piece played at a different tempo than he had originally conceived it, and to see that the effect of the piece is thereby lost. This last observance is extremely necessary, not just in vocal matters, but also with instrumental music, and even if the conductor can read everything from the upper line, he must, for the above-mentioned reason, still examine the other lines carefully. From this it becomes clear that the conductor's (or Concertmeister as he is called at court) understanding of instruments is almost as important as the composer's (Capellmeister's). And from this point one can see how dangerous it is to a composer's reputation when works that were written for a particular orchestra or musical association are performed in other places by less proficient people. Nevertheless, this is inevitable and necessary for the spread of their fame. Should not one then advise all composers to take pains that their works by easy, especially with regard to the accompanying instruments? Even with the very best orchestras the performance would thereby be enhanced, for even if they are capable of playing the prescribed difficulties, one still cannot depend upon it as a certainty. And if one could count of them, still the players' anxiety and their toil have an unpleasant effect on the listener. The latter--assuming he is a good listener--feels all the players' tension, often without being conscious of it. He becomes aware of it only after the difficulties have been surmounted, as he then feels a certain relaxation. I admit that this is a boon to the instrumentalist who wants to perform in public and whose purpose it is to arouse our admiration; in his case perhaps the top line should be more flamboyant, but in the case of the accompanying parts which might spoil the effect the principal voice is supposed to achieve, there is no excuse for the composer; the fault is all his and the kindest thing that can be said of him is this: this man lacks experience.

But now to return to the conductor. Over and beyond the considerations discussed above, the conductor has to observe certain practical details which are very important. I shall list a few of these. First, he must be able to rely on his instrument: he must be certain that it surpasses the others in

power. This in itself is still not sufficient to allow it to be heard through the sound of eighteen other violins and as many other instruments again; rather, his arm must be worth more than all the others, that is, along with a clear and vigorous execution he must learn all the advantages that are in his instrument and in himself, by which he can strengthen his sound and make it as penetrating as possible. In order to make the tempo of the piece very clear and visible to the other players, from the start Pisendel had the habit of indicating the tempo with the head and neck of his violin while playing the first few measures of the piece. If there were four beats to a measure, he moved the violin down once, then up, then sideways, then up. If there were three beats to a measure, then he motioned once downwards, then sideways, then up again. If he wanted to restrain the orchestra in the middle of a piece, then he only bowed the first notes of the particular measure so as to give them all the more power and emphasis, and then he let up, etc. The attentive conductor must constantly be watching for such favorable opportunities and often enough these advantages will present themselves, if only he keeps his eyes open.

I'll get back to my letter after this rather lengthy discourse. I must be allowed to digress, since such little essays were the chief reason for publishing my letters, the historical part being merely the external occasion. Perhaps these opinions will also be of some amusement to the reader.

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The real glory of today's performance was the singing of Mlle. Benda of Potsdam, a daughter of the admirable Concert-meister Benda. I have often heard this music performed and have helped perform it myself, but never have I heard it sung with such careful deliberation, with so much sensitivity and with such expressivity. One could tell from her singing how very much she liked the piece which had drawn her hither from Potsdam. I have to tell you one small feature of the performance. The words which form the end of the third recitative where it is said of Peter, "He wept bitterly" (*Er weinet bitterlich*) were expressed very beautifully by Graun. This he did by extending the second syllable, which has a beautiful, expressive harmony, for the length of an entire measure and within that he repeated the note in different ways; for this she used the so-called tempo rubato, i.e., she gave the

note a strong accent which it really was not supposed to have; the result was a genuinely anxious gulp or sob. Try it yourself. Give especially strong emphasis to the second, fifth, seventh and tenth notes of this measure, and let the others recede in contrast, and you will see what an unusual effect it has.

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I have always been irritated by the use of tempo rubato in singing if it is not done cautiously and with calculation; for as soon as the poetry suffers from it, as soon as the short syllable is made long thereby, and vice versa … . Or when a song which is flowing along gently is thereby disturbed in a childish manner and distorted, who then would not be perturbed? But how many people there are who still find pleasure in it! Some people are not pleased by anything which smacks of the familiar and the understandable. They want everything to be new or even half in-comprehensible. If they don't even know what they have heard, then they admire the singer and say, "That was unusual"--which they immediately follow with "That was beautiful." For such people any shifting of accent, wherever and whenever, would be suitable. The sensitive and knowledgeable listener will not be pleased until he hears it as well done as Mlle. Benda performed it.

From this one could almost make a rule that the singer may only use it on a stressed syllable. The instrumentalist, however, has more liberty, or rather takes more liberty. Nevertheless, since now his intention is more to arouse our admiration than to move us, he leaves the heart and the passions to the singer and himself only satisfies the ear. What a great pity this is! For almost all the instruments we already have the most exemplary players, and they teach us to give spirit and expression to an instrument as well. This appetite for novelty and the bizarre leads many astray and makes charlatans of those who actually had the capability of becoming masters of their art.

With singers the case is entirely different, thank heaven, and one can usually expect that they will not easily go astray. Their art is too closely related to Nature, and if a singer has sensitive and correct feeling, then Nature's promptings will not be drowned out and he will not miss the expression clearly indicated. How sincerely we poor Germans ought to hope that the patriotic efforts of the meritorious Mr. Hiller might thrive and that his plans for a well-ordered school of voice might succeed.

When travelling through Germany, one cannot help but feel resentment and sorrow at finding the most beautiful voices in almost every locality, and all of them without the slightest degree of instruction. One's resentment is only increased when one finds a young genius who has received from Nature all that he needs for singing, only to have this gift suppressed or even ruined at the hands of an ignorant and barbarous teacher.

Picture, if you will, S*** with his violin in his arms trying to teach his adorable little daughter, whose natural voice brought soothing joy to the hearts of the audience. He played the highest notes on the violin and forced her to imitate them, though good taste tells us that they are little suited to the violin and even less so to the voice. After he played she then had to equal them or rather squeal them, just so that there would be something unusual about her later. He kept her at it until her voice was exhausted and had sustained permanent damage. This poor child is now ruined, though a wise instructor could have made a great singer of her. She lacks nothing in sensitivity and understanding and could have been one of the greatest singers of our day, had not ignorance and folly ruined the voice with which Nature had so kindly endowed her.

It were all to our benefit if the laudable efforts of Mr. Hiller are supported and achieve their purpose. And to his benefit also, for thereby he will make a name for himself which will be remembered by posterity with respect and gratitude, and in doing so he is being of service to his contemporaries, their children and grandchildren--and to God himself. For how much our church services suffer from the discordant singing of the people! If good, pure singing is to become more common, it will, like reading and writing, have to become the responsibility of the elementary schools. Then we could begin to sing God's praise with purer voices. And if our voices cannot penetrate to the throne of the Almighty, then the Lord, who sees into the heart of man, will at least find that many a heart, being less distracted, is meditating more on Him. The terrible cacophony, which now prevails in our public singing and which is unbearable to a discerning ear despite all pains and patience, certainly disturbs the devotions of many among us.

Here--I must insert a remark which will gradually lead me to the main purpose of this letter. I suspect that in his school of voice Mr. Hiller will distinguish between church music and theater music, and will teach them in different classes. For how different church music is from theater music!--And how often even the Italians sin against the former!--The

ornamentation which is so beautiful in the theater is out of place in church. It interferes with our devotions by causing pleasure and often brings back memories which are improper in such a holy place. Whoever has not noticed this amongst the majority of our organists is surely lacking in true reverence--or his ear is bad.

I cannot resist recounting here an incident, perfectly suited for this topic, which happened to me in Herrnhut, the seat of true, pious reverence. A respected old man of the Brotherhood took me into their prayer hall (*Bethaus*) to attend their worship-service. The noblest simplicity of this building, the perfect quiet of the listening congregation (on whose faces one could see the omnipresence God, their love for Him and that peace which comes to our bodies only when our souls are toiling)--all these things, plus the simplest music and the most unaffected singing, imbued in me a certain reverential and blissful feeling which I have never felt in any of our ordinary churches. And yet my reverence did not equal theirs, for I had not noticed something that my guide pointed out as we were leaving. Perhaps, too, my ear was at fault, not being as used to perfect simplicity as theirs. In short, as we were leaving the prayer hall, which they aptly call the "common hall" (*Gemeinsaal*), we met the organist who was likewise a member of the Brotherhood. My guide stopped him and spoke to him as follows: "My Brother, in a certain song today thou didst disturb my devotions by a certain colorful run of notes; it reminded me of a clown I saw many years ago in the theater in Venice who used just such music for one of his acrobatic tricks. This necessarily distracted my thoughts for a few moments and led me away from Him who fills my entire soul. Do this no more, but rather give support to our reverence and rejoice that in thy hands thou hast the means to do so."

And you, gentlemen of the organist's calling, who are so happy to demonstrate the velocity of your hands, feet and wit, you ought to be ashamed that you have not only neglected the path to reverence, but also have sought with all your powers to lead the opposite way. Change the way you play. Prepare yourselves for your prelude with the same reverence of a preacher preparing his sermon. Then play the hymns as purely and cleanly and as free from vain ornamentation as the preacher reads the prescribed gospel. To awaken holy awe and devotion in the listener you have the advantage of a knowledge of harmony which the man at Herrnhut did not have; therefore, it was only through melody that he was able to imbue his listeners with

gentle and pleasant feelings. But you, who by the power of harmony can lift our souls to the throne of God and bring them down humbly to the dust again, use this power over our hearts, which we must give you. Prepare our hearts for the words of the teacher, and afterwards engrave them more deeply on our hearts.

The singer may also share in this. When a singer in church wants us to admire the agility of his throat, then we are necessarily distracted thereby from God, whose presence ought to fill all our souls, especially in this holy place. Is this not applicable to the composer as well? Certainly as much as it concerns the other two. This leads me now to the actual purpose of this letter, from which the various things that I have encountered along the way have so far diverted me. I had determined, however, to give free rein to my thoughts and to place no fetters on my spirit except those which morality and religion convince me are necessary.

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Thus the composer of church music is very different from the composer for the stage.[15] Inventiveness and wealth of pleasing and delightful themes are of great merit in the theater composer, but they can become a fault in the church musician. Likewise, too much gaiety, a too fiery imagination, and finally, exaggerated audacity and boldness of thought can often bring about things which in the theater would deserve our applause but which in church, because they are out of place, are completely incorrect. Among these errors are rapid change of tempo and short divisions of the beat within the measure. On the other hand, a thorough knowledge of harmony, the too frequent use of which is wrong in the theater, is one of the great merits of the composer of sacred music, just as the purest, most unaffected song penetrates our heart without engaging our wit, or pleasantly tickling our ear, or demanding our amazement; there it arouses the feelings which the poet has given the composer to express. From time to time the church musician too will have occasion to make use of his heated power of imagination and

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[15]I mean here only the composer of serious works for the theater. The greater difference between the composer for the comic theater and the church musician is obvious to everyone and needs no comparison.

boldness of thought, but let him use them with extreme care, never for a moment losing sight of the holy place for which he is writing. For this a very proper sense of music and a refined good taste are demanded.

The following characteristics are things necessary for a perfect composer of church music (assuming genius and zeal for his art as prerequisites): 1) a thorough knowledge of harmony and of composition in general; 2) a good, natural and touching sense of melody; 3) an extremely accurate feel for music; 4) correct and refined taste.

Thus Graun, who possessed these qualities wholly, could hardly be other than the perfect church musician that he is. He surpasses all those who have preceded him, for they had only some of those qualities. My sentiments do not allow me to except even the great Handel, who will probably never be outdone as far as erudition and discernment (Scharfsinn) are concerned, although he did frequently want natural and soul-stirring tunefulness, no matter how moving some of his compositions may be. He, too, often displayed his cleverness in church--a thing which good taste and proper sentiments could never condone.

With Graun, however, keen-sighted Envy can search until the midnight oil reddens his eyes, but will certainly find no food for his calumniating tongue. The small imperfections which remain only prove the humanity of the work, and Envy does not dare point out these to the reasonable world, for the world also sees and judges and would damn and despise him for it. Examine Graun's recitatives and note how suitable and moving they are. Then turn to the arias and note first the choice of the subject, the wisdom of them, the churchly character of them all. Then notice how beautifully they are carried out, how the whole plan was carefully conceived and is not accidental--it all derives from the subject. And the expression of the words and the feeling in them! Note how he attends to every duty of the exemplary composer, how he illuminates the thoughts of the poetry from all aspects. Notice how every repetition serves to engrave the text more deeply on us and that it never becomes excessive. And finally, the whole song and almost every single section and phrase are excellently chosen and suitably placed.

