

Sharon Chmielarz

SNIPPETS FROM FRAU MOZART'S LAST LETTERS TO
LEOPOLD MOZART AND NANNERL, 1778

We've arrived by mailcoach, nearly choked by wind and drowned by rain
but safe and sound, praise and thanks be to God.

Wolfgang is bored, he hasn't gotten a clavier yet, and the hall
is so narrow it will be impossible to have one brought up.

My own life is not at all a pleasant one. I sit alone in our room the whole day long
as if I were in gaol, so dark in here I couldn't possibly know what the weather is like.

And for this we pay thirty livres a month.
Lunch is calf's foot in some dirty sauce.

By the way, Baron de Grimm paid a visit; you're not to worry so much,
shit in your bed and make it crack. Everything comes out right in the end.

Madame d'Épinay's given me her red satin gown and fan!
Though indeed I cannot understand one word of her language.

How is Frau Adlgasser doing? Barbara Eberling? Does she still pay you visits?
Does Nannerl teach at Andretter's every week as usual?

Tell Nannerl the frisure they wear here is extraordinarily high all round,
more than a foot. Tell her Queen Marie Antoinette is pregnant!

I had a real good laugh over your letter for I know the girl Sigmund Haffner's engaged to,
the daughter of the brewer at Uttendorf. She looks older than her twenty-six,
but only because she was worked to death at the Colonel's. A charming match for Sigmund.

Herr Raaff comes to see us almost daily.
He calls me 'Mother' and sings me arias;
I am quite in love with his voice.

I walked in the Luxembourg Gardens and into the Palace's picture gallery;
was frightfully tired when I got home. Alone. Wolfgang's lurching with Raaff.

As to the lightning conductor, I can't find out what people here think about it,
as I don't know the language. It seems to me God can find anybody He wants
and no lightning conductor can save him.

"I send greetings to Nannerl," Leopold Mozart wrote from Milan (12 Dec., 1772), "and a message urging her to practice hard and to teach little Zezi conscientiously. I know well that she herself will benefit if she accustoms herself to teaching someone else very thoroughly and patiently. I am not writing this without a motive."

ON THE ART OF PRACTICE

We must all have a quiet place to practice, Zezi.
Even the daughter of the *Zuckerbäcker* practices
in the bakery. Afternoons when the shop's sold out
she swings the door's "*offen*" sign around and takes
a plain brown violin case from under the counter.
Squeak! Squawk! Sh-h-ht! Papa's sleeping—
the early riser, the floury mole stirring dough in the glow
of the oven, Papa, the sweet tooth king, lies upstairs,
rolled in a feathertick. Ruuuup! he snores. In they go.
Cakes and breads. An hour later, Ruuuup! he snores.
Out they come. Money for violin lessons.
Decorated with chocolate and sweet cherries,
glazed with maple. One day the daughter
wants to be a virtuoso; the shop, a salon
of spindly chairs. During prolonged, difficult,
sour cadenzas customers will savor,
with mincing bites and licking tongues,
Papa's sugary petits noirs.