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## The Mozart Conversation or The Aria of Nannerl Mozart: Drama in Three Acts and Two Tableaux

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**THE MOZART CONVERSATION**

**or**

**THE ARIA OF NANNERL MOZART**

**Drama in three acts and two tableaux**

**2022**

**by**

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## SYNOPSIS

The full-length historic drama (three acts, two tableaux) examines the impact of emerging feminism on the Mozart family during the Enlightenment era.

As social changes cause the rejection of sexism, Nannerl, Mozart's sister disrupts male ordained traditions as she affirms her genius as a musician. The new social trends disrupt the affectionate relationship with her brother Wolfgang, who is psychologically exhausted by the stress to perform. The parents, Leopold and Anna Maria, invoke the respect of old traditions to exploit financially the genius of their son and to minimize his sister.

After the parents' death Wolfgang and Nannerl settle their differences through the joint creation of extraordinary music works. Long after Wolfgang's death, his widow, Constanze, reveals to Nannerl that old family letters demonstrate that prejudices held against her as a woman, were meant to hold her back and to promote her brother. By so doing, they created doubt in Wolfgang's mind about his self worth and caused his nervous breakdown.

## CAST

The five characters can be played by four actors because Anna Maria intervenes only in the first act, and Constanze starts appearing in the second act. Both roles can thus be performed by one actress.

The characters, by order of entrance:

- Anna Maria (1720-1778): Married to Leopold in 1747, she is the mother of Nannerl and Wolfgang. She struggles to adjust to new social ideas. She dies in Paris during a promotion tour for Wolfgang.
- Leopold (1719-1787): Father of Wolfgang and Nannerl; well-regarded music pedagogue and violinist at the Salzburg court. He is a traditionalist conformist.
- Nannerl (1751-1821): Charismatic and talented musician and composer but her career as a composer and a musician is thwarted to make way for her brother's.
- Wolfgang (1756-1791): Highly talented musician and composer and, following the tradition, he is the favorite child because he is a boy. He married Constanze Weber in 1782.
- Constanze (1762-1842): Mozart's wife and talented singer. She comes from a Viennese family of talented musicians. She wrote Mozart's biography long after remarrying in 1809.

## SETTING

Staging in three acts and two simple tableaux:

Tableau 1: Living room of the Mozart family house in Salzburg.

Tableau 2: Background view of the mountains near Salzburg.

The landscape view of the second tableau is supplemented with items needed for the individual scenes. This background panel is removed as needed to view Tableau 1.

## COSTUMES

In act I and II the actors perform with wigs and 18<sup>th</sup> century clothing, but men (Wolfgang, Leopold) wear tight pants. Women (Nannerl, Anna Maria, Constanze) wear puffy floor length skirts in style. In addition, in scenes 7, 8 and 14 Nannerl wears a “basket” tied around the waist underneath her skirt to accentuate the ballooning – a dress style called *à la Française*. In act III the simple Empire fashion is adopted.

## PROPS

Common objects used in the tableaux:

- Decoration for living room of the Mozart family home (Tableau 1)
- Reproduction of mountains landscape as background (Tableau 2)
- Old typewriter (Scene 21)
- Garden table
- 2 Garden chairs
- Bookshelf with books – including “L’Émile” by Rousseau
- Sofa (as available, otherwise two interior chairs)
- Interior table
- Interior chair
- Newspaper: “Salzburg Gazette” (Scene 7)
- Eighteenth century outfits and wigs, as described in Setting
- Skirt basket worn by Nannerl in scenes 7, 8 and 14. See Setting
- Deep sounding bell rung from backstage (Scenes 18 and 19)
- Walking cane (Scene 21)

The Mozart Conversation – Act I

**ACT I**

**SCENE 1 – Leopold, Anna Maria**

**TABLEAU 1**

*[Around 1770, in the living room of the Mozart family house in Salzburg. Leopold and Anna Maria are in their early 50's. The room is decorated with items described in Setting]*

ANNA MARIA

*(In elegant floor-length dress; she stands in the living room as Leopold walks in)*

Oh, how fancy and youthful you look my dear Leopold! Are you about ready to go to the palace for the concert rehearsal?

LEOPOLD

*(Dressed formally. Smiling)*

Yes, I am. But you look very youthful and elegant yourself, dear Anna! We are quite a pair, wouldn't you say? Still young at heart! And we have been married how long now? Twenty-five years?