Then look at his duets, and you will certainly see the best and most assiduous workmanship united with the most beautiful and most touching melody. And how beautifully planned the inversions and imitations are, without the slightest injury to the melody. Finally, examine his choruses and tutti. There you will not only find the purest harmony and the most thorough

craftsmanship and application of his talents which evokes our admiration, but you will also see that even though in them pleasantness and clarity reign, yet no single voice ever puts another in the shade and each part could be sung.

Must one not then be filled with perfect respect and love for this immortal composer and for his eternal works? To these great merits I yet must add that in all his pieces he has ever been so completely characteristic of and suited to the church, that it would be entirely impossible to perform one aria or a section of his church music on the stage.

Now look through Hasse's sacred compositions and you will also find much expression, great traits of genius, beautiful melody, and at times evidence of hard work. But that which is truly characteristic of sacred music--the great knowledge of harmony which one finds everywhere in Graun--is often missing. You will notice many arias which could be appropriately set on the stage and choruses which produce an effect with little effort, but seldom an effect suited for the church. They do not imbue our souls with the same reverence and devotion that Graun's do. Who is not moved to the depths of his heart, not humbled to the dust at the chorus "*Hier liegen wir gerührte Sünder*"?[16]

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The little comparison of Graun and Hasse which I have ventured here should only serve as a cue to the thinking reader for his own investigation, since a decisive judgement in the case of two such great men can never be approached prudently enough. At the same time I believe that I can say on the basis of my feelings and awareness that Hasse, as a man of much experience and *savoir vivre* and of a fiery and bold temperament, is a better composer for the theater than Graun. The great effect that Hasse's operas have on everyone, and their universal approval permits the conclusion which I have drawn from my investigations. Graun, on the other hand, as a man of great insight and scholarship in harmony, of gentle emotions and solid

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[16]Necessity compels me here to note that in performance, the expressivity of this piece often suffers greatly by playing the notes in the accompaniment staccato--as if there were a pause after each one--and this is usually how it is played.

taste, seems greater in sacred music than Hasse; this, too, is confirmed by experience. In various places I have been present at performances of sacred music by Handel, Hasse, and Graun, and I found, without exception, that the latter had the most general and greatest effect. In such matters the voice of the people is very important to me: it often has led me away from an assumed opinion (which I had been taught by biased men who nonetheless had sufficient knowledge to create a reputation for themselves) to a second, more careful consideration. The reader should take a look at the works of these great men, now that he has been given a pointer.

But just to show the reader that one must not be blindly enthusiastic even for the works of the greatest masters, and that one must rather try to notice everything about them, I will here set down my remarks on the performance of Graun's passion, concerning various things which that great man seems to have neglected. This cannot offend even the greatest artist if one does not lose sight of the great respect which he deserves. To be sure, incautious, conceited and even jealous critics often do decry the little faults of great men (which is only the penalty they pay for their humanity) with a tone which should only be used to castigate the ignorant and inexperienced person who vainly tries to gain the world's attention. Great men then necessarily grow resentful and the utility of criticism is lost. The bungler enjoys a fate similar to that of the truly learned man and no criticism is then able to improve him.

To show the young composer how careful one must be, even when one really is knowledgeable, and what a difficult job it is to compose for the voice, and especially to show how necessary it is to have a thorough knowledge of poetry--this alone moves me to point out the little imperfections of this masterpiece. Against the great beauties of the piece they hardly count as much as a speck of dust in a crystal-clear spring.

In general the length and brevity of the syllables should be expressed by the height and depth of tone as well as by the upward or downward beat. This, I find, is often neglected by Graun as it is in the recitatives of so many other masters. In the first recitative the instrumental intermezzo which follows the words "*so verlassen trauren*" ["thus abandoned to mourn"] seems to me to be more comforting than mournful, because in slow movements the key of E-flat major seems to me to have a comforting character, just as in fast movements it seems glorious. That every key, especially among instruments, has its own character is probably indisputable, is it not? At least I

can indicate that is my own true feeling about the matter. The preceding chorale and the tutti and the beginning of the recitative had imbued me with a sense of sadness, and with this intermezzo I felt comforted.

In the first aria, right in the first line, the accent is on the word des when it should be given to the next word *Todes* [death]. In the second recitative the question "*auch du bist nicht mehr wach*?" [couldst thou watch no longer?] was not expressed; one could treat it as a lament, except that the poet and even the composer indicated in the text that it was a question. In the aria which follows, the accent again lies on the first word ein and not on *Gebet* [prayer] where it should be; one can excuse it because the poet stresses the word ein as well. In the third recitative, line one, the emphasis is on the word bey (in the) when it should be on *Schein* (light). In this particular recitative I note an oversight with respect to the roles: Jesus sings the words "*sucht ihr mich, so lasset meine Freunde gehen*" (if 'tis me ye seek, let my friends go free) with the same notes that Peter sings later "*ich kenne dies Menschen nicht*" (I do not know this man). Peter's fear is very beautifully expressed in the shortening and repetition of the words.

In the third aria of the second part the first syllable of the third line is on the downbeat when it really should be on the anacrusis. I well understand that Graun was distracted by the melody but the declamation would gain more than the melody would lose if the three syllables "*hebet die*" (lift ye up) were put in the fourth measure and two notes were given to the next syllable. Otherwise, does anyone not feel how excellent the expression is in this aria in general and particularly the words "*dem Frevler an das Herz*" (to the heart of the sinner)? In the fourth aria Graun has allowed himself to be twice (once by the theme, once by the word "*strahlen*" [gleam]) diverted from the usual practice of allowing the words to be sung plainly the first time in an aria so that the listener can immediately comprehend the contents of the aria. In the second division of the first part, the accent is again placed on *ein* when it should be on "*Berg Gottes*."--I must also add here that in performance the tempo of this aria is always taken too fast, causing it to lose its true character. In the second part of this aria I find a false accent on the word "*zersplittern*" ("burst asunder"); it should be on the second syllable, but is on the first. In the following masterful tutti one is amazed that Graun chose such an ordinary theme; nor does it fit the words: the syllable "*ein*" is

high, the next one low, while the accent really should lie on "*Vorbild*" ("paragon").

In the following recitative, line three, the syllable "*von*" is short and should be long, because it reads "*von dir*" and not "von dir". **hand note** How difficult it is for me to look for things other than beauty in such excellent works! Anyone who wants to may continue the search, I cannot! I hope that no one will think it my opinion that Graun did this out of ignorance: far be it from me to think so little of him. No, even the greatest man often overlooks something in his own works that he would certainly notice in works by others. Happy he, who always sees his own works not with his own eyes alone, but with the eyes of a friend as well. O blessed friendship! Thou art not only necessary to our lives' felicity, but the works of our spirits also depend upon thee! My continuous and only wish then be this: to have a friend always at my side whose voice guides me and who pours joy and contentment at once on my soul.

THIRD LETTER.

To Lieutenant v[on] Sch[erwansky] in M[--].

Berlin.

You ask to hear my opinion of Burney's musical journey. I was happy to conceal it, for you know what bouts of enthusiasm I break into upon espying a masterpiece or a merely good or handsome work; you know that I am the first to think as highly of something as one decently may, and that I am happy to withhold my judgement of an unsuccessful or bad work, and that I never express it of my own accord. But as soon as someone asks me, then I say it with perfect propriety and ingenuousness: then neither fear nor cunning can stop me. And even if Mr. Burney were not merely a doctor of music, but were even a man holding the frightful shears of the anti-Tissot doctors who threatened to sever my rather tightly-strung life-lines, I would still speak my mind. And even if he cites me as the only one to take exception to the audacious judgement which he presumes to make on our whole nation, still I say outright: Mr. Burney is a poor observer of music. And if he wants proof of it, let him read this letter.

I shall not here take up all the individual mistakes and erroneous notions which fill his entire book because I know that the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* is preparing a thorough criticism which will touch upon all, or at least most instances. As far as the character and person of the man are concerned and his peculiar procedure, which one absolutely must understand in order to comprehend how a man of some real understanding could be capable of such frequent inconsistencies--all of this can be said better and more freely in a friendly letter than in a journal whose editor is to be praised for exercising the greatest care and discretion to avoid even the appearance of bias and precipitous ardor.

If I were asked what sort of man ought to undertake such a musical journey for his own advantage and that of others, then I would say that it would have to be a man endowed by Nature with fine and true feelings and a strong faculty of discernment; a man with a thorough knowledge of music and experience in composition; a man who by studying and reading the works of the best masters and also different sorts of works had developed a

mature and definite taste; who, further, has sided with no one and is partial to nothing exclusively, but travels in order to hear--for in music this is diametrically opposed to looking at it--to hear what he afterwards will decide is best; and further, a man who during the journey constantly kept his purpose in view and sacrificed everything to it; finally, a man who has the gift of communicating his experiences to others in a reasoned, definite, clear and pleasing fashion.

Let us now--without anticipating the final assessment--compare Mr. Burney item for item with this list. The first quality was a fine and true sense of music. Mr. B[urney] seems to possess this from Nature to some degree, but he lacks the diligence and study necessary to correct it and make it reliable.

Discernment. I know that it will at first seem quite strange to you when I deny that he has any at all, since there are so many discerning opinions in his book. Will you still be amazed when I tell you that most of the time Mr. B[urney] did not himself form an opinion, but that good and bad opinions flowed from the mouths of others through Mr. B[urney's] pen?--That you may believe. He queried everyone who crossed his path and sought out his opinion; no matter whether that person was partial, or ignorant, or impertinent, Mr. Burney wrote down what he said. A few hours later someone else of a different school came along, was questioned, and what he said was also written down. If he had asked them about the same thing, he would have gotten exactly opposite answers; indeed, he often did ask them about the same thing and wrote down both answers--and what once had been written down had to be printed. This explains the manifest contradictions of his book. I have followed his same itinerary on foot, and for each pronouncement he made, I could name you the man to whom the opinion belongs--if I wanted to name them all here.

Mr. B[urney] has a crucial flaw as an observer: he did not quickly see through the people he met and then pick that person who was best suited to be his guide and adviser. No, he consorted with everyone, the good and the bad, and trusted them so much, or, more likely, he loved himself so little that he added his own name to their opinions. The cause was that he was too little the Englishman. Frenchmen and Italians had ruined him. How much time Mr. B[urney] lost with the wrong people, and how many errors he taught his people and ours can be seen on almost every page.

By "wrong people" I mean not only those who are ignorant of

their art, but also those who are of bad moral character, even if in their art they are the most able. For it is my opinion that one should pay no attention to bad, inexperienced artists or learned men; this is punishment enough for them. On the other hand, one must try to become acquainted with good composers or writers from their works, or in the case of a great virtuoso, to hear him as often as possible: but I do not seek personal intercourse until I know that person is of good character, especially one without envy and bias towards other able people. My intention in such an acquaintanceship is--other than the enjoyment of the pleasantries of friendly association--to experience and to learn from that knowledgeable man things about which I myself have no knowledge or incomplete knowledge. But if he forms his opinions prejudicially, then I shall be given errors for truths. And how often this led Mr. Burney to false reports! A travelling observer needs discernment,[17] not only for the judgement of works of art, but also for the choice of his acquaintances, who are quite necessary to direct and guide him around an unfamiliar place, especially when one spends as little time in a place as Mr. Burney usually did. For then you can neither test the people nor get to know them by their actions; and if you cannot read their souls, then you will have to be content to be deceived from all sides. Sad it is, however, that Mr. B[urney's] eyes deceived not only him, but also that through him, a large portion of the public will also be deceived. For just as he was not able to see the soul in the eyes of the man standing before him, so too the majority of readers will hardly be able to recognize the imprint of the man's soul in his book; yet if one is capable of looking at it, this imprint of the soul is therein so exactly copied, that one can recognize the whole man from it. But to give these readers some hints and to set them on the right course for further investigations, I am making public this letter, and I neither fear nor intend to change the slightest thing.

The third necessary characteristic of an observer of music is a thorough knowledge of art. This, too, Mr. Burney lacks. He has acquired some practical knowledge of music, partly by reading and playing and partly by hearing different kinds of music, but he does not have a theoretical knowledge of it. This can be seen in all the pronouncements that he himself makes, as

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[17]This might be better labelled keenness of vision [*Scharfsichtigkeit*].

well as in the part he plays in the conversations. He always touches only the surface of a matter, as amateurs usually do: he never bothers with thorough investigations of harmony; and if he once does say anything about it, then it is so indefinite and conditional that he always leaves a loophole for himself.

He also lacks experience in composition. His pieces, of which he has left some examples in Vienna, Berlin, and other places, are quite mediocre, if not juvenile. To judge by them one would have to deny him almost any trace of genius: their dominant characteristics are dullness and vagueness and one would never guess from looking at them that the man who wrote them is seen as, or rather has set himself up as the judge of whole nations.

