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Christoph Heinrich Girbert orders *Entführung* from Breitkopf (17 Nov 1788)

David Black

Letter, Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig, Bibliothek, A/2232/2005

[1]

HochEdelgebohrner Herr!

Eur: HochEdelgebohrn geehrtestes Schreiben
will sogleich beantworten, und mir nachstehen,,
de Sachen gehorsamst ausbitten

1.) Mozarts Entführung aus dem
Serail im Klavier Auszug.
2.) Walthers Musikalisches Le,,
xicon. Erfurt 1728 *4:to* Seite
119.

Im Verzeichniß
Musikalischer
Bücher 5:te Ausgabe

3.) Sam[m]lung kleiner Klavier=
und Singstüke, 1:tes 2:tes 3:tes
4:tes und 5:tes Quartal. Seite
127.
4.) *Just, VI Sonatines pour le
Clav: à l'usage des com[m]encens
4:to* Seite 129.

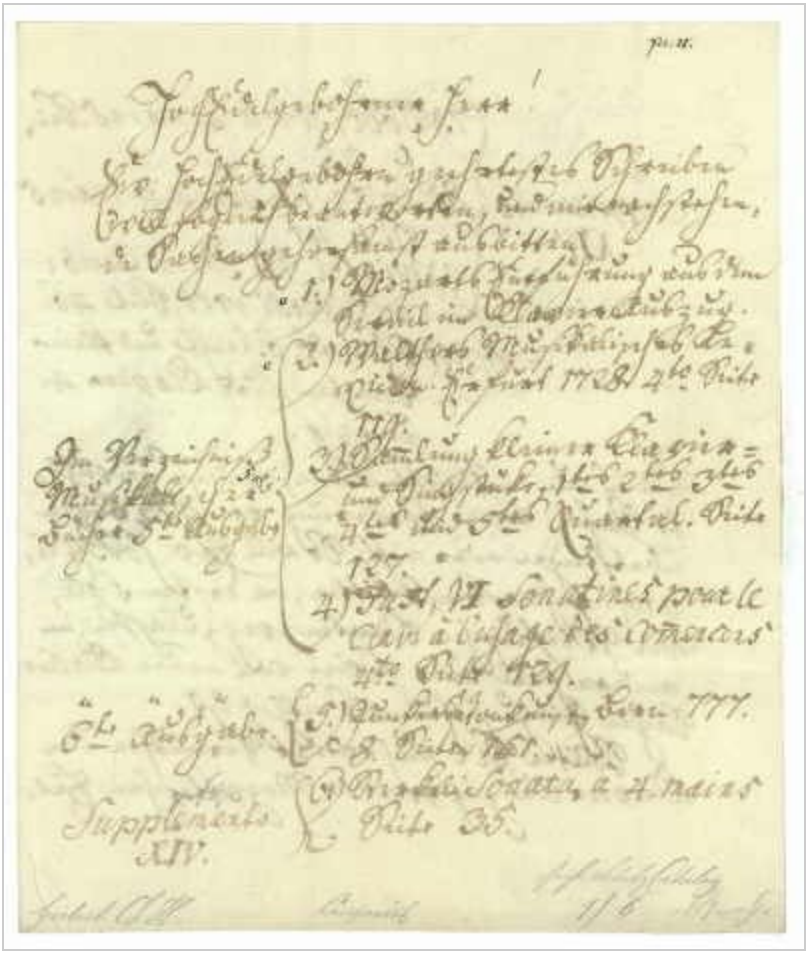
“ “ “
6:te Ausgabe.

5.) Junkers Tonkunst, Bern 777.
8. Seite 151.

Supplemento
XIV.

6.) Sterkel Sonata à 4. mains
Seite 35.

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[2]