ANNA MARIA

Not yet, but close: twenty-four! I remember that you had turned twenty-five and had been appointed at the first violin position in the orchestra of the court of Salzburg.

LEOPOLD

Yes, indeed. What memory, you have!

ANNA MARIA

And you managed to keep your job all along.

LEOPOLD

And life has been good to us, for the past twenty-five years, wouldn't you say! That is the reward of stability... I think that it is not so much that I play well, that made our success, but we have always respected the social rules and all the protocols.

ANNA MARIA

I must say that you have a knack for anticipating what to say and how to navigate in high society. And you are also an excellent teacher! At the court they liked what you brought to the plate. Look: now Salzburg is a town with culture!

LEOPOLD

But you know, what?

ANNA MARIA

What's that, my dear?

LEOPOLD

I remember also this: everywhere we would go you were always the most elegant lady and the most beautiful.

ANNA MARIA

Oh, come on...

LEOPOLD

Everyone would turn on their heels to see how a lucky guy I was! Having you at my side gave me that extra boost of pride and self-confidence.

ANNA MARIA

Come on! Let's say that we worked well as a team.

LEOPOLD

We surely did, but your charm was the cherry on the cake... that's what made it happen, everywhere!

ANNA MARIA

Okay, okay, that's fine, but let's not exaggerate. My physical appearance was given to me by nature...

LEOPOLD

*(Interrupting)*

...And by God... And by God, Anna!

ANNA MARIA

But I like to be appreciated for who I am, for what I have accomplished on my own. I am not just a display thing...

LEOPOLD

Yes, of course, you are appreciated! Our Lord chose us, but that does not preclude your own qualities. You bore our children and seconded me in all the important decisions. That is a lot already!

ANNA MARIA

*(Ambivalent, hesitant)*

...I tried to... Yes... I did acquiesce to your decisions.

LEOPOLD

*(Firmly)*

We work hard and the Lord rewards us with beautiful children and good standing at the court and in town. Here is more proof: not only are we blessed with beautiful children but they both are incredibly gifted! What more can we ask for? It is highly unusual for both our grown up daughter and her young brother to show exceptional disposition for music. We are probably blessed like the family of the great Johann Sebastian Bach.

ANNA MARIA

That is true, our Lord has blessed the Bach family with many well-recognized composers and musicians. I guess that, that is why Johann Sebastian Bach humbly wrote in Latin on his cantatas the words 'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam'.

LEOPOLD

You are right... I did not think of it that way! I like that: 'For the Great Glory of God'... 'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam'... Our Lord has blessed the Bachs and us too, Anna Maria, us the Mozarts!

ANNA MARIA

But it is essentially four boys from Johann Sebastian Bach's two wives who are recognized as great composers. From his first wife it is Wilhelm Friedmann and Philip Emmanuel who shine like him.

LEOPOLD

Yes, and from his second wife, Johann Chritoph and Johann Christian; more boys in the collection of great Bach composers!

ANNA MARIA

And we have a beautiful girl, Nannerl, who is very gifted!

LEOPOLD

*(He stops and turns around)*

Do you mean that a child's genius is determined at birth by the mother? Not by the father?

ANNA MARIA

*(With a smile)*

Mmm... It is just a passing thought...

*(Staying respectfully behind her husband)*

But let's hope that our good fortune will last! So far, Nannerl and Wolfgang are on the path to success as they draw their talent from their father - from you, my dear



Leopold! And last Sunday, in front of the whole court, the Archbishop couldn't stop raving about you as his best violinist and extraordinary instructor!

LEOPOLD

*(Proudly)*

Yes, I did hear that. But that's because he keeps my salary low, Anna. Let's not be naïve! He wants to appease me because he pays me barely more than a servant, a butler. And I must officiate immaculately dressed – like I am now – in a uniform just like a servant! A few empty compliments won't feed us very long!

*(Pause)*

While we are on the subject of money, Anna, I am thinking this: we have turned fifty, and we have to start thinking of our old age. Picture this in your mind: if – when we are old – our children are famous musicians, they could contribute to the family wealth and we will not end our lives destitute and in misery.

ANNA MARIA

Well, it must be reassuring, then, that Nannerl's talent is glowing! She is already showing great promise. At her last concert she improvised a big piece on a few notes played at the flute by the bishop...