Mr. B[urney] has not enough patience to read industriously and to study with effort the works of the best masters and also varied kinds of works. Thus how was it supposed to be possible for him to possess a definitive, firm taste, since that is almost impossible without a thorough knowledge of harmony? For one is so often deceived by appearances, by externals if one is not capable of judging according to principles the things one sees and hears.

That Mr. B[urney] willfully took sides cannot be laid to his account. His judgements and opinions always depend on his mood, often with the result that he praises what he ought to find fault with and vice versa, and often praises and finds fault with a thing, but at different times. As far as Berlin was concerned, he was predisposed against it, and this opinion--to his great shame--he sought neither to refute nor to confirm. Moreover, he even neglected suggestions that were made towards refuting his ideas and made himself unworthy of them. I must be more expansive on this topic.

In Berlin, described in Mr. Burney's own journal along with conclusions about the orchestra and composers there, he heard nothing but a student concert at the house of the Royal Chamber-Musician, Mr. Rohn. This able man had instituted the concert just so that his students, most of whom are not very good, could practice ripieno playing. Mr. Riedt, who otherwise no longer plays, but occupies himself entirely with theory and scholarship, supports him in this by playing in a concert now and again. The real purpose of the concert may very well have been achieved, but it is not the thing with which to give a friend the right idea of musical life in Berlin. How foolhardy it would be to give someone an idea the make-up of an army by taking him to the place where the most recent recruits were

being trained!

But, says Mr. B[urney], "I did hear the Royal Chamber music in Potsdam." From that he can judge neither the music of Berlin nor its orchestra. All he heard there were three flute concerti by Quantz, and it may very well be that they were some 20 years old. Then he heard six virtuosi from the Capelle, who compliantly accompanied the concerti, to whom he would do great injury were he to weigh their merits on the basis of that performance. He cannot even say anything about Quantz on the basis of that performance and he learned just as much about the orchestra as he would have learned about a great sea captain whom he saw sailing a small craft up a narrow river against the wind. Would he know from that how, in a tumult of the elements or in a great battle at sea, that captain would defy and master the storm and the waves?

Furthermore, Mr. Burney had the opportunity of attending a concert in Berlin where the ablest men were going to perform compositions from Berlin in the Berlin style. The evening was arranged and Mr. B[urney] was expected, but he was detained by a soupé. Then he departs without having heard anything that would give him any right to judge. Afterwards he criticizes music in Berlin very boldly, jotting down everything that ignorant and prejudiced men tell him, for he had far too little contact with men who told him things good and true--these can also be found in his account, but he saw too little of those persons who would have been able to instruct him properly. No, to those reports he adds his own observations about corpulence and the size of teeth, and the result he achieves would embarrass any honorable man to repeat.

In his criticism of composition in Berlin, which he claims to have seen, Mr. B[urney] shows not only how different hearing is from seeing in musical matters, but also--when he does actually see something--how different a hurried viewing is from attentive listening. The point I make here is that a diligent observer of music must always have his goal in view and must sacrifice everything for this. Here everything testifies against Mr. B[urney]. Banquets, ladies of the court, feasts, night watchman, banquets, restaurants, schoolboys, banquets, tower steeples, municipal and village musicians. Is there anything not described in his journal? And what gets more notice than meals and banquets! I am completely convinced that two meals a day are certainly necessary to make it through this life. But whether one meal per year needs to be described in a musical diary is another question which, it seems to me, can

just as certainly answered. Even the frequent specifications of pipe organs--what use is that when one wishes to know only the history and character of great and meritorious men and their works?

I am very sorry that my judgement thus far has been so greatly to Mr. Burney's disadvantage; however, in respect of the last point, concerning style, I can give him my complete approval. Anyone who reads his book in the original will find that it is beautifully, elegantly, and passionately written. One can tell from the book how easily writing comes to him, and I know that it was quite easy for him to translate the reports, often crudely written by others, into his native tongue. One item in this regard (which really concerns his way of thinking more than his writing style) leads me to a point which I could not possibly omit. Patriotism rankles me, whenever I find it, and it makes me throw down the book. Here is someone's unconsidered opinion which Mr. Burney asserts at the beginning of the third volume in the article on Prague; he repeats it at the end of the book where he says: "If there is such a thing as innate genius, then Germany is certainly not the seat of it, even if one must admit that patient hard work and application are there at home." How in the world is it possible to speak so strongly against one's own feelings and be guilty thereby of a terrible contradiction! "I will not refute you, sir, but direct you to your own book. Pick it up. And when you come upon the name of Hasse, or Bach, or Gluck, do you not tremble like the weak atheist who, when leafing through holy writ, pales at the name of Him against Whom he sins? Did you not yourself admire the genius of our Keiser and Handel, of our Bachs and Grauns, or our Hasse and Gluck, of our Bendas and Quantz?[18] Indeed, sir, were you not rather prodigal in your dispensation of genius, as you travelled through Germany, since you accorded me that distinction from having seen a few pieces of mine which I now despise with all my heart? No, no, sir. Should you ever fall into our hands again, we would hold onto you for at least a few years, so that we could show you how we use patient hard work and application to mould young geniuses and at the same time make reasonable men of them who don't contradict themselves at every turn."

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[18]A great many others deserve to be included in this list and should not feel excluded by the absence of their names; for who could name all the worthy successors of those masters?

I could not better close this missive than by sending along a little epigram which a famous German poet[19] penned in my diary on the subject of Burney's travels.

Uns reich zu machen, viel der Pfunde zu verzehren,
Um derentwillen wir nicht eben Britten wären,
Kommt er geflogen, wie ein Pfeil;
Reist rüstig unter uns, hört Meister, lispelt Lehren,
Denkt, schreibet, tadelt, lobt, und alles in der Eil.

To make us rich, to throw away many a Pound,
He comes flying like an arrow.
Yet we would not be Britons, though his Pounds abound,
He travels briskly among us, hears all that's to be found
In the Streets; hears masters, mutters doctrines profound;
Thinks, writes, blames, praises--all in haste, never thorough.

[19]Mr. Gleim.

FOURTH LETTER.

To Mr. Kr*** B[ock] in Marienwerder.

Berlin.

Full of enthusiasm for Handel's harmony, I take pen in hand to tell you, my beloved friend, everything I felt on this happy evening. Had it been spent with you at my side, we could have communicated our feelings to each other, intensifying them by soulful glances and warm handclasps. My wants would then all be supplied, and there is no state of bliss for which I would exchange that condition. But how shall I tell you all that I experienced this happy evening?--You know my feelings and you also know that there are no words for the highest and most vivid feelings. And still I must tell you, must pour out my whole heart to you, a heart which needs relief, for it is so filled with high, holy delight that it can hardly contain itself, and my joy begins to verge on pain. Never, never have I felt the like! But never had I heard the magic tones of that conqueror of hearts; never had I heard how his powerful harmonies fill the souls of his audience with the fear of approaching thunder--harmonies which make limbs shudder in terror and the blood stand still. And again it was pure, heavenly harmonies that soothed their souls, and sweet, tender melody that poured peace and rapture into their hearts and filled their eyes with tears of sweetest and noblest joy. With the soul suffused with these blessed feelings, the lament of an anxious crowd of people pierces into the soul all the more deeply and fills it with torturous pain, and leaves it with such a sting that not even the jubilant, expansive song of triumph of the redeemed can banish it entirely. Thus this mighty man conquers the souls of his audience and understands how to fill them with every sentiment. Like the all-powerful song of that lofty singer who proclaims how the heavens celebrated the divine work of our salvation, so he also thrilled us through and through with shudders and superhuman feelings. But also, like the song of that gentle, heartrending singer who causes us to shed hot tears over the death of Abel and the original happy innocence of the human race, like him Handel too pours anguish and yearning into the heart and like him, pours guileless sweet delight into the heart as well. If he raises a triumphal song, then his exuberant song resounds in full choruses like the high and

sublime trumpets of victory of the singer of Frederick [the Great], his victories, and those of his generals. How my heart pounded as those new melodies streamed through my soul with inexpressible, never before felt feelings.

To be sure, I already knew of the greatness and depth of his spirit. My mind knew it, being taught merely by my eye, but my heart never much shared in this. For I saw his great works much as the sensitive explorer of great, multifaceted Nature sees a majestic stream by moonlight in the distance: his clear eye tells him of the great width of the stream; high, jutting cliffs inform him of the depth of it; both induce in him a quiet admiration. Next he approaches the stream and hears its frightful roar, for here wide cliffs inhibit its course and make it swell up and bellow with rage. The explorer hears it and is amazed; he walks now with more awe and horrible images form in his brain; his heart beats, he wants to escape, but cannot, his whole soul filled with terror, and he stands there as if planted, completely numbed by the mighty, thousand-voiced roar of the stream.

Finally he awakes from his stupor and flees, not knowing whither, along the green, shady banks of the stream. Now he imagines himself to be miles away from it, for he no longer hears the terrible roar. He looks around and finds himself still close to it, though it now flows along gently and quietly on a bed of gravel, teasing the banks and watering their flowers. Charmed by this rapid metamorphosis, and by the peaceful, lonesome and moving scene, he wanders along the gentle shore, his mind turned inward.

Gradually his heart begins to swell; cold chills run through his limbs. He awakes from the deep reverie wherein he roamed the more blessed fields far beyond the earth, and finds himself again at that first place of terror. But now his tender, deeply-moved soul is overpowered by the impetuous chorus of the raging waters, and he throws himself down, completely beside himself, and embraces in spirit his distant friend with heated feeling, who in some other latitude and clime, but just as lonely, often roams shady fields and yearns and sighs for the embraces of our lonely wanderer, whose happiness would be complete if he could walk the rough path of this life at his side. Yet even at a distance the friend remains the wanderer's greatest joy.

So you are to me, my beloved, though far from me, still you are my greatest joy. And so I missed you today in the rapture that I felt at Handel's harmonies, and wanted to share my fear,

my pleasure and my pain with you. True, our dear S*** was with me and that increased my pleasure, for I do esteem him and heartily love him; but I know that in our friendship there is an indescribable quality, an amazing sympathy--perhaps I could honor someone more than I do you, but to love him more were impossible! Every time I write to you I feel myself filled by most special feelings, but today, moved by Handel's harmonies, I was quite beside myself: my blood boiled in every vein, and I am in no condition to think about anything with calm deliberation. I shall put down my pen and shall not take apart the individual beauties of this great work until a later hour when I shall be less impassioned and more disposed to thought.

Only now do I see that in so many pages I did not even tell you that the piece I heard today was *Judas Maccabaeus*. It was performed in German, very well translated by Professor Eschenburg.

I cannot refrain from saying a few words about the translation or rather the setting done by this able man. You must know how difficult it is to translate a good piece of poetry to fit the music, so that with the translated verse the same varied repetitions can be made that are in the composer's original; if he has repeated three or five syllables of an eight-syllable line then the translated line must also allow these same syllables to be repeated and still retain the complete sense. Further, one must understand how difficult it is to make these words fit, not only as syllables, for they must also have the same meaning, the same exact emotional content, syllable for syllable in the most precise relationship. When you have comprehended it, you will perceive that the poet who is to undertake the laborious task and complete it as well as Mr. Eschenburg has done must not only know both languages precisely, but must also have a thorough knowledge of music. And this Mr. Eschenburg has; he is a fine and thorough connoisseur of music who has developed and honed his musical taste by reading and by hearing the works of our best masters. Even with all this knowledge of music and the most exact knowledge of both languages, that which so well fits the words and the sentiments of the original can still be bad verse: with all this anxious quibbling about words, if I may so express myself, the great difficulty, hardly to be conquered, is to put the grace, the vitality and harmony into the verses so that they may stand on their own as good poetry. And who does not admire in all such translations by Professor Eschenburg that poetry which is characterized by grace, vitality and harmony. I too have long

admired this in him, but my admiration was even increased by learning that this grace and harmony are not forced by a year of tedious work, but that they flow easily and naturally from his pen. Who should not now have the most perfect esteem for this young man, knowing, as I do, of his personal merits?

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And now to the performance of *Judas Maccabaeus*. It took place at one of those "amateur concerts" where I had heard Graun's passion, and I was amazed today at the precision of the instrumentalists, but was annoyed even more at the singers and at the tempi that were wrong at times.

The first chorus, which fills every soul with sadness, was

Klagt, Söhne Juda's, klagt um Zions Leid,
Um stimmt ihn an, den Ton der Traurigkeit!
Verwaist geht sie, in Gram versenkt, einher!
Ihr Retter, Freund und Vater ist nicht mehr.

