

[Munich, 29th November, 1780]

The *aria*² sent for Ra[a]ff³ is not at all to either my or his liking; regarding the *era*, I will not say anything at all, for that is always wrong in such an *aria*. *Metastasio*⁴ has it from time to time, but extremely seldom, and these *arias* are not his best either; and what necessity is there for it there? – Moreover, it is also not at all as we wished it, namely it should show nothing except peace and contentment, and it shows this here only in the second line; then we have seen and felt enough of the disaster and all that he had to withstand throughout the whole *opera*, but he can surely speak about his present state. Nor do we need a second part at all – all the better. – In the *opera Achille in Sciro*⁵ by *Metastasio* there is such an *aria* in this manner, and in which manner Raff wishes to have it:

*Or che mio figlio sei,
O fido⁶ il destin nemico
Sento degl'anni miei
Il peso a leggierir.⁷*

Tell me, do you not find that the speech by the subterranean voice is too long? Consider it thoroughly. – Imagine the stage, the voice must be terrifying – it must penetrate – one must believe that it really is so – how can it achieve this if the speech is too long, a length which will increasingly convince the listeners of its emptiness? – If the speech of the ghost in *Hamlet*⁸ were not so long, it would have an even better effect. – The speech here can furthermore be shortened easily, it gains more from that than it loses.

Now, for the *March* in the 2nd *Act*, which one hears from a distance, I need *sordini*⁹ for the trumpets and horns of the kind one does not have here. Would you perhaps send me one of each with the next post-coach soulless I can have them copied here?¹⁰

¹ BD: Original lost. NissenB.

² BD: Probably the original version of aria No. 31.

³ BD: Anton Raaff (1714-1797), son of a shepherd, originally intended for the priesthood, appeared as a singer in Bonn, Vienna, Paris, Lisbon, Madrid and Naples before a longer period of service in Mannheim and Munich. Cf. No. 0120/54.

⁴ BD: Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782). Came to the Vienna court in 1730; Apostolo Zeno (1668-1750) had suggested him as his own successor. He remained there until the end of its life. He met Mozart at least once, cf. No. 135/60-61. Mozart set several of his libretti (KV 118/74c; 126; 208; 362) and numerous arias (KV 21 (19c); 369; 23; 78 (73b); 79 (73d); 88 (73c); 71; 74b; 77 (73e); 82 (73 o); 83 (73p); 368; 440 (383h); 294; 512; 468a (295a); 432 (421a); 538; KV Anh. 2; KV⁶: 73 A (lost)).

⁵ BD: *Achille in Sciro*, opera by Caldara celebrating the marriage of Maria Theresia and Franz of Lorraine.

⁶ BD: Correct to “*Sfido*” instead of “*O fido*”.

⁷ “Now that you are my son, I defy hostile destiny, feel the weight of my years becoming lighter”.

⁸ BD: Mozart probably saw *Hamlet* performed by Schikaneder’s troupe in Salzburg on 13th Nov. 1780.

⁹ = “mutes”. BD: A request repeated in No. 0555, answered in No. 0556.

¹⁰ BD: According to a communication from Stefan Zweig to Emily Anderson, the auction catalogue of Puttick & Simpson of 20th Dec., 1848 included with this letter a P.S. in which Mozart asked his father to write often, but “by day and with eyeglasses”. Nissen does not mention this P.S.