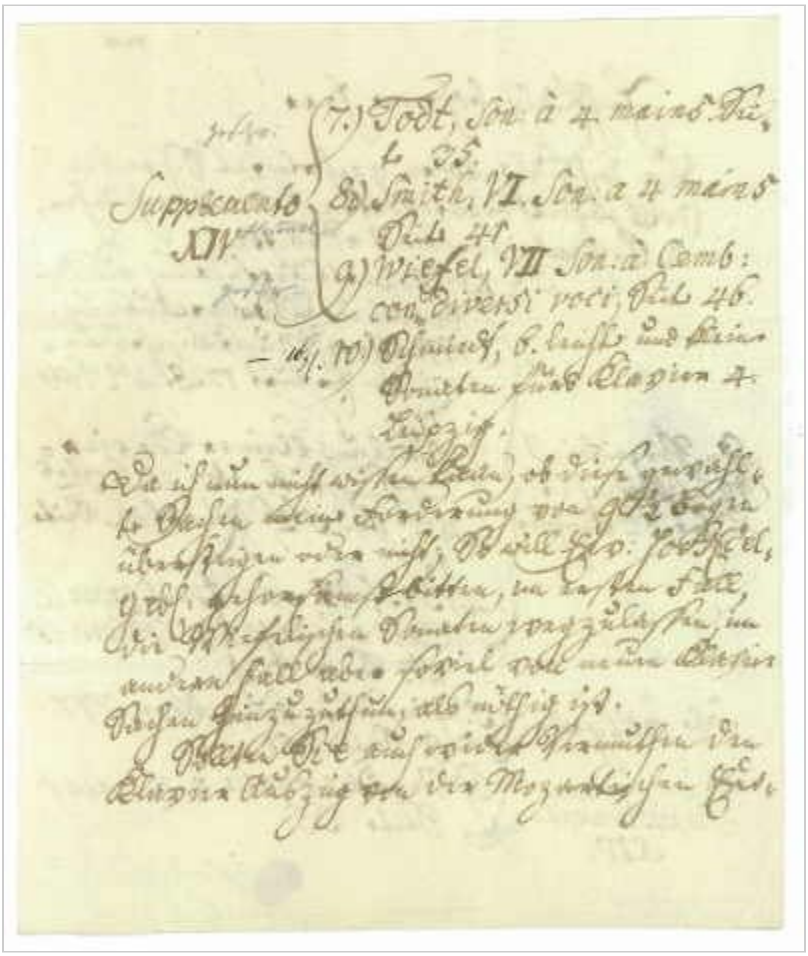
7.) *Todt, Son: à 4. mains.* Sei,,
te 35.

Supplemento XIV.

8.) *Smith VI. Son: a 4 mains*
Seite 41.
9.) *Wiefel VII Son: à Cemb: con diversi voci*, Seite 46.
10.) Schmidt, 6. leichte und kleine Sonaten fürs Klavier 4. Leipzig.

Da ich nun nicht wissen kann, ob diese gewähl,,
te Sachen meine Forderung von 97½ Bogen
übersteigen oder nicht; So will Eur: HochEdel,,
geb: gehorsamst bitten, im ersten Fall,
die Wieflischen Sonaten wegzulassen, im
andern Fall aber soviel von neuen Klavier
Sachen hinzuzuthun als nöthig ist.

Sollten Sie auch wider Vermuthen den
Klavier Auszug von der Mozartischen Ent,,



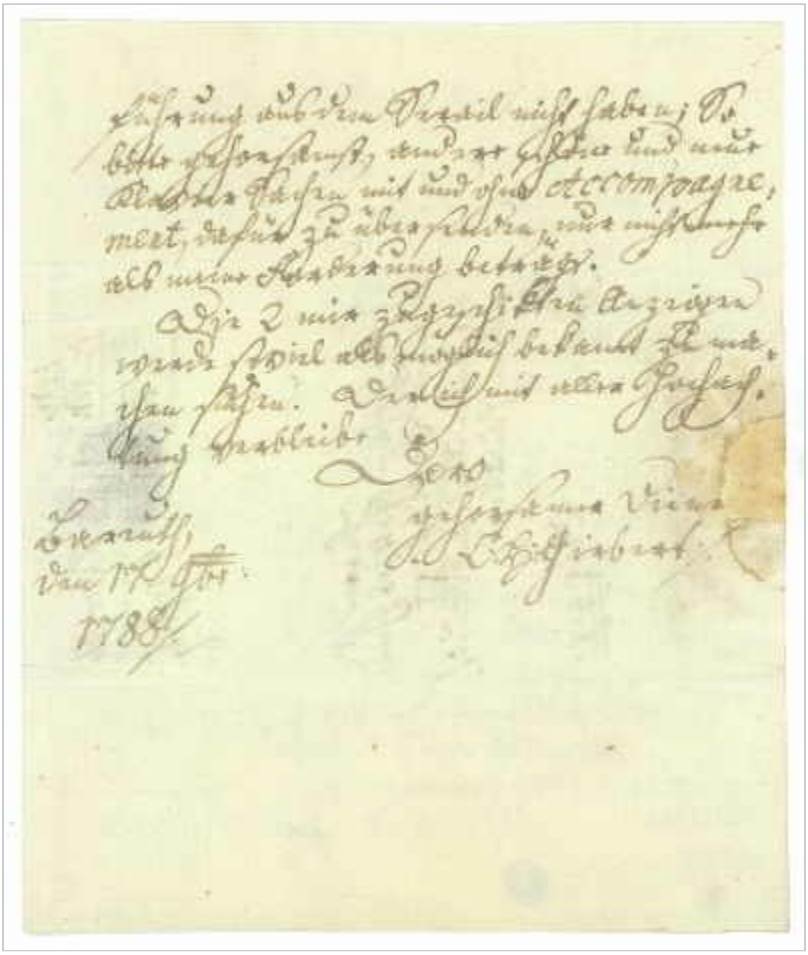
[3]

führung aus dem Serail nicht haben; So
bitte gehorsamst, andere schöne und neue
Klavier Sachen mit und ohne *Accompagne,,*
ment, dafür zu übersenden, nur nicht mehr
als meine Forderung beträgt.