The first word, "*klagt*" [mourn], was held for one whole measure by all the voice parts in a C major chord in the lowest range of the voices. This had such an excellent effect that right at the first word one was completely transported into the mood which continued throughout the whole chorus. Little by little the lament grew into one which truly stormed the heavens, but interrupted by floods of tears, it falls again to earth, and is only audible as fragmented words and low, soft notes. And in deep mourning it collapses, orphaned, desolate and afflicted. But now the impetuous lament of the whole people breaks out with force, for its "redeemer, friend and father is no more." They continue their complaint until they are exhausted and then they repeat the last syllables a few times breathlessly almost as a death-rattle: "is no more." The breast already pounded sore in sorrow they exert once again to pure lament. Like the burnt-out but still glowing candle-wick which before it dies bursts into a small, bright flame which disappears immediately, leaving behind only a trail of smoke gradually lost in the air, so their song falls again into profound, breathless lament: "is no more." And so ends the chorus.

Is not the most mature consideration evident in the design and execution of this chorus, or, should I rather say, the most vivid and veriest of feelings? If any critic would refute this by pointing to the difficult, elaborately worked out harmonies

of this masterly chorus, to him I say that Handel did not need to study harmony the way he would, rather that the most difficult well-crafted harmonies were second nature to him, just as dealing with solar systems was something ordinary for NEWTON. For Handel did not understand harmony just from calculation as do most of our harmonists nowadays; rather, his lofty, sublime feelings played their part as well. And therein lies the reason why the harmonies of our moderns only occupy the mind, while Handel's harmonies touch the heart.

A short recitative, which is very expressive, is followed by a beautiful aria, and after that comes a chorus which is extremely moving:

Wir weihn dem Edlen Klag' und Schmerz;
Ihm seufzt die Brust, ihm weint das Herz.

Any sensitive listener will sigh aloud with heavy heart, and even now tears inhibit my words.

Without going into too great detail, I shall mention only the most striking sections.

One can imagine nothing sweeter and more pleasant than the music of the following aria, which is first sung simply, then in two parts:

Komm, süsse Freyheit, Himmlische!
Der Freuden Schar rings um dich her!
Wir warten dein, wir flehn um dich,
Dann fehlt kein Stück, kein Wunsch uns mehr.

* * *

O Freyheit, du! du Freyheit nur allein
Verschönert selbst der Sonne mildes Licht,
Durchwebst mit Lust den Anblick der Natur;
Und sanfter strömt das Leben dann hinweg.

Together.

Komm, süsse Freyheit, etc.

These beautiful lines are accompanied by melody so lovely that it could only have been created by a man who had experienced the blessing of freedom [*Freyheit*] in its fullest measure and most intensely. The necessary result of this charming depiction of sweet liberty was that a burning desire for freedom was awakened in the people standing about, and this desire breaks out in the most powerful of sounds--in harmony--the effects of which are beyond description, as the chorus

sings:

Du Held, du Held! o mach uns frey
Von unsrer Feinde Tyranney.

Now try to imagine the strongest expression that melody and harmony can produce for these lines, and if you cannot match Handel's expression, then imagine the effect of this chorus on the listener's heart, already softened by the tenderness of the preceding song, and now suddenly attacked with such force. I can find no words that begin to describe it.

The final chorus of the first part is thoroughly moving and penetrating:

Hör' uns, o Herr, der Gnade Gott!
Und gieb uns Freyheit, oder edlen Tod!

And how shall I now describe the very original and peculiar expression of the first chorus of the second part?

Fall ward sein Loos! so fällt dein Feind, o Gott!
Und mit ihm sank sein Trotz, sein Frecher Spott!

My feelings now about putting what I felt into words are like those of courtiers confronted with a philosophical discussion. They use the fashionable words of the court adroitly and mannerly, but they can only talk about the things that are spoken of every day at the court. If you divert them into a topic they have never thought, or rather spoken about, then they lack the vocabulary to express themselves, for they have only a practical understanding of the language. And even though I learned to speak my language somewhat more thoroughly, and know more about it, still I must confess that I am unable to express that which I now feel about the first words of the chorus. It is a feeling which has certainly never been uttered by human tongue: so peculiar is the expression that those words convey. I must repeat some of the words of the verse here, even though they may seem strange to someone who looks only at the words: "*Fall ward sein Loos*" [Fall'n is the lot]. But anyone who knows the music of the chorus will have to admire the translation of these words which must certainly have cost Mr. Eschenburg no little effort in spite of his facility. For the idea of the original, expressed in four syllables, had to be expressed in four syllables again, and indeed, in such a way

that the first syllable might be repeated separately; for Handel repeats the word "*Fall*" [fall'n] several times softly on low notes: "*Fall, Fall, Fall war sein Loos etc.*" And now I challenge anyone to translate this differently, with all the given limitations: "*Schrecklich fällt der Feind Gottes.*"

The following aria is full of beautiful, expressive moments, and it finally becomes a chorus:

Du sinkst, ach armes Israel!
Tief hinab,
Vom Sitz der Freuden
In des Jammers Grab!

A marvelous effect is achieved in this aria by having the vocal part paired with a cello, accompanied only by the basses.

Then comes the aria for bass that spreads fear and terror

Durch Wunderthaten
Errettet unser Gott;
Mit mächtigem Donner
Beschützt er sein Volk.

After a short recitative Judas Maccabaeus exhorts the people to fight again, with sounds that make all souls that hear it ready and even impatient to follow him:

Blas't die Trommet', erhebt ein Feldgeschrey!
Die Tapfern ruft, die Tapfern nur herbey!
In euch entbrenn' ein neuer Heldenmuth!
Denn unser Eifer ist gerecht und gut.

In answer the people cry out impetuously, wildly in these excellent lines:

Uns weckt, uns weckt der schrecklich süsse Schall;
Wir folgen dir zum Siege! --Wär's zum Fall:
Wie schön, o Freyheit, ist für dich der Fall!

Nothing can match these lines in nobility and sublimity, save their Handelian expression, which is completely worthy of them. "*Wär's zum Fall.*" These words are excellently expressed by a dissonant chord, thrice-repeated slowly in the lowest range of the voice parts. And the effect of its expression is greatly intensified by the silence which goes before it. In the last

lines one can hear the burning desire of the people to die for freedom. No wonder, then, that the English, who cherish their freedom just as much, made an idol of Handel.

The most sublime certainty, which emboldens the meekest soul, reigns in this aria:

Mit frommer Brust, so fromm als tapfer,
Sind wir zum Kampf' und Flehn bereit,
Und fürchten nicht den Trotz der Feinde,
Denn Gott Jehovah lenkt den Streit.

The final chorus of the second part displays a noble pride, and it is likewise excellent with respect to harmony:

Noch niemals beugten wir das Knie
Dem stummen Holz und tauben Stein;
Wir opfern Gott'--und Gott' allein!

From the depths of the heart and with earnest entreaty the deeply moving song of the oppressed people is expressed in this aria:

Jehovah! sieh von deinem ew'gen Thron
Erbarmend auf dein Volk herab!
Der schon so manche Wohlthat gab,
Gieb uns der langen Knechtschaft Lohn!
Dann schallt dir deines Volkes Dank,
Dann quillt die Lust
Aus jeder Brust
Im jauchzenden Triumphgesang.

In the last part one can hear that the composer's whole soul is agitated and every listener feels moved in his soul.

Charming and quite pretty is the chorus of youths and maidens consisting only of descant voices and one tenor line, alternately accompanied by flutes and horns. I cannot possibly resist the temptation to include the lyrics at least especially since I know that the poetry is not yet widely known.

Chorus of Youths.

Seht! er kömmt mit Preis gekrönt,
Feyrt, Posaunen, den Empfang!
Rings um den Erretter tönt
Der Befreyten Siegsgesang!

Maidens' Chorus.

Seht! er kömmt, mit Sieg umringt;
Flöten, tönt, belebt den Tanz!
Myrthenzweig und Rosen, schlingt
In des Jünglings Lorbeerkranz!

Then both choirs sing the first verse together, and following that, there is a sublime mixed chorus:

Singt unserm Gott! und macht sein Lob bekannt,
Und preist die Wunder seiner starken Hand!

The final tutti is most solemn and masterfully worked out:

Hallelujah! Amen!
In unsre Chöre mischet euch, ihr Reih'n
Der Cherubim und Seraphim, harmonisch ein!
Hallelujah! Amen!

Despite the many great and indescribable beauties of this masterful work one still cannot call it Handel's masterpiece, for Messiah surpasses it yet. Nor is Judas Maccabaeus free from the usual Handelian faults. There are some arias in it that have a very flat and dragging melody, and others that sparkle with wit. A certain good music reviewer (on the occasion of a song that I wrote in my childhood and which, by odd circumstance happened to be printed in a collection of my pieces) called such works "permissible daubings" to distinguish them from fine paintings. On these two points one should examine the last aria of the first part, "*Kein blutdurstender Trieb etc.*" and also the first aria of the second part, "*Gewetzt zum Verderben*"; and the following aria: "*Er nahm den Raub den Königen etc.*" and in part, the aria which immediately follows it, and other sections of other arias. However much one is disturbed and irritated by such objectionable spots, one's displeasure is overshadowed by the more numerous beauties of the work, and one is glad to forget the blemishes.

With each pleasure I experience in your absence, I wish to see you, beloved friend, at my side, as I yearn for your comfort at every misfortune; but never yet--not even when love betrayed wrung burning tears from me--never have I wished so much to have you with me as today, as I heard this heavenly music. Judge from

that of the excellence of Handel's work and of my glowing friendship and love for you.

Fifth Letter.

To Mr. H.** in R[iga].

Berlin.

I arrived here at a very good time, for almost daily I hear new and beautiful music. There was a performance by the court singers and musicians in the new Catholic Church (which is a model of noblest and most sublime simplicity) of a pretty piece of sacred music by Mr. Fasch.[20] I observed once again that high round domes are not conducive to music: the notes become jumbled and in the faster sections they become an indistinct mass. This happened today all the more because they played down front before the altar. The piece they did was *Il Guiseppe riconnosciuto* by Metastasio. As far as I know this has not been set to music by Hasse and I heard it today for the first time ever. Mr. Fasch had expended much effort on it and remained true to the *da chiesa* style throughout. Nor did most of the arias lack for good melody, and some of them were masterful. Perhaps they all would have been if Mr. Fasch had found in the poetry more inducement to expressiveness; but as it was, only a few of the arias were emotive, and in general, this work, of all the plays by Metastasio, seems to me to have the least in good, musical poetry. The content of an entire aria is often only a single thought, which is not based on any vivid feeling. In a few of the arias the second part only says in different words what the first part had already said; and rarely is the da capo so arranged that it really seems suitable, not to say necessary, etc. The composer does find more inducement in the recitatives, and Mr. Fasch has not infrequently used these with very good results. Looking at the harmony, one sees finely and laboriously polished work, and often it was strong and forceful. Surprising modulations, appropriately placed, had a very good effect and lent a suggestion of modernity to a few spots without giving offense to the setting: that is probably the only permissible way to be modern in Church.

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[20]Mr. Fasch is a musician of the Royal Chamber and alternates with Mr. Schramm in accompanying the King. Both are meritorious and honest gentlemen.

The overture was solemn and yet made very pleasant by intermezzi on the flute. In the choruses, and especially at the end of the first part, there was, along with the most suitable expression and a well-conceived plan, very good work with respect to harmony, which was not just full, but so devised as to have a good effect.

One must admire this piece by Mr. Fasch all the more when one knows that it is the first of this type that he has done and the first time that he has composed with Italian poetry. One can tell, however, that he has studied the works of the best masters and from their experiences has deduced empirical principles, without which a piece well worked out on paper can nevertheless have a very indifferent effect when performed. It would be unthinking of me to enumerate here a few errors I noticed in declamation; Mr. Fasch will no doubt correct them himself after the first performance. But if Mr. Fasch should be curious enough to want to hear them, it would be more appropriate a matter for a friendly letter to be locked up in a desk or destroyed by fire than for this letter, which is to be published. And since Mr. Fasch has not yet published it, I do not feel justified in criticizing it more strictly and thoroughly.

About the performance of today's piece I have nothing more to tell you that I have not already said when speaking about the opera, except that Madame Mara did not sing today; instead, a certain Mlle. Koch of Potsdam was here to beautify this piece. And beautify it she did indeed, as much by her beautiful, full and penetrating voice as by her very good presentation [Vortrag]. She is a daughter of Mr. Koch, director of the Royal Opera buffa. He has not only composed successfully for the Italian comic theater, but has also composed a setting of a very well-translated French operetta for the German Theater.[21] I find nothing wrong with his setting except that it is too good--I mean too grand for this insignificant little piece. From the daughter of this clever man [Koch] I learned in Potsdam that she will sing with Madame Mara in the large theater next summer, and I am certain that she will be generally well received. In the future Madame Mara will find her a dangerous rival. She is still very young, and under the direction of her father, who is an excellent voice teacher, she is certain to achieve perfection in her art.