LEOPOLD

*(Interrupting)*

...The 'Archbishop', if you please...

ANNA MARIA

...Yes, by the Archbishop – a beautiful melody with variations and a fugue, like that... on the spot, and in front of counts and countesses and dukes and duchesses! I am no musician, but I can see that she is a genius...

*(Growing more animated)*

And then, you remember, at the end, when she stood up so pretty and feminine... she looked at the crowd, smiled and bowed so elegantly... She kept the left hand on the piano and made a deep reverence... and she put most gracefully her right hand on her chest revealing just enough of her feminine charm... what stage presence! She floored her audience!... The old man sitting to my right became so excited that he dropped his wig!

LEOPOLD

*(A bit peeved)*

And Wolfgang? What do you think of Wolfgang?

ANNA MARIA

Wolfgang... Well, that is another story altogether...

LEOPOLD

*(Interrupting)*

Oh, Excuse me, just a moment! I want to hear all what you have to say about our genial son, but I am realizing that I must double-check something in the violin parts for the rehearsal... I will be right back. Just a minute, please!

*(He leaves the room)*

**Scene 2 – Anna Maria**

*(Alone)*

Oh, boy... Yes... Wolfgang... that is a totally different story... So sensitive... too sensitive! How can I explain to Leopold that his son is a pack of nerves and anxiety? He is crumbling under the weight of expectations. He is not thriving... So different from Nannerl who is a shoe-in. What I see in Wolfi is anxiety, anxiety and more anxiety... he does only one thing: he composes and composes... and becomes less and less sociable. Luckily, he adores his sister and that is his anchor in society. Their complicity relieves his stress a little bit but I am sure that Leopold does not understand any of this... He is a good man, for sure, but he is always 'Go! Go!'... pushy...

*(Thoughtful)*

He will be back in a minute and will expect that I tell a glowing story of our son's musical prowess! Wolfi is a genius, that is sure, but as a mother I see that the pressure put on him is detrimental: he thinks that he must perform and excel all the time because he is a boy...

**Scene 3 – Leopold, Anna Maria**

LEOPOLD

Good, good, I am all set! False alarm! I was not sure about a transposition that I wrote in the first movement, in the Sonata Allegro... That kept nagging me but it is all right. I was a bit anxious, I guess.

ANNA MARIA

What you say is gibberish to me but I am reassured that nobody is going to have a panic attack on stage!

LEOPOLD

Do I look anxious?

ANNA MARIA

Well, that's a different chapter... We were talking about the children...

LEOPOLD

Yes, right! You were about to tell me about our marvelous son!

ANNA MARIA

You really want to know what I think?... Ok. Well, I am worried, Leopold... Of course, Wolfi is still young, but you must have noticed that he is very withdrawn. He hardly talks with anyone and he has no social grace... He is the total opposite of Nannerl... He is fifteen – he is no longer a child – but he stays mum most of the time. It looks like his whole world revolves in his head and it is always about music... Music is his passion, no question about that!

LEOPOLD

I can see that, and I must agree with you. Like you, I see that his secretive personality is totally the opposite of Nannerl's. She is a natural on stage but that ease does not come naturally to him. But let's recognize what matters the most: as you say, Wolfgang's music is truly out of this world...

ANNA MARIA

...Like Nannerl's?

LEOPOLD

Yes, true, but even more so! However, let's not forget that Nannerl is a woman, and that does not help! It is a big obstacle, a handicap.

ANNA MARIA

But you just said that Nannerl has poise and that she is a natural on stage... She seems ready to confront the cutthroat world of stage artists. She is very well equipped and very stable, while her brother is a pack of nerves. Why do we push him? He is genial, I grant you that, but he likes to mosey along in his own way. I can hardly follow him, sometimes.

LEOPOLD

You mean that he is 'unstable'?

ANNA MARIA

I heard from Nannerl that he spends hours talking to himself, like mumbling, and then, blasting – almost like in a rage – he writes music down on paper. He seems ‘unpredictable’ for the least. That is what I fear.

LEOPOLD

So, if I hear you well, your fear is that, as Nannerl becomes successful and affirms her musical talent to the public, she will overshadow her brother and he may become even more withdrawn?

ANNA MARIA

Yes, and maybe there is a risk that he could be pushed to the brink... I am concerned that he gets a big panic attack... He may not recover.