Die 2 mir zugeschikten Anzeigen
werde soviel als möglich bekannt zu ma,,
chen suchen. Der ich mit aller Hochach,,
tung verbleibe

Dero
gehorsame[r] Dien[r]
C: H: Girbert ÷

Bareuth,
den 17. 9br:
1788 ÷



1788 Bareuth
17. Nov. Girbert
21. ___
24 x 2

Herrn
Herrn Johann Gottlob Im,,
manuel Breitkopf,
berühmten Buch= und Musi=
kalien Händler
in
freÿ Leipzig.



[translation:]

[1]
Honorable Sir!

I want to answer Your Honor's most worthy
letter immediately, and most humbly request the
following items:

1.) Mozart's *Entführung aus dem*
Serail in keyboard score.

[...]
[for the rest of items in Girbert's list, see the Notes below]

[2]
[...]
As I cannot know now whether or not these selected
items exceed my credit for 97½ Bogen *[bifolia]*,
thus I humbly ask Your Honor, in the first case
to omit the Wiefel sonatas, in the other case, however,

to add as many new keyboard items as necessary.
Should you also, contrary to expectation, not have the keyboard score of Mozart's *Entführung*

[3]
aus dem Serail, then I most humbly ask you to send other pretty and new keyboard items, with and without accompaniment, but not to amount to more than my credit.
I will try to make as widely known as possible the 2 advertisements you sent me. I remain with all esteem

Your
Most obedient servant
C. H. Girbert ÷

Bayreuth,
17 November
1788
[...]

Commentary

Christoph Heinrich Girbert (1751–1826) was a keyboard player and music teacher who spent most of his life in Bayreuth. According to Gerber (*Neues Lexikon*, vol. 2, col. 333–34), our main source of information, Girbert was born in Fröhstockheim (today part of Rödelsee near Würzburg). After displaying "an irresistible inclination for music," Girbert received a rudimentary musical education from his stepfather, and a short but more influential course of instruction from Kantor Stadler in Bimbach.

In 1769 Girbert moved to Bayreuth, where he started a business, worked as a keyboard teacher and enthusiastically taught himself keyboard technique, harmony, and composition. Between May and June 1784, Ludwig Schmidt visited Bayreuth and, "without much effort," convinced Girbert to be the music director of his new theatrical company (for more on Schmidt, see our entry for 25 Aug 1785). The company mounted productions in Ansbach, Erlangen, Nuremberg, Salzburg, and Passau, giving Girbert the opportunity to meet and learn from leading composers. In Reichard's *Theaterkalender*, Girbert appears as "Musikdirektor" of the company in 1785, 1786 and 1787 (Reichard's listings are generally based on information from the previous year). According to Gerber, Girbert was director for only thirteen months (i.e. until mid 1785), after which he returned to Bayreuth and resumed his business.

Among the company's productions was Mozart's *Entführung*, which it notably gave in Salzburg at least seven times between Nov 1784 and Feb 1785 (see our entry for 25 Aug 1785). Girbert

thus had the opportunity to meet Leopold Mozart, although Leopold made no reference to Girbert in his letters to Nannerl. It is not surprising, then, that Girbert was interested in acquiring a copy of *Entführung* for himself a few years later.

This letter to the music publisher Johann Gottlob Immanuel Breitkopf (1719–1794) is primarily a request for a substantial number of musical books and scores, both printed and manuscript, listed in a number of the publisher's catalogs (see below). These include Walther's celebrated *Musicalisches Lexicon* (then already sixty years old), Junker's extended essay *Tonkunst*, and various pieces of keyboard music. There is a preference for short and easy pieces, including some (items 6–8) for one keyboard four hands, which may suggest Girbert had a teaching purpose in mind; both the Sterkel and the Todt have parts marked fancifully for the "master" and "student," like Haydn's Variations Hob. XVIIa:1.

Girbert's request for the keyboard arrangement of *Entführung* probably refers to the vocal score arranged by the Mainz Cathedral organist Johann Franz Xaver Starck (d. 1799) and published by Schott in 1785/86 (see Haberkamp 1986, 177ff). This edition did not appear in Breitkopf's catalogs, and so Girbert included a qualification that should *Entführung* be unavailable, contrary to his assumption, Breitkopf should send further "pretty and new keyboard items, with and without accompaniment."

The outcome of this order is unclear, as Breitkopf's side of the conversation is not known to survive and no music from Girbert's estate has been identified. However, someone presumably in the Breitkopf office marked the Mozart and Walther entries with a small circle in ink, which may indicate that they were unavailable.