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[21]*Der Holzhauer, oder die drey Wünsche* [The Woodcutter, or The Three Wishes].

After the performance I had a wonderful time at Mr. von W.'s with our friends S. and V. We had debates over the *Système de la Nature* and played comic operas when not talking. Farewell, my good friend. Yours, etc.

SIXTH LETTER.

To Mr. R[ichter] in K[önigsberg].

If it should occur to you that I could have written to you before now, and why do I bother to write now since I have neglected to do so for so long, then I would have to say in reply that I have had no musical occasion of as much interest to you as today's. That I love you from my heart and esteem you, that I surely don't have to repeat for you are already convinced of it.

The latter fact suited my convenience, but it is impossible to avoid writing about this particular musical event. It is my custom, whenever I see or hear something beautiful, to look around immediately for someone with whom I can share my pleasure, for joys unshared are only half joys to me. Today, however, search as I would among the many hundreds of people that I saw, still you were on my mind, even though we are separated by distance. Thus I must share my pleasure, esteemed friend, with you. Are you still asking what it's all about? Could it be anything other than something by our Bach,[22] whom we both adore and who is everything to you? Today I got to see this great man from a new aspect and I am filled with new esteem for him. A passion by Bach was performed in St. Peter's Church; this piece is characterized by originality, suitable strong and novel expression, lasting strength and intense fervor. Bach's original mind is recognizable in all his works, even the smallest pieces--all bear the stamp of originality, and all would be recognizable among a hundred others, although there is invention and novelty in all his works. But never did his inexhaustible spirit extend itself so far as it did here. In every recitative, in every aria, in every chorus there is invention and novelty, both harmonically and melodically, and in all of it nothing ignoble. All of it--except for a fast aria the playful wit of which did not seem to suit sacred music--is all so noble, grand and in the loftiest da chiesa style. And all of it peculiarly his own.

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[22]C. P. E. Bach, Capellmeister in Hamburg.

"But the natural, fluid melody of GRAUN is not there!" So say those who are inexperienced in art, yet they can be set right with only a few words. "You must admire the unique genius [*Originalcomponisten*] of Bach who can only write the way he does and who does not sing in such a fashion that you, when you hear his pieces, could think, `That's how I would have sung that verse, too.' But that is what you must admire in Graun. This makes Graun a generally pleasing composer and necessarily made him the favorite singer of his nation, which he did in fact become through his *Der Tod Jesu*. Bach, on the other hand, by his original genius has raised himself to the fame of a great, rare man, and is the model of a whole school--the best school of its kind that any nation ever had. Do you understand me? Klopstock does not write poetry like Gellert and it would ill befit Gellert to write verse like Klopstock. Their genius is just as different as Bach's and Graun's. Gellert's genius dictated that he become the favorite poet of the nation; Klopstock, according to his genius, the model writer of epics--and in fact, both of them have done just that. Bach has no more intention of pleasing everyone than Klopstock does. Those of you who have no taste for such men, sing and play your GRAUN, read your GELLERT. Bach and Klopstock had other people in mind when writing: you do not know the language in which they exercise their eloquence. How could you then understand them?"

That false opinion about Bach would be far less prevalent amongst amateurs (dilettanti) if they were left to their natural feel for what is good, but they are led astray by ignorant persons, and also by the malicious and envious as well. The ignorant do not understand Bach's works and cannot possibly perform them so that they make sense to the listener. How can I recite poetry correctly if I have no insight into the ideas contained in it? And how can the listener who hears me read with false and inverted accentuation, how can he understand the verse? It's just the same with performances of musical pieces. Hence, any reasonable man can see that sight reading is contemptible nonsense. Do not think that I am belittling what seems (to the ignorant) to be a virtue the way many philosophers deride riches and external appearances, not from real conviction, but because they don't possess them. That is not the case with me. Because I do not consider it praise, I can say of myself that I have the facility on two instruments to play even difficult pieces accurately at sight. But how often, even though not a single note is missed, how often the true meaning, the real expression of the thought is lost. This I

have observed sufficiently not only in my own playing, but also in that of other extemporizers as well. This happens with all the instruments, most frequently with the keyboard instruments because of the polyphonic writing alone, not to consider the difficulty of performance; and among the works for keyboard, the most frequently misinterpreted are Bach's works, because they have more originality than any others, and thus it is all the more necessary that one know them most precisely before playing them. It is just the same with Klopstock's poetry. But how few there are that can read him correctly and how few can perform Bach's pieces right. Without intending to pay you a compliment, dear R.,[23] I must take this opportunity to confess to you honestly that your way of playing Bach's compositions has always satisfied me more than all others. And of all the pianists that I met on my three years of travelling only a very few could come close to you. Among them are Mr. Bertuch and Mr. Fasch in Berlin, Capellmeister Wolf in Weimar, Mr. Franz Benda in Potsdam (the eldest son of Concertmeister Benda), Mr. Transchel in Dresden, who in addition to his great dexterity in playing is also a fine and thorough music critic; and Mr. Duschek in Prague, who not only performs Bach's pieces very well, but also has an unusual, refined and brilliant individual style; also Mr. Fleischer in Braunschweig, certainly deserves mention here; he plays very adroitly, with discrimination, exactitude and accomplishment, not only Bach's things, but also his own compositions, which are full of fire and invention. Finally, Mr. Pobielski in Königsberg and Mr. Klügling in Danzig also deserve mention. Quite a small number out of so many hundreds, but seldom do you find even one of the very worst players who does not play the Bach pieces; moreover it often happens that these untalented folk are all too generous with their art (as indeed they must be), while the good players, by contrast, are heard only by the very few. Thus how could it be otherwise than that Bach's pieces please but few people? Even among those who hear his pieces played well, there are many who have such bad

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[23]I think I owe it to this uncommonly talented virtuoso to make his name known here. He is Mr. Richter, organist of the main church in Königsberg. At the same time I have to say that he is my mentor, to whom I first owe my keyboard abilities and my acquaintance with Bach's works. Does it not follow from this that I am indebted to him primarily for the formation of my musical taste?

taste that they prefer an English or a Polish dance to the best sonata. And how many belong to the vast lot who would rather read a little Anacreontic poem than a sublime ode by Ramler? And yet I would maintain that this failing is not as much at fault as the malice and envy of many musicians themselves who are actually capable of recognizing the worth of this great man; but because they fall incapable of matching him, they busy themselves with detracting from his fame, so that at least in the eyes of the ignorant they don't stand so far behind him. I know that all this matters little to Mr. Bach. And I do not speak at such length about this to defend him, but rather to open the eyes somewhat of those who may read this little work, and to encourage them to offer a bit of opposition to anyone who might speak down to them in judgemental tones. And if such a person should say something about the lack of natural, pleasing melody, then they should ask about the original spirit and the great knowledge of that great man, and who might there be that surpasses him in that. How many even come close to his achievements? They should let themselves be taught more about the great merits of this man rather than about what he lacks in the eyes of the envious. Once one has rightly recognized and understood his merits, one will be convinced that he lacks nothing except that which runs counter to his genius or is even beneath it.

Even today the wicked did not miss the chance to sow the seeds of criticism amongst the populace. One of them dredged up a few little negligences with respect to declamation and maliciously treat this great man the way a simple schoolboy does with his Virgil when he finds a comma or a period out of place. And just as there will always be people about, be they only servant girls who will listen to his childish palaver and admire his precocious erudition, so also there will always be enough people who hold malicious critics for knowledgeable men because of their impudent chatter. The only thing lacking is for Papa to come and give the boy a good swat for his insolence. How the faces of the servants would look then! Truly a picture worthy of being painted by Hogarth. By the way, Oeser was working on a monument to the great man, thus assuring his own eternal remembrance just as he did by the new-born Graces at Gellert's tomb. The subtle refinement of this idea could hardly be surpassed. But my enjoyment is again interrupted by a malicious critic: "Just listen to how difficult the vocal and instrumental parts are." D--n it, leave me in peace! I grant you that Bach wrote his great music for good singers, who sing in tune and not

just arpeggios in thirds as students do. For such people the difficulties are more than moderate, but that doesn't make it universally true. And now for the instruments: don't you see that an original thought often demands a like expression, one to which we are not accustomed? And what is difficulty except something unfamiliar, something we don't encounter every day. Granted, occasionally there will be a few notes to be avoided because they are not idiomatic. But do you demand that Mr. Bach know all instruments as completely and thoroughly as he knows his keyboard? For that one needs not only theoretical knowledge, but also practice and experience with instruments. So your only further demand is that Mr. Bach should put in an apprenticeship with an artistic whistler so that he would then know all the instruments--then you would consider him perfect? If that's all he lacks, he surely will gladly pay tribute to human failings with that.

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The expression in this masterful passion was for the most part so appropriate and so strong and at the same time so novel, that this may count as the unfailing proof of Mr. Bach's original genius. His new and strange ideas are not artificial and far-fetched; rather, they arise from within his soul. For when a vocal composer tries too hard to invent a new expression for the words to be set, and digs up an esoteric musical expression for them, then the suitability of the expression certainly is lost most of the time and one can easily recognize the artificiality and tension of the idea, especially if the words are sung. This was not at all the case with Mr. Bach's passion. I observed rather that the cause of the most rare vitality in much of the expression (which aroused the admiration of many people rather than allowing them simply to feel) to be this: that Mr. Bach must have felt many things much stronger and more vividly while composing than most people are capable of doing. To a certain degree it is necessary to put oneself into the same mood of enthusiasm which the composer experienced while at work. But to do this the listener must prepare himself for such a work ahead of time. One must convince oneself of the importance of the matter to be treated just as the composer does before he begins writing; and like him, one must guard against all distraction during the piece; for if one listens to even one movement with less attention than to the others, then one cannot judge the work as a whole. I, however, as a listener entirely absorbed in myself and this piece, found it beautiful and

excellent. To speak the sensibilities and opinions of the majority, I would have to say what so many have said of YOUNG: his only fault is this, that he was too insistent and too monotonous in the strength of his thoughts, without any diversion whatsoever; the reader becomes fatigued from it and could read no more at one sitting than Young could write and think on one night. That last part is wrong, for YOUNG certainly had a hundred times as many ideas about every subject than are printed in his book--more than most readers think about such matters. To be sure, such critics are fair enough to grant that he has profuse strength of soul and ingenuity. You, too, will admit that only our German EBERT was able to think along the same lines, or rather was able to "think his way into" Young completely.

The strong fire that blazes throughout Bach's passion I cannot describe to you in words. At times I was excited to the point of rage, and the expression of pain and lament was just as vigorous and strong.

I cannot say anything to you in respect to the excellence of the harmony. You know this great master too well to have the individual beauties of this work dissected; you already think him a perfect master of harmony. But one thing I must tell you: you would find a wealth of new, grand and sublime phrases and modulations which are perhaps to be found in no other musical work.

If only you could have heard this great masterpiece yourself! Perhaps I will soon have the good fortune to meet its author and to get to know him well in his practical artistry. Then please do not be offended if you lose the first place in my list of clavier players--but that place in my heart shall be yours forever.

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SEVENTH LETTER.

To Mr. Kr[--]--B[ock] in M[arienwerder].

Berlin.

O terrible paralysis
Able e'en the spirit to slow,
Acccustom'd, year by year to grow,
And where it enters, no restraint to know.
O sad orthodoxy which teaches us
Enthusiastic genius,
Which from Heaven alone descends,
And up to Heaven always tends,
In a single sect to find;
And all not in its bounds confined,
As unconverted and purblind--
That to Criticism's Hell it sends.