LEOPOLD

Oh, my! But we both agree on one thing in all this: for the good of everyone in the family and for our future, we have to stop Nannerl because Wolfgang must succeed! And we must help him first. That’s really what you are saying, isn’t it... That is the goal?

ANNA MARIA

I did not say that! I am not going that far!

LEOPOLD

But Wolfgang is the boy, Anna! Then, let’s just say that Nannerl can no longer compose but that she can still give concerts. Wolfgang needs more wiggle room, more time to grow up at his own pace to let him shine. What I see is that too much success for Nannerl will exacerbate her brother’s fragility and, over time, endanger the wellbeing of the family and our collective financial security.

ANNA MARIA

We cannot really stop Nannerl, Leopold! We cannot do that. She is twenty, she is a beautiful young woman, incredibly gifted, full of enthusiasm, and with her own dreams... She is our daughter and we have encouraged her all along.

LEOPOLD

Yes, but Wolfgang – our son – was born five years after her! We could not anticipate at the time that we would have two prodigies, two geniuses! That we would be like the Bach family where boys turn out to be geniuses! It is okay to push a girl, but only if she is the sole genius. But if

there is also a boy genius, well, he must prevail, obviously! There is no alternative.

ANNA MARIA

Can't we show a bit more compassion for Nannerl?

LEOPOLD

Compassion, compassion... What does that have to do? You are not realistic, Anna. Society will not accept that she beats her brother. You know that! Think again of the Bach family... Out of Bach's twenty children from his two wives, the world remembers that half of them had died by their fifth birthday, that four of the boys were geniuses and the girls, are mothers and housewives who died in poverty.

ANNA MARIA

Nobody is talking about Nannerl 'beating her brother'. There is room for two. We must save her... Things are changing...

LEOPOLD

*(Strongly)*

No, it does not work that way. The public will only see that she beats her brother as a composer... and that she is smarter than him! Their careers will be destroyed and we will all be ruined... I can already tell you this: the Archbishop – and the Church – will not like that Nannerl eclipses her brother. I am willing to bet that I would lose my job! And then, what? Remember that I received a very small raise, this year. Maybe it is a warning... and we should read the writing on the wall.

ANNA MARIA

So, bottom line, the obstacle is really that our Nannerl is a woman?

LEOPOLD

I am afraid so. And to find a way out of this mess we have to go around her musical talent... We cannot risk dying poor or being constantly humiliated.

ANNA MARIA

That is not right. Why is society that way? It is hypocritical! Things must change, don't you think?

LEOPOLD

Of course, they should, but it is not up to you or me to interfere with the social order. Things take time! So,

let's focus on the family... I see you coming with grand social ideas of 'revolution', tra-la-la, etc. Well, forget all that! What matters is that we all survive. It is as simple as that. Our future depends on our son and he has to be mentally strong to succeed!

ANNA MARIA

How so? Do you have an idea to help him out?

LEOPOLD

Well, maybe... I have been thinking of this, Anna: Listen, do you remember a book on education published a few years ago? It made a racket at the time. It was by a French philosopher.

ANNA MARIA

You mean a book by Monsieur Voltaire?

LEOPOLD

Oh no! My goodness! No! The other one... They hate each other, by the way... Voltaire is all about pushing people to revolt... He is bad! He has no respect for traditions.

ANNA MARIA

I see: you must think of Monsieur Jean-Jacques Rousseau, then, the one who wrote 'L'Émile', the treaty on education?

LEOPOLD

That's him! Thanks! Indeed, it is 'L'Émile' that I am thinking of. And if you want to talk about reducing anxiety in the family, well, I can tell you this: his treaty is about the respect of traditions and there is nothing better than traditions to slow down the pace of change!

ANNA MARIA

*(Evasive)*

We have that book there on the shelf, somewhere, I believe.

*(She points to the bookshelf)*

LEOPOLD

Right. And as I recall, Rousseau explains that the key to keeping social order, is to maintain intact the structure of authority in families. A woman can never confront her husband, her father or the man of the house, and she must support him in all things.

ANNA MARIA

That sounds so old fashioned, Leopold. I am not sure that I can agree with that.

LEOPOLD

I know that you wouldn't, but again that is not the point! What we think is irrelevant! Look: we have carved a place for ourselves in high society; we have earned our standing – we are well fed, well clothed and have good housing – because we have contributed to the social order... You bore my children and you have always supported my decisions. Society would collapse if families had more than one person in charge... I mean someone else than the man of the house.