Gerber listed a large number of compositions by Girbert in manuscript, including seven operettas, four keyboard concertos, six sonatas and five sonatinas for keyboard, two symphonies and five string quartets. All these appear to be lost (a number were formerly in the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Königsberg).

We are very grateful to the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig for providing us with a copy of this letter.

Notes (⇧)

Girbert's letter refers to the fifth and sixth issues of Breitkopf's *Verzeichniß Musikalischer Bücher, sowohl zur Theorie als Praxis, und für alle Instrumente...in ihre gehörige Classen ordentlich eingetheilet* (Leipzig, 1777 and 1780) for items 2–4 and 5 respectively. For items 6–9, the reference is to *Supplemento XIV. dei Catalogi delle Sinfonie, Partite, Overture, Soli, Duetti, Trii, Quattri e Concerti per il Violino, Flauto Traverso, Cembalo, ed altri Stromenti che si trovano in Manoscritto nella Officina musica di Breitkopf* (Leipzig, 1781).

The items Girbert requested are:

> 1) *Die Entführung aus dem Serail. Ein komisches Sing-Spiel in drey Aufzügen. Die Musick ist von dem vortrefflichen Herrn Mozart, Der Klavier-Auszug von Herrn Abbé Starck* (Mainz, 1785/86).
>
> 2) Johann Gottfried Walther, *Alte und Neue Musicalische Bibliothec, Oder Musicalisches Lexicon*... (Erfurt, 1728). Strangely, and perhaps unbeknownst to Girbert, the Breitkopf reference is to the limited first edition of the *Lexicon*, which contained only entries for the letter 'A'. The complete edition appeared at Leipzig in 1732.
>
> 3) *Sammlung kleiner Clavier und Singestücke, zum Besten der neuen Friedrichstädtischen und Werdauischen Armenschulen* (Leipzig, 1774–76).
>
> 4) Johann August Just, *Six sonatines pour le clavecin à l'usage des commençans*... op. 3 (Den Haag, n.d.).
>
> 5) Carl Ludwig Junker, *Tonkunst* (Bern, 1777).
>
> 6) Johann Franz Xaver Sterkel, Sonata in F for keyboard four hands, StWV 212. This entry, like numbers 7 and 9 is marked "geschr*[ieben]*" in pencil, indicating it was transmitted in manuscript.
>
> 7) Johann Christoph Todt, Sonata in F for keyboard four hands. The "F. C." in the catalog is presumably an error for "J. C."
>
> 8) Theodore Smith, two sets of *Trois sonates en duo qui peuvent être exécutés par deux personnes sur un clavecin ou piano forte*, op. 1 and op. 2 (Berlin, c. 1775). This entry is marked "Hum*[m]*el" referring to Johann Julius Hummel, the publisher of the prints.
>
> 9) Johann Wilhelm Wiefel, Sonatas in D, F, A, B-flat, G, C and B-flat for various solo instruments with keyboard.
>
> 10) Siegfried Schmiedt, *Sechs kleine und leichte Sonaten fürs Klavier oder Fortepiano...erster Theil* (Leipzig, 1788). Girbert did not indicate in which supplement this was found, but the ink annotation "16" shows that it appeared in the sixteenth supplement (Leipzig, 1787).

"Hochedelgebohren," the term of address that Girbert uses with Breitkopf, literally means "high nobly born," but according to a German-English dictionary of the time was used with "Persons of some Distinction, to such as are in publick Offices, but are not Noblemen born"; *also* to Merchants, to renowned Artificers and to Tradesmen of some Distinction ..." (Ebers 1798, ii:182–83).

Two further letters from Girbert to unidentified correspondents of 20 Mar 1788 and 14 Jun 1788 are in the Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main. We have not had the opportunity to inspect these.

The composer and organist Christian Friedrich Johann Girbert (1794–1860) and Johann Georg Girbert, Kantor in Gössnitz and author of a *Kleine theoretisch-praktische Tonschule* (Weimar, 1845) may be related to Christoph Heinrich Girbert.

Bibliography (⇧)

Brook, Barry S. 1966. *The Breitkopf thematic catalogue; the six parts and sixteen supplements, 1762-1787*. New York: Dover.

Fischer, Joachim. 2014. *Johann Franz Xaver Sterkel, 1750-1817: thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis*. [Aschaffenburg] : J.F.X. Sterkel Gesellschaft.

Haberkamp, Gertraut. 1986. *Die Erstdrucke der Werke von Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*. 2 vols. Musikbibliographische Arbeiten, edited by Rudolf Elvers, vol. 10. Tutzing: Hans Schneider.

Credit: DB (transcription by DE). This item was first identified through a search on Kalliope.

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