What Professor Ebert says here in very handsome verse I always think to myself in common prose when I hear spiteful, tasteless, stubborn schoolmen here speak of PERGOLESI'S *Stabat Mater*. They despise the whole world and blame it for being so blind and think that they alone see that this work is not a great masterpiece of harmony, that it can match neither Bach's fugues nor Handel's choruses. That the whole work is filled with excellent melody, suitable expression and touches of genius could not be missed by anyone with any spark of feeling in him. But they don't see it, they don't hear it, they don't feel it. O the malcreants! Had they been thus deprived by Nature, I would pity them in silence. But no, they purposely close their ears, and steep themselves in discordant, black, rancorous harmonies exclusively, and become so inured, that no soft, euphonious chord can reach them to let their own hearts give them the lie. But if such a chord did break through to their hearts, even there it would still find no entry, for their hearts are eaten up with poisonous black envy and leering enmity and have no feeling for those heavenly melodies. Only black, rancorous chords move them and find entry. O ye brood of vipers! They would tear out their own eyes to be safe from all assaults of beauty whatsoever if their eyes did not also perform

the valuable service of seeking out the faults of others, and often of presenting that as flawed which the ear beholds as beautiful. And how easily reason is thus circumvented by false conclusions. For that reason, noble, heavenly harmony is denied their ear and heart, and has become an object for the eye and mind. They know harmony only as arithmetic: they have never felt it. They go to hear a piece by Pergolesi to calculate the various relationships. How disgusting! Like going to see Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson* to count the number of scenes.

You see, now you can laugh! Laugh in the face of that haggard, wall-eyed, malicious, half-consumed ghost. Mock him, scorn him! Only such arrows are sharp enough to pierce his hardened heart. Despise him, don't even call him a theorist if he has no respect for that harmony which can conquer hearts. But he hasn't the vaguest idea of it, he only knows the relationships that his crazed brain informs him of; his blood is burnt up, his stomach ruined, his brain eaten away. Take away his black box filled with poisonous powder that eats away at his nerves and dulls his mind with impure fluids (which he takes thinking that they are the cure). Take away that dangerous instrument from which he constantly takes in hot vapors, for it only surrounds his head with thick fog; and take away the containers around him all filled with poisonous drinks which keep his blood constantly foaming and boiling.

Throw him in ice-cold water and hold him there until his rage subsides and he comes to himself and recognizes you again as human beings: for now you are nothing but wretched, despicable creatures in his eyes. Fear that man!--For how can he harbor good thoughts about others, when his own blood is in constant revolt against itself. How can he whose own heart is closed to the heavenly harmonies maintain peace and unity with his fellow man.

Beware of him, all of you. But you young artists especially should flee him as if he were a poisonous serpent which can poison by a breath, by a glance even from a distance! Do not go near him, for he will set your senses in confusion. He will teach you to view everything in a horrible black light. He will destroy your peace and contentment. The just admiration you have for great men whose achievements spur you on to follow their example--this he will turn to mockery, and all to gratify his envious heart. He will plant divisiveness between you and your father and will alienate you from him whose teaching and advice were necessary for rearing you in Virtue. He will put you in shameful fetters which will deprive you forever of your

honor and the love of your friends. Or are you already completely devoted to him? One day you will tire of bearing constant witness to his diabolical malice. If you get away from him, and at a distance want to initiate the bond of sweet friendship with that upright, philanthropic man who is surrounded by malicious creatures whose only hope is to discredit his fortunate genius and his agreeable, pleasing wit, but also to ridicule his weak body, and who know how to make even his gentle, loveable, virtuous nature appear evil.

Yet he, surrounded by these malicious creatures, remains in good spirits and humanely pities them. If you want to be his friend, then you will have those poisonous adders against you. Now the malicious one gathers together all those against you of whom you made enemies through the virtuous man, and inflames them with poisonous breath to impassioned revenge. Then will he search out the frivolous sins of your youth and find ways to exploit them to his wicked purposes; he will instigate false charges against you, involve you in legal squabbles, ready to perjure himself against you at a moment's notice. And if the believable testimony of the upright man does not save you, then you are lost, for that would be your last hope and help. But that too he knows how to take from you. And then you are left alone in the world. Then he stands laughing, maliciously awaiting his hellish triumph, in hopes that you will acknowledge him, will bow before him once again, and commit yourselves wholely to him. Then look at him with deepest disdain and let him know that he is not worthy of revenge. And before you throw yourselves anew into his greedy claws, flee to some other part of the earth and sooner feed on the foulest fruits of the field than on nectar and ambrosia from his hands, though he had taken it from the gods.

How excited I have gotten! I do not fear, however, that I have filled the page with things totally uninteresting. I know you will recognize the man upon whom this whole depiction has been most faithfully drawn. You also know the persons who have been the victims of all those vices, and you're concerned about these persons, that I also know. But now back to the Pergolesi. What shall I tell you about it? My zeal in denouncing such malice will show you how much I think of that beautiful piece.

It is probably not necessary for me to analyze individual beauties in the piece. You know it; indeed, everyone knows it. Is there anyone who does not see that very much warmth, very suitable and touching expression, and the noblest melody and vigor are the characteristics of this little piece of sacred

music? An eternal shame that this genius was snatched away from us almost as a youth.[24] Any lover of song will mourn his early death. And if it is true that you, old malicious, jealous man, stabbed him in the breast, may your soul feel eternal disquiet for it. Every note of complaint with which he moved us to tears must be painful to you, must torture your soul and keep it in constant unrest. How dare you rob us of that sensitive young man, to whom Nature had given so fortunate a genius, chosen by her to honor her and the land in which she placed him. How dare you rob us of such a promising young man! Only wicked, horrid Envy can lead one so astray, Envy the enemy of all virtues and achievement! For the man possessed by Envy will find his own son a thorn in his eye if the son surpasses his merits.

And I must add that the "Stabat Mater" was rather well performed at the local amateur concert, and the many envious voices I heard speaking about it occasioned this letter. At this concert I also heard a passion by Capellmeister Wolf of Weimar. I found much pleasant, flowing and expressive melody in it, nor did some arias lack for fire. He seems thus deliberately to depart from the strict sacred style, and one cannot fault him for it until one has heard his reasons. From the various infelicities in declamation one could tell that the piece must have been hurriedly written. Why is it that most vocal composers make mistakes in declamation? Is it that they don't understand the language or the poetry sufficiently?

Pergolesi's works seem to reveal, indeed, it seems quite likely, that he was not a prolific genius, and even if he had lived longer, we would not have gotten very many great works from him. After all, his "Salve regina" looks a lot like his "Stabat mater," and his two operas have much in common, even though one is serious and the other comic. Yet all probability notwithstanding, such a judgement is still too hasty. When I examine his works carefully and compare them, I see quite clearly that he composed everything in the greatest haste. Every composer knows from his own experience that if he gives himself completely over to his intuition and writes down the first melody that occurs to him for every line, so long as it's suitable (and it will be as soon as he has the right feel for it), then these first thoughts will contain much that is already familiar, things that he has either heard from others or has

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[24]Pergolesi died in his 27th year and it is said that he was stabbed by an envious older composer.

already written himself in a similar mood. This is where one first begins to consider and to use the hone of criticism. Pergolesi seems to lack this, however. He seems never to have corrected anything in his pieces. All of them look like a first draft. There is yet another very important factor, especially with works on which the composer does not devote much time. I mean that Pergolesi perhaps did not have a good memory to warn him against similarity of ideas as he wrote them down. He himself didn't see it until the actual performance. But then it was too late, and the onerous task of changing it was more than the flighty youth of the composer could overcome. Thus one could say of Pergolesi that he lacked strict self-criticism and a good memory. And these two things have nothing to do with genius, which one can easily enough recognize in the great facility one finds in his pieces and the expression, always strong and appropriate. Happy the composer who is warned by his memory as soon as a thought occurs to him: that thought is not yours, or, that has long been yours. Thrice blessed is he whose wealth of ideas immediately supplies another motif just as fitting--for usually the first thought is the best one--without interrupting his sentiments with considered thought. If that happens,a the listener will certainly notice it when he comes to the place: he will recognize the artificiality and the forced quality of it immediately.

I have just seen some violin trios of Pergolesi which I did not know. They were engraved in London with the following title: "Twelve Sonatas for Two Violins and a Bass or an Orchestra. Compos'd by Gio. Batt.a Pergolese, Autor [sic] of the Stabat Mater."--The following advertisement is added: "The Manuscripts of these Sonatas were procured by a Curious Gentlemans [sic] of Fortune, during his Travels through Italy." It is good work and very melodious, but I miss Pergolesi's fire in them.

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EIGHTH LETTER.

To Mr. v. K in P .

Berlin.

No doubt you are asking why I have not written you concerning the German theater here. The answer: *patriotisme*. Here is the message that I wish I could write: "Our national theater is now perfect. King Frederick has put aside his prejudice against the Germans; he realizes that he can make a nation of his children which will surpass all their neighbors, and even equal the British; to do so all they lack is his long-withheld encouragement. How spoiled people are! Royal encouragement spurs them more than desire for honors!" I wish that I could say, "Finally our German tongue has become the language of the court; everyone knows how necessary this is to move our theater towards perfection. The language now generally has that degree of refinement that once could be found only in Lessing's plays. Now no one is amazed at the lofty tone and sublime language of a tragedy, although before, all it was able to do was to keep many people from thinking that the actions on the stage were real.

"Our theater is also no longer a public theater, and the director now may no longer regard the cheapest seats when he decides what to produce. It is maintained by the Court, and is no longer as wretched as it was when it was public. The King gave a respectable sum for the initial organization, i.e., for the building of the theater, for procuring costumes (I must note here that it consists only of European clothing: Greek, Roman, Turkish and so forth were completely excluded). For those things, and to attract the best actors and dramatic poets the King allocated money to be paid annually for the maintenance of the theater.

"Our actors[25] are very well paid, and have therefore become--o mores!--quite different people. The principal actor receives 3,000 *Reichsthaler* annually as does the principal actress. The second principal, who is almost as good as the first (except

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[25]If one wants to have plays every day and good ones to boot, then at least three times as many players are required than normally, so that each role can be studied by two or three people and no actor is obliged to play two contrasting roles.

that he has the fault of imagining himself to be perfect and in so doing often neglects some scenes), gets 2,500 *Rthlr*. The director will probably cure him of that fault, for he told him yesterday when he was not doing justice to one scene, that he would find a reduction in pay to be his reward for it, and further, that he was regressing, rather than climbing to the heights of perfection as he ought to be doing. If he omits anything from carelessness again, he will certainly be reduced in salary to 2,000 *Rthlr*., which is actually what the third man gets, and he is a very good actor too. The number four actor gets 1,000, etc.

"Scripts are rewarded in the same way: a masterpiece, whether tragic or comic, is given 2,000 *Rthlr*.; something less excellent, but still meritorious especially in so far as the ultimate moral objective is concerned, is worth 1,000 *Rthlr*.; a mediocre piece, however, gets--nothing at all. Furthermore, the dramatists have no fixed income here. However, 5,000 *Rthlr*. annually have been set aside for rising young poets who show signs of genius and aptitude for the stage, and in fact, any such young man is given 500 *Rthlr*. annually for subsistence.[26]

The novice dramatist is responsible to the director of the theater, and starts by writing little preludes or speeches for the actors on festive occasions, but they may not be in verse, especially if the occasion is of no special solemnity. It has been generally agreed upon that only the heroic dramas will be in verse so that the heroes are given an idiom that distinguishes them from the rest of humanity as much as their deeds do. These plays are very rarely performed, however, for it is thought that the middle-class tragedy and also the comedy [*Lustspiel*] have a far greater influence on the morals of the

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[26]If there are more than ten such young men, the King is overjoyed to supply salaries for the rest. Altogether, this whole arrangement, broad and inclusive as it is, creates no expenses out of the ordinary because the King has disbanded the Italian and the French theaters and sent them back home with an admonition to try to find favor in their homelands, just as the natives of those two countries would do. And if there are too many actors in the home countries, there certainly will not be too many day laborers. If they all cannot have the fortune to sing for the Pope in Rome, at least they can be of more service to their compatriots by making the countryside around Rome richer in trees, grass, plants, cattle and people.

audience. Here they are more concerned with the edification and amusement of all the people than with complimenting the prince.

This beautifully planned scheme requires a discriminating and thorough judge of art who has himself had some experience in the theater. The burden would have been too much for any one man, so the position was divided between Ramler and Lessing. The latter had to promise beforehand, however, to write at the specified wages paid by the theater. Only he, who has the fortunate grace and ease of a fiery genius could have promised to do so: another man would have been terrified of the job itself. Among the poets that were first considered in addition to Ramler and Lessing was Weisse, who has given up writing heroic tragedy and now writes middle-class tragedies in which he paints with his whole, excellent heart; they are the most certain proof of his fine, warm feelings and happy genius. After him came Gerstenberg and Engel. Engel had already won all hearts with his *Der dankbare Sohn* [The Grateful Son]:everyone seeing him for the first time spoke to him with complete trust and warm friendship, for no one could doubt that the author of such a fine and noble play was a good-hearted man of warmest feelings; and no one was deceived in so thinking. He had to promise (and did so willingly since he had already so resolved) to write no more farces, which are far below his genius and noble character. Surely everyone would prefer *Die Apotheke* [The Apothecary]. For here, as you must know, operettas are very much out of fashion, although one by Hiller or Wolf is still put on as a postlude occasionally. Our actors are ashamed of the vulgar plots, as is the audience, and both despise that which is unnatural and childish.