ANNA MARIA

So, what about Rousseau's book? How is it relevant to us?

LEOPOLD

It is very relevant! It gives the answer to all our problems with Nannerl!

ANNA MARIA

*(Interrupting)*

Nannerl is our problem, now?

LEOPOLD

Sure! And Rousseau's theory not only proves it but it gives us a cover... more than a cover, actually: it gives us an alibi! Rousseau is the undisputable authority on education and he establishes clearly why women must always yield to a man's will.

ANNA MARIA

Which means?

LEOPOLD

It means that Nannerl cannot overshadow Wolfgang. Period!

ANNA MARIA

We are going to say that to Nannerl?

LEOPOLD

Don't you want to save your son – and yourself – and me? The book by Rousseau justifies overwhelmingly that Nannerl cannot compete with her brother.

ANNA MARIA

And what will happen to Nannerl?

LEOPOLD

That is no problem at all! She is a very attractive young woman. Thanks to her God-given beauty, she has many suitors – like a queen bee surrounded by a swarm constantly buzzing

around her! She only has the embarrassment of choice. We are blessed, Anna! Let's see it that way! Nannerl is at a good marriageable age... We will give her a nice dowry and she will do what housewives do: be a good mother and be a good wife devoted to her children and to her husband. There is nothing unfair in that. It is the will of our Lord. Rousseau explains it very well. If we look rationally at the situation, we must recognize that we made a mistake when we encouraged Nannerl's musical gifts... We must now change course... The error is ours. It is hard to correct, but we do the right thing, Anna Maria.

**SCENE 4 – Nannerl, Leopold, Anna Maria**

NANNERL

*(Entering with gaiety; she does not notice Leopold at first)*

Mama, listen, listen to this, I think that I have a wonderful idea! Oh, hi Papa! Wow! How nicely dressed you are! Are you going somewhere?

LEOPOLD

Hello Nannerl!... Ah... uh, yes... I almost forgot... You will both excuse me but I must leave now. I need to go the Palace for a rehearsal. I will talk to you later.

*(He exits promptly)*

**SCENE 5 – Anna Maria, Nannerl**

ANNA MARIA

*(To Nannerl)*

So, you want to share an idea that you have in mind, darling?

NANNERL

Well, yes! But I see that Papa is always in high demand at the court. Another concert! Wow! He must be good! Yes, I have an idea, Mama, but it is not about music, it is about technology.

ANNA MARIA

Technology? O-oh... What do you have up your sleeve? I am glad that your father didn't stay to hear this! It would rub him the wrong way. He is so afraid of novelty and change - and your brother is just the same way.



NANNERL

That's why I am doing it! It is a gift for Wolfi. I want to push him to think in a modern way!

ANNA MARIA

But, to be fair to your brother, if technology is not his strength, on the other hand, he is very much avant-garde in his music... Revolutionary, even!

NANNERL

Yes, but, as you say, in music, and only in music! His mind is only focused on music. He stops there, full stop! Besides music, he hardly speaks and I have no idea of what is going on in his head, and Wolfi is my brother! I love him to death, and that's why I want to shake him up! This is my idea, listen: I want to give him a bicycle!

ANNA MARIA

A 'bicycle'?

NANNERL

Yes, actually, it is called a 'Draisienne' by the name of the German inventor, Baron von Drais. It is a vehicle with two wheels, not four, nicknamed bicycle for that reason.

ANNA MARIA

Oh yes... I have read about that... But are you sure that it is a good idea? You need to have good balance to stand on that machine... It has only two wheels. Do you think that your brother is up to it? He is so clumsy.

NANNERL

Mmm... I really didn't think of 'balance'... Let's see... Oh well, I'll do it anyway! It is too late. I have the bike. Finding his balance will be the fun part of the gift.

ANNA MARIA

You mean that 'breaking his neck' is the fun part?

NANNERL

No! Come on! I didn't say that! I will send the bicycle to him before he comes over so he can get used to riding his horse with wheels.

*(She laughs)*

ANNA MARIA

I hope that you are right.

*(Change of tone: more intense)*

Nannerl... You know that I am not a gifted musician... What do you think of anyone who has no talent for music?

