

Vienna, 20th April,
1782

Dearest sister! –

My dear Konstanze has finally summoned the *courage* to follow the impulse of her good heart – namely to write² to you, my dear sister. [5] – If you will honour her |: and indeed I hope you will, so that I can read her pleasure over it on the brow of this good creature – :| if you will honour her with an answer, I would ask you to send your letter to me as an enclosure. – I write this only as a precaution so that you know that her mother and her sisters know nothing about her writing to you. – [10] Herewith I send you a *præludio* and a three-part fugue,³ – that is precisely the reason why I did not answer you at once, because I could not get finished earlier because of the toilsome writing of the small notes. – It is awkwardly written. – the *præludio* should come first, then the *fugue* follows afterwards. – But the reason was that I had already written the fugue and copied it out [15] while I was thinking out the *præludium*. – I only hope that you can read it, because the writing is so small, and then – that it might be to your liking. – I will certainly write you something better for the keyboard another time. – The reason why this fugue came into the world was really in my dear Konstanze. – *Baron van Suiten*,⁴ to whom I go every Sunday, [20] gave me all the works of Handel and Bach |: after I had played them through to him :| to take home. – When Konstanze heard the *fugues*, she fell completely in love with them; – she does not want to hear anything except *fugues*, but particularly |: in this special field :| nothing except Handel and Bach; – Now, because she has often heard me playing *fugues* out of my head, she asked me whether I had not yet written any down? [25] – and when I said to her, No. – She scolded me very severely indeed because I did not want to write down precisely that which is most artistic and most beautiful in music, and did not relent in her begging until I put down a fugue for her, and thus it came into being.⁵ – I deliberately wrote *Andante Maestoso* on it, so that one does not on any account play it fast – for if a fugue is not played slowly, one cannot pick out the entering subject distinctly and clearly, [30] and it is therefore of no effect. – I will – come time and good opportunity, write 5 more⁶ and then present them to *Baron van Suiten*, who in fact has a treasury – in value very great but in numbers admittedly very small – of good music.⁷ – and for precisely that reason I ask you not to take back your promise [35] and let no person see them. – Learn them by heart, and play them. – A *fugue* is not so easy to play by ear. – If Papa has not yet had the works by Eberlin copied, that would suit me very well – I have got hold of them under the hand and – for I no longer had them in my memory, I unfortunately saw that they – are much too trifling [40] and in truth do not deserve a place between Handel and Bach. All *respect* for his 4-part

¹ BD: Mozart's sister, Maria Anna Walburga Ignatia ("Nannerl"), (1751-1829).

² BD: Cf. lines 47 ff.; note on No. 0674/12 ff.

³ BD: KV 394 (383a). Nannerl sent the work to B&H in 1800 (cf. No. 1280/14 ff.; No. 1293/4 ff.).

⁴ BD: Gottfried Bernhard van Swieten (1733-1803), became a diplomat in 1755, served in numerous European cities. From 1777 he had educational responsibilities in Vienna. Owner of an enormously valuable library. Wrote the text for Haydn's "Seven Last Words" and "The Seasons". Acquainted with C. Ph. E. Bach. Met Mozart in Vienna in 1767, saw him regularly in Vienna, introduced him in his home to the music of Handel and Bach. Commissioned works from Mozart.

⁵ BD: This story of Constanze's role in having the fugues written down was no doubt an invention designed to impress Leopold and Nannerl. The only evidence of Constanze's musicality is limited to her participation in the performance of the Mass in C Minor KV 427 (417a) in Salzburg in 1783 (cf. No. 0765/181-182) and the *solfeggi* KV 393 (385b), which were written for her.

⁶ BD: The project seems never to have gone beyond KV Anh. 33 and Anh. 40 (383b). Cf. No. 1288/76. But see Mozart's treatment of six three-voice fugues by J.S.Bach (5) and W.F.Bach (1) in KV 405 and his transposition of a six-voice fugue by Gerhard Croll.

⁷ BD: Scores primarily of Handel's works, but also a wide range of Baroque works for keyboard.

writing, but his keyboard *fugues* are nothing but little *versetti*⁸ drawn out to great length. Now may life go very well for you indeed. I am glad the 2 bonnets please you. I kiss you 1000 times and am your

[45] sincere brother,
W. A: Mozart
A handkiss to Papa. – Today I received no letter. –

CONSTANZE WEBER'S POSTSCRIPT:

Most esteemed and most precious friend!

I would never have been so bold as to write forthrightly to you, most esteemed friend, of my inclinations and longings or [50] to place them in your hands, had not your esteemed brother assured me that you would not take umbrage at this step, which happens out of too great a desire to converse, at least in writing, with a person who, although unknown to me, is yet most valuable to me because of the name Mozart. – [55] Should you become angry if I am so bold as to say to you that you are precious and – beloved – to me above all else, madam, for no other reason than your being the sister of a brother so worthy of you, and if I dare – to ask you for your friendship: – without being proud, I may say that I half deserve it, and wholly deserving – is what I shall strive to become! – [60] May I offer you mine |: which I have already long since given to you secretly, madam, in my heart :| in return? – Oh, I indeed hope so! – and in this hope I remain,

Esteemed and precious
friend,
[65] your
Please give my handkiss to most obedient servant
your esteemed Papa: – and friend,
Constanza Weber mp⁹

⁸ BD: “Little versetti”: in responsorial psalm settings, the organ parts sometimes used as one half of the responses were sometimes published by composers such as Eberlin under the Italian title “*versetti*”.

⁹ mp = manu propria = in her own hand.