Actors are no longer the contemptible lot that most of them used to be. As soon as they began to go about in fine clothes they were accepted by the better classes; the highest nobility consorted with them. And now government officials are seen familiarly rubbing shoulders with them, or even embracing them, an honor usually reserved for--castrati! But because actors were constantly being received with so much respect by polite society, they have become people worthy of esteem and favor from this side of society as well. One can also see a great difference in acting. Once, the man who played the king or prime minister often looked like an herb peddlar; but now he has the means to create a perfect illusion, and so forth.

There is so much to tell, and I have already written so much that you may be tired of reading before I get to what I really wanted to say. But that's what happens when one gets excited

and when one is led to talk about one's favorite topics.

I shall say no more about the performance of tragedies and comedies--which are mostly wretched translations from the French--except that after I had seen one of each I could not bring myself to go again. About operettas I shall only say that I always pitied any composer who had gone to the trouble of writing anything more than street songs [*Gassenlieder*] for singers of that type. Each time that there was an aria by Hiller, full of feeling and expression, I imagined how he would sing it to me from the keyboard, full of warmth and feeling; but at the same time I had to hear it done by that mickle-mouth, screeching vocalist and her lover with the voice of a night watchman! Never did greater contrast exist so close together. And such sounds are served up to a public which everywhere has a reputation for the best of taste; but any audience may be glad that it has heard--and continues to hear--ones such as Mrs. Schmähling and Conciolini! Not another word upon it! But what then? The operetta in and of itself.

Common and frequent as operetta productions are in our theaters, and pleasing though they may be, it is just as frequently maintained--often by those who like them--that operettas ruin the public taste. And with good reason, it seems to me. Give a man nothing but milk and sweet fruit for a while and afterwards he will have no taste for the stronger, more substantial foods. He'll say, of course, "It doesn't hurt me, I'm well and comfortable." Well enough for walking, that I'll believe, but just let him try some hard physical work and he will see how much of that he's able to do. So it is, it seems to me, with human feelings as well. Once they're weakened by that flabby, childish fare, then that is what they need to be most contented. But ask such a person if he will be strong enough to bear the misfortune that is always waiting around the corner and to maintain his firm resolve when it comes, and whether he will have enough strength to carry out his resolution. That the serious drama is a splendid means to this end, surely no one will deny. Even our weak man must feel this himself, even although he takes no pleasure in it--like the sinner who finds virtue beautiful, but neither wants to nor is capable of practicing it. But you who do not think the theater a school for virtue and morality, but want to make it simply a place of amusement--are you not much amused by Lessing's and Weisse's and Krüger's comedies which instruct you at the same time? Or are you thoroughly opposed to being edified? Is even that wit too strong for you milquetoasts?

From the moral standpoint and that of good taste in general, everything seems to speak against the operetta. On the other hand, however, it might serve to train the ears of the public and to make song more wide-spread. But one mustn't let all that pretty expression get in the way of thought!--And a minimum requirement would be that our actors could sing correctly and in tune, even if the range of possible beauty were not fully realized. But as long as this is not the case, then everything is against the frequent production of operettas. But because they do, in fact, exist, let us say a few words about them.

Pastoral scenes are chosen as the main subject for operettas. Now as much as I love the country life per se and true, unadorned Nature above everything, still the representations we find of it in our plays cannot possibly satisfy or please me. Not the usefulness of the country man, nor his labor which nourishes us; not his happiness brought him by clean air,[27] plain food and contentment with the sweet gifts of infinitely good Nature; not the domestic felicity which he finds in a large, healthy family--these things are not presented, even though they could return us to a blessed simplicity of morals and customs; no, instead, they ridicule the admirable innocence and simplicity of the country man. They should rather praise his sound common sense, which does not desert him even in emotional matters; and they invent the fiction of a tasteless and foolish love which could only be the pipe dream of an immature man nourished on nothing but honey and grapes. The country man could be used to show that moderation and work are the sources of virtue itself and that many thousands of vices that dwell in the city are completely unknown to the country man. But no, they would rather show a dyed-in-the-wool rascal who would never be found in the country if he hadn't been driven out of the city. True, the operettas of Mr. Weisse are full of the most beautiful strains of noble, natural simplicity, but their main purpose still is to make us laugh; and they are also full of that childish, silly love which a sensible farmer would think insane.

But because such trifling and joking are the object of operettas, the music too must be tailored to suit them. A

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[27]The importance of clean air for the human body is noticed by anyone who spends time in the country. If anyone is not convinced by that, let him to Switzerland and breathe the pleasant air there: then let him tell us about the change in his body.

flowing, pleasant, comprehensible melody is required and it must not be distorted either by artificial harmonies or too frequent embellishment. Mr. Hiller is a perfect master at this. He was the first among us to sing sweetly and endearingly, and will always remain a perfect model for it. I am speaking here particularly of good singing in operettas. For if we were to take odes and songs [*Lieder*] into account, we would have to name Mr. Gräfe, the councilor [*Cammerrath*] in Braunschweig, with fitting praise as the first to introduce them to the public. It is common knowledge that this hardworking man has had a great many vocal works published, and that he played a part in the invention of Breitkopf's beautiful music printing. Yet I can assure you that this is the smallest part of his works, and that few composers, who are themselves musicians, have written as much as *Cammerrath* Gräfe has as an amateur and continues to do. I must here make mention of Cramer's Psalms which Gräfe has set to music, most of them with accompanying instruments; in them he often pays closer attention to declamation than the greatest masters do.

To return to Mr. Hiller, his comprehensible, pleasant and expressive melodies, and often truly comic expression are not his only merits; he has also found occasion in his operettas to display fire, strength, and depth of thought, as well as knowledge of harmony. For the poets were not content merely with writing pastoral scenes, as for example, Sedaine did in that dearest of plays *Rose and Collas*, so nicely put to music by Philidor; in the German translation (which has good dialogue) it is called *Hänschen und Gretchen*. But no, the poets did not leave it at that; they added persons from the city and the court to the plot to make it more lively, more entertaining and varied. This was to a certain extent an improvement for the operetta, because the poet then got the opportunity, as in the Lustspiel, to hold up truths, satiric statements, and morals to the city slickers and courtiers; this was done with much refinement by Mr. Weisse especially in *Die Jagd*. In general, *Die Jagd* comes closest, in my opinion, to the ultimate goal which operettas--since they will not go away--ought to have. And Mr. Hiller has also been very fortunate in the composition of the same. The characterizations are all so well-drawn, and so consistent, that for that reason alone one must account it a masterpiece of its genre. In Röschen one hears the frolicsome, flighty girl, just as Hänschen's song is most tender and melting; and the same composer, who could give the other characters the merriest arias full of wit and true comic

moments, could also make his king sing like a king. In the aria "*welche königliche Lust*" [what kingly delight] there really is a lofty, quiet grandeur. But it really ought to be presented differently than the way one hears it in our theaters. One must also admire Mr. Hiller's prolixity, for he has already written twelve operettas, not counting the many other pieces for voice and instruments. And this fecundity goes hand in hand with a thoughtful economy of resources. He does not pile up many different musical ideas in one aria--that would make him repetitious as are most composers who soon end up copying themselves. Hiller, on the contrary, follows each theme naturally and draws everything from it that can be gotten. His reward for this is that he is the favorite composer of the nation, just as he is a valuable friend to those outside his art.

Next to Mr. Hiller, the first place at this certainly belongs to Capellmeister Wolf in Weimar. His operettas are full of fire and appropriate expression. But in the exact choice of his motifs and in the constant quest for suitability he is not as perfectly in control, it seems to me, as Mr. Hiller. The latter ponders more on the nature of the persona, it seems to me, and so there is never anything wrong with his character portrayals. Even the comic does not seem to come so easily to Mr. W[olf]: it is not infrequently forced and heavy-handed. Further, to Mr. Hiller's credit, he opened a path, which is recognizable in all the operettas of Mr. W[olf].

Granted that Mr. Hiller works with better texts that Mr. W[olf], who often must base his compositions on things that never yet had the honor being sung through once. I must confess my feeling that much as I like Mr. Wolf's operettas, I like his works for keyboard much more. His clavier concerti are so carefully worked, and have so much fire and agreeableness; indeed, there is even something quite distinctive about them, so that they belong among the very finest works now being written for that instrument. Some of them would be worthy of a Bach. Just as beautiful are his symphonies and other instrumental works. I must add here that Mr. Wolf has been writing for voice only a short time, and thus we can expect a great deal more from him in the category as well.

Mr. Hiller also has the distinction of having trained a good pupil in Mr. [Christian Gottlob] Neefe, who I know will not lack for industry in pursuing the fame of his master.

My profoundest wish for these able men, and for all others who are involved in our German compositions for the theater

would be that the singing of our actors could be improved so that the composers' works would not continue to be so maltreated. This much I know: if I had the gift to produce Hiller's operettas, I would henceforth lose no time in doing so.

However, I also wish profoundly that our poets, when their verse is to be sung, would give more thought towards making it musical poesie, and that they should first look at the observations that other men (and especially the Italians) have drawn from the works of the best masters, for it is not for nothing that they try so hard to follow them; they should give some attention to these distillations[28] and probably should learn something about music before they write verse to be sung.

I cannot refrain from saying that it is a great pity that Professor Zachariae did not continue in music--he, who showed us such good musical samples of his spirit; he bade fair, to judge by those works for which he often wrote the poetry himself, to be both composer and poet in one. Only the French theater has a piece in which poet and composer are one and the same. This is a small drama--*Le devin du village*--by Rousseau. Much as Prof. Zachariae surpassed the latter as a poet, he would surely have surpassed him as a composer if he had not purposely given up writing music. But since this is a matter of fact, it is greatly to be hoped that Mr. Z. will industriously produce musical poetry and make use of his knowledge of music in this fashion.

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[28]They will be especially well-served by Mr. Krause's treatise on musical poesie; for even if it is not complete or even perfectly correct, still it contains a great many true and splendid observations.

NINTH LETTER.

To Mr. C[oncertmeister] V[eicht??? in M[itau??]

Potsdam.

Finally I have had the long-desired pleasure of making personal acquaintance with Concertmeister Benda, whom we both so much admire. However, confounded gout and other grievous circumstances robbed me of the pleasure of hearing the power of his bow. But I did get to experience it through his younger son, who has his father's seal of approval, and everyone seems to agree that he is most laudably following in the footsteps of his father. What glory! He played various sonatas for me composed by the Concertmeister himself and some of his own pleasant works. At adagio playing he won my complete admiration. It is true that the genuine Benda style is something unto itself. It is characteristically aristocratic, agreeable, and extremely moving. Its distinctiveness comes from the way the bow is used. Benda does not simply take rather full, slow strokes as most people do who think they are playing adagios in the Benda style. One thinks of the particular emphasis which singles out one note amongst others; of constant awareness of piano and forte according to the pitch of the note, comparable to light and shadow in painting; further, of moderate, nobly chosen embellishments which never go beyond a singer's throat: I mean that in an adagio movement one should apply no more and no different ornaments than a good singer is allowed in an aria; and finally an extremely important laxity towards the time value of the notes: this takes away that forced quality from the melody and makes the musical ideas the player's own, and thus it seems to be the actual expression of the soloist's feelings. All of these things determine more or less the style of the Benda adagio. When you hear something other than this, where a thousand notes are added to each measure, and no eighth note remains an eighth but is doubled as many times as possible and thus no single plain and full stroke of the bow is heard--in such a case the listener's ear is adequately filled, but the heart remains completely empty. But in the Benda style the listener is moved to the tenderest of feelings and often brought to tears. A difference of daylight and dark! And even if the other style dazzled me with the difficulty of the preceding allegro, when I hear an adagio that falls completely short of

the mark, must I not then give all my love to that master, that conqueror of hearts? With the former I do not get beyond admiration. This is true in general for all our new-fangled violinists who are only concerned with technical difficulties; the arousal of our admiration is the sole air of their art. These gentlemen don't notice that they debase and compromise themselves by their efforts to become skilled tight-rope walkers when they could become masters of the noble art of dancing. But once a virtuoso has chosen that first course, then it is unfair to criticize him for his adagio playing: for the one is so diametrically opposed to the other that the impossibility of uniting them could be proved physically from the construction of the hand and arm. And if you'd like to see it proved by examples, take the ablest and most famous tight-rope walker and train him in the art of the dance; then see if it is possible for him to produce one elegant step. Even after much effort all his steps will still bear traces of angularity, distortion and unevenness. I have known dancers in secondary roles who practiced only leaps so that if opportunity presented itself, they could shine. Afterwards, when they went back to artistic dancing, some of the acrobatics stuck with them a long time, even when they had Noverre as model and master. As it is with the foot, so it is with the hand and arm. But--to continue the comparison--even if our dancer is no longer able to put noble, profound meaning into his steps, at least he will not make comic leaps in portraying a serious or tragic story, but will rather stay with slow steps. So it is also with instrumentalists. If they are not capable of bowing with the soulfulness of a Benda, then the last thing they should do is to throw in lots of comic runs; they should rather present the melody of the piece simply and clearly. But I understand these people: they are afraid of being shown in their nakedness, and so--to conceal the deadness of their tone, which would bore any listener--they dazzle with an abundance of notes. Innocent persons, at least, will think it difficult.