NANNERL

*(Surprised)*

Well, I love you the same! You are Mama!

ANNA MARIA

I did not say it well... I meant 'someone who likes music but, suddenly, she is prevented to exercise her talent'.

NANNERL

I don't see where you are heading with this...

ANNA MARIA

*(She pauses again and changes her mind)*

...Well, about that bicycle for your brother, I don't see why not! You are right. It is a nice gift, but my gut feeling is that he will need time to adjust to that horse with wheels. Still, I appreciate what you are doing: I see that you love your brother and you want to help him. And you also want him to do some exercise to deal with stress.

NANNERL

*(Puzzled)*

What's up, Mama? You seem preoccupied.

ANNA MARIA

I am worried.

NANNERL

And you don't want to tell me what's the trouble?... Ok, I must go now. I love you, Mama!

*(Confused, Nannerl gives a kiss to her mother on the forehead and takes her leave)*

ANNA MARIA

Oh, you are going?

*(Nannerl has left)*

What else could I have said? Well yes, maybe I should read again the book by Rousseau. I read it so long ago. Leopold has a point. I must be sure that we do the right thing for the entire family. The respect of traditions is important.

*(She proceeds to the bookshelf and stretches high to retrieve "L'Émile")*

Ok, here it is... hnnn... Geez... What you look for is always on the top shelf...

*(She grabs the book)*

Hnnn... Got it... That's it: 'L'Émile or, On Education' by Jean-Jacques Rousseau... Oh! Published in 1762... That long ago? It is ten years old already!

*(She sits down to read and falls asleep...)*

*[The lights are fading]*

### SCENE 6 – Leopold, Anna Maria

*[Several hours later. Anna Maria is in her chair, stooped over. She did not move and the book is open on her lap. Leopold is back from rehearsal]*

LEOPOLD

Anna!

ANNA MARIA

*(Jumping in her seat)*

Uh... Leopold... Excuse me, I must have fallen asleep... just dozing a minute or two... How did the rehearsal go?

LEOPOLD

Very well, thank you... Ah, I see that you are reading Monsieur Rousseau's treaty! Excellent! And does that give you good insight?

ANNA MARIA

Yes, I read and reread what he says about the education of girls...

LEOPOLD

And?

ANNA MARIA

Leopold, I cannot tell Nannerl that she has to give up composition... That is not right. Today's world is changing. I was shocked to see that the book is so old-fashioned. Girls do more things than their mothers used to do. That book on education was probably written twenty years ago. Things are changing fast.

LEOPOLD

Twenty years? Really? I thought it was more like ten years.

ANNA MARIA

It was published ten years ago, but I think that it was drafted twenty years ago...

LEOPOLD

And how long ago has the Bible been written, please?

ANNA MARIA

*(Pause)*

...You are the authority in the house... I respect that; but then, talking to Nannerl is also your responsibility... You have to tell her! I want to make sure that if she is a good composer, she won't die poor and abandoned...

LEOPOLD

Very well, then!

ANNA MARIA

Uh... You, you will tell her?... You will?... But, but, before you do that, there is still one more idea that I want to try.

LEOPOLD

*(Raising the eyebrows)*

Mmmh. It seems that you are trying to wiggle your way out!

ANNA MARIA

Yes and no... I hesitate... it is my way of making sure that we are fair... that we have crossed all the t's and dotted all the i's. We must find out from Wolfgang himself how he feels about being pushed in a career in music.

LEOPOLD

What do you mean: 'pushed'? I see: you want to change the focus on Wolfgang, away from his sister... Well, he is a genius! Unquestionably! What more do we need to know?

ANNA MARIA

True. But he must have the opportunity to demonstrate clearly that he really has what it takes to compete as a virtuoso. He must come on his own. The performing arts world is a stressing business... To find out if Wolfgang is cut for that, I am respectfully suggesting that he goes first on a tour abroad, that he lives in a totally different environment. We will see how well he does. And because I am not a musician, I am volunteering to go with him, and observe him objectively. I would not pressure him. I would write to you a letter every other day.

LEOPOLD

Hmm! Interesting thought... So, you would write a diary, report cards documenting his social progress day by day?

ANNA MARIA

Precisely.