The intent of my comparison has not been to disparage those players whose strength is in allegro playing, for in doing so I would indict myself who have worked for several years at very difficult things, but without ever losing sight, even for a moment, of the ultimate goal of music, I mean affection. As soon as I saw that a bowstroke, however much it pleased me, might ruin the force of my bow in adagio playing, I ceased to pursue it. Included here especially is "hopping" with the bow [spiccato] in which many short notes are produced with one

stroke; Mr. la Motte is a master at this to the point of utter amazement, to which he adds the skill of playing double stops very cleanly in just this fashion. But this stroke, pleasing as it may be to the ear, completely ruins the arm for adagio playing; it is the very opposite of the strong bow which is demanded of a good adagio player. Therefore, it would not make good sense to demand a moving adagio of Mr. la Motte and at the same time want to have the ears tickled by spiccato notes. Yet while necessarily admiring this able man, I could not help regretting that the constant and sublime pleasure which a Benda adagio affords had to be sacrificed to this short, though spirited one. I also admire with amazement the indescribable speed and infallible accuracy of [Antonio] Lolli, and the accomplishment, ease, purity and agreeableness of Ditters, Pesch and Fränzel among others. But Cramer, who incorporates both styles as much as is possible, him I do not merely admire; my heart applauds him and I both love and admire him. More still I am drawn to a Benda, who has no thought of arousing admiration, but only aims at my heart and hits it so squarely that I am completely filled with the sentiment he wished to arouse in me.

Thus Mr. Carl Benda deserves not only our applause for his great skill, but also our hearty thanks for upholding the style of his venerable father, in performance as well as in composition. We have only to wish that Mr. Benda would exert himself to put something of himself into his works and his playing. But not merely so as not to be an imitator--for it were honor enough to be a successful imitator of so great a master--but rather to satisfy somewhat the now so prevalent taste for novelty. He would thereby have the pleasure of making his great father's style more widely known; for with many persons--to the shame of the German public--it now has been pushed aside by brash wags [*Witzlinge*]. But we would only want him to subject the fast movements to such changes: his adagio style must remain unchanged, for it is founded in the nature of our sensibilities and passions, and as long as they remain unchanged, the true adagio, that which moves and stirs us, will be Benda's.

The eldest son of Concertmeister Benda, Mr. Friedrich Benda, deserves no little acclaim as a violinist; however, he has departed more from his father's style of playing and has moved closer to the new fashion. Still more admiration is due him as a clavier player and a composer. He plays the keyboard with much dexterity and very agreeably, and his compositions display thoroughness, industry and inventiveness. I wish that he would

publish his trios for two violins and cello, and his keyboard concerti. At this point I can divulge to the public the agreeable news that Mr. Carl Benda has decided to publish six violin sonatas of his pen; they are very melodious and pleasant.

I might make mention here of Mlle. [Juliane] Benda, whom I mentioned as a singer in my Fifth Letter; she is also a very able pianist. She plays with such dexterity and confidence as are seldom seen in a female, and at the same time very prettily and with much expression. I also possess a few sonatas and songs by her hand which are full of invention and warmth of expression.

I suppose you want me to tell you what I thought of the Great Frederick as a flute virtuoso. That I can do without hypocrisy in a few short words: perfectly good at adagios, not good at all in allegros. He plays adagios with much sensitivity and strong expression. His support of the tone, his precision with regard to piano and forte, and embellishments [*Manieren*] completely appropriate to the adagio--everything, everything about his adagio playing is in the Benda style. His cadenzas are pretty and always suited to the piece. With them he often ears a "Bravo" or "Bravissimo" from Concertmeister Benda. His allegro, however, has no fire to it; the fast notes are dull and dragging, and the longer-valued notes lack the proper accentuation, which is another thing that distinguishes the allegro from the adagio.

It had been my plan to criticize nothing in these letters that concerned only one person so that the contents of my letters would be laudatory, partly so that there would be nothing unnecessary in them, and partly to defeat all suspicion of envy on my part, from which, thank Heaven, I am completely free. But no one could think it the work of envy to point out errors of a king in one of the fine arts. It may also be seen that timidity does not cause me to withhold my criticism.

I shall write you again from here to tell you something about this lovely area. Also there are a few other virtuosi here worthy of your respect. Remain ever my friend as I shall eternally be yours.

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TENTH LETTER.

To Mr. C[oncertmeister] V[eichtner].

Potsdam.

Beautiful as Potsdam is in architecture[29] and even its countryside,[30] yet because of the cold lack of neighborliness[31] that reigns there, I should never wish to live there--were it not also the home of Concertmeister Benda. For that I could live there and take no thought of beautiful architecture or

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[29]Potsdam abounds in beautiful buildings. In almost every street one finds buildings which have been built according to drawings of the most beautiful Italian examples. Yet the beauty is all external. The interior has neither beauty nor comfort, and one is no little surprised to enter a palace and find a small, dark stairs, the doors often with no locks and the rooms informal, and in them the lowest tradespeople and soldiers. And if they should lack for people to live in these new buildings (which are still being built), then they can do as did the predecessor of this king did with the new houses in Berlin before they were inhabited: he had lights put in them so that a foreigner, or perhaps he himself, would think them inhabited.

[30]The area around Potsdam is pretty and offers abundant variety. The city itself rests upon an island completely surrounded by water which flows through the middle of the city as well. There are high hills to either side, some covered with trees, some cleared; these heights command a good view not only of the city itself, but also of a large surrounding area. The mountains alternate with flat stretches of meadows and fields, and thus the inhabitants of the city are provided with beautiful areas for taking walks.

[31]It is truly amazing that the way of life here is so unsociable and dead despite the fact that two courts are in residence, namely the King's and the Crown Prince's. But perhaps they are precisely the cause of it. One courtier avoids another, this one hates that one and the city people themselves often have reason to fear the court people and avoid having anything to do with them.

landscapes. If I had not resolved to exclude from these letters any news that interests me only, I could fill several pages with how I was received in friendly and honorable fashion at the home of Concertmeister Benda. That this can be boring and vexatious for the reader has been amply illustrated by BURNEY'S journal, in which the reader must review with him all the banquets and parties at which Burney alone did the eating. From this alone I could prove that Burney is no typical Englishman.

Sans Souci[32] and the New Palace[33] are the King's summer quarters. There I heard some chamber music, performed not only by the King, but also by a very likeable and pleasing singer, Signor Colli, a young castrato whom the King likes for his pure, gentle voice, and also for his pleasing figure; Mr. Colli performs chamber music for the King every day. I must also make mention of a great cello virtuoso, Mr. DUPORT, who lived in Paris until now, but now has been taken on by the King for the Opera and chamber music, and by the Prince of Prussia as His Royal Highness' teacher. The quickness of his fingers, the variety and ease of his bowing (and in both the most complete confidence) are indescribable. His tone is pure throughout the range of the instrument, pleasant, and consistent whether in the highest positions or even beyond that. To see other cellists move the left hand close to the bridge is in itself enough to

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[32]This is a small, tasteful summer building which lies at some slight elevation and has a garden of which may be sooner said that Nature at her finest reigns more therein than much Art. Yet Art has here done Nature the favor of creating unartificial order and beauty in small, whereas Nature otherwise treats only in large. After Art had made the subtlest and wisest choices and had arranged everything for the best, she then hid herself modestly under the mantle of Nature and now remains concealed.

[33]The New Palace is a model of the rich and extravagant style of building. From top to bottom, everything is regal. It seems to me, however, that the exterior is completely overladen with decorations; the only way to excuse it is to see it as a royal summer-house. The view from this beautiful building is excellent and quite varied. The great variety, provided by Nature herself, has been successfully amplified by the King. On a hillside some distance away which was covered over with young birches he had ruins of buildings built; these contrast very nicely with Laughing Nature and enhance her.

cause anxiety--for soon the squeaking begins, and one is tempted to yell, "Why violin pieces on the bass? That's not right for the instrument!" Mr. DUPORT can not only play perfectly in tune in the highest positions, but also retains the cello tone when doing so. One may safely accept the opinion about him which is generally held: in allegro playing Mr. DUPORT will not be surpassed; yet anyone who has heard Mr. MARA knows that this is not the case in adagio playing.

As usual, the King played concertos by [J. J.] Quantz. In the previous letter I said what I thought of his playing, and here will take the opportunity to speak of Mr. Quantz' works, about which Mr. Burney blathered on at length, though he knew only the three concertos he heard that day at the chamber music performance. That he was able to observe very little in orderly fashion is easily explained by his excitement. For it seems inevitable to me that any man who is enraptured when Countess Thun pays him a compliment or when Count Sacken invites him to dinner, that such a man, finding himself in the ante-chamber of the King of Prussia and hearing him play the flute, would be entirely beside himself. Oh, that Englishman!

Quantz wrote 300 concertos and all of them for a king. Could it be otherwise than that at first sight many of them appear similar? But if one investigates them with care, one will find variety everywhere and will be amazed at the inventiveness and inexhaustible genius of the man. And with respect to industry, beauty, harmony, design, and execution of each movement--who surpasses him at these?

His scores are all perfectly correct, but it is not this exactitude alone which one must so much admire, but rather the variety and richness which everywhere abounds. And when one looks at the design of each movement, notes first the theme and then observes how excellently it is carried through and sees how all other motifs are contained within the main theme--then one understands with what care and attention Quantz has planned every movement, not as most modern composers do who simply write down whatever occurs to them. As far as the well-known figurations are concerned, it was not otherwise possible than that there would be some similarities in many of the works, for after all, he had to be guided always by the King's playing ability and even by his will, and thus was forced to put in the King's favorite melodic patterns. With respect to the accompaniment, he invented a new style by not always having the voices accompanied by full harmony, but rather often by the bass alone or simply with violins in unison. And thus the harmony is

carried by the passing tones of the bass line, thus causing the "concert voice" to be more prominent, which, in the case of the flute, is very desirable. He has also been successful in his accompaniments of the Italian *scherzare*. In short, then, as an instrumental composer Quantz is to be admired above a great many others; one must also admire him as a writer and as a connoisseur of his instrument and others as well. He deserved to be the teacher and darling of King Frederick, and anyone who does not sufficiently esteem him does not deserve to know him.

Here in Potsdam I have come to know a very able bassoon virtuoso who is at the same time an inventive composer; and what is even more rare--he couples the gallant style of writing with understanding composition. I mean Mr. Eichner. His tone is full and pleasing and even though he is able to perform very difficult things on his instrument, still he stays within the limits of what is singable and pleasing--as is appropriate for that instrument. And how seldom one sees such knowledge and considerations among virtuosos nowadays. No one is satisfied with his instrument: the cellist is bent on making a violin of the cello, the violinist wants to make a fife of his instrument, or a bassoon or a child's whistle. The bassoonist, the flutist, the oboist, all of them want to play like string players, and they forget that their own instruments are supposed to imitate the human voice, and could actually approach the voice, while the cellist and violinist often strive in vain to do so. I especially admired the way Mr. Eichner understands the nature of the instrument, and often when he played I thought I was hearing a beautiful tenor voice. Nor does he neglect to throw in occasional displays of technique to show that he does not lack the ability, but that good taste and a good sense of music place them after the voice in importance. And how much he gains by having the concertos he plays carefully written is evident to all. For who has not had reason to complain about the horrendous works that are played by even the ablest virtuosos since the plague of composer-virtuosos set in; some even consider it a disgrace to play works by other composers. For this reason I fear going to any large concert, and am pleased to stay as far away as possible if I am not assured of finding reasonable virtuosos there who in addition to dexterity also have knowledge and taste. I do sometimes go to hear a new virtuoso. But if his art is only in his fingers, then one hearing is enough for me, for, after all, fancy playing only arouses admiration, which in turn demands novelty.

Now if my letter has been too rambling for you, in my own

defense I must add that I did not have time to be more precise.

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