LEOPOLD

Very good! Excellent thinking, Anna! And that is also fair to Nannerl. Then, why don't you and Wolfgang plan going on tour as soon as possible. Let's say that you go to Paris... It is a great cosmopolitan city. I'll stay here with Nannerl so she won't interfere with her brother... By the way, as we talk about her, what did she come to see you about, just before I left for the rehearsal?

ANNA MARIA

Oh, she thought of making a nice gift to her brother...

LEOPOLD

A gift? How sweet of her! And, knowing her interests, I can imagine that her 'gift' is some technical stuff, maybe a new invention! But I can tell you this: she will drive her brother crazy. And that's a good reason to keep them apart.

### SCENE 7 – Nannerl, Wolfgang

#### TABLEAU 2

*[Outdoors with mountains in the backdrop. Garden table. Her fancy floor-length skirt is unusually ballooning because she wears a 'basket'. See Props]*

NANNERL

*(Coming on stage reading the newspaper; she looks around for her brother and paces impatiently. She will almost trip on her puffy floor-length French-style skirt)*

Let's see... let's see today's paper... Here we go! In the 'Salzburg Gazette', exactly what I am looking for: an article on the 'bicycle', the latest invention by Baron Karl von Drais. I can't wait to see Wolfi's gleeful and proud face, when he comes riding on his 'draisienne', his bike! I will show him the paper article; he will be proud to be on top of technology! He dislikes riding a horse so much that he is always late... But, where are you, Wolfi?

*(She catches her foot in her skirt)*

Oops!... Did it again... Geez! I almost fell this time... For gosh sake, why does it have all that useless material and that length? It is so easy to catch your foot... I tried to be stylish today to impress Wolfi... I am even wearing a basket to please him. He likes to follow the

fashion... He is shy but he has an eye for pretty girls...  
Where are you Wolfi?

WOLFGANG

*(Out of breath and disheveled, he walks in  
stumbling and catching himself on the table.  
His wig is misplaced and he is covered with  
brambles)*

Hello Nannerl! Sorry... hhh... hhh... I am late, I know...  
but,.. hhh... hhh... that bicycle... it is quite something!

NANNERL

Yes, I knew that you would like it! It is such a simple new  
idea: a machine with two wheels that can go as fast, or  
faster, than a horse... But I was hoping that you wouldn't  
be dawdling on the way!

WOLFGANG

*(Huffing)*

Once you get used to it, the bike is okay... It is surely  
much nicer than a horse... You can ride fast... really  
fast! You should try it, Nannerl! And it does not smell  
like a horse!

NANNERL

But why are you still late, then, Wolfi? And look at  
yourself! What happened? Did you rest in the shade, rolling  
over in the grass as you composed a symphony, or what? And  
where is your bike?

WOLFGANG

Oh no, no-no, I did not compose, that's not it. The bike is  
great, yes, thanks again! But, you see, I fell quite often  
in the brambles and I am all scratched up.

NANNERL

What do you mean... that you 'fell quite often' How's that?

WOLFGANG

Well, yes, when you sit on a horse and you want to stop,  
you stay up, seated on its back, but with a bike when you  
stop you just fall off...

NANNERL

You must put your feet down first before stopping! Did you  
do that?

WOLFGANG

*(Staring at her)*

You do?

NANNERL

Come on! Of course, you do, silly goose! To ride you need 'mo-men-tum.' You have to keep moving. If you don't, you fall flat.

WOLFGANG

'Put your feet down first', really? Ok, I'll try that... But you had to know that.

NANNERL

You simply need common sense!

WOLFGANG

*(Irritated)*

Why don't you have your own bike, then, if you are that smart? Why didn't you keep this one?

NANNERL

That's it! I am probably responsible for your cuts and bruises, now?

WOLFGANG

I did not say that.

NANNERL

I know! Not yet! But I see you coming... And I am telling you why I don't have a bike: it's because bikes are made for men only, because they wear pants and women don't, for Pete's sake!

WOLFGANG

Pants?

NANNERL

Yes, you heard it right: for men who wear pants. Can you understand that? I have to wear a puffy long dress or a long skirt... Look at this one. It's a big skirt that I put on to please you! It keeps dragging on the floor and I may trip on it at any time and fall flat on my face.

WOLFGANG

You don't seem to like your beautiful skirt... It is really sweet on you!

NANNERL

And the worst is this: this skirt has a basket inside to make it even more ballooning. That is the new style. And that is what makes it 'sweet' as you say. I am wearing one just to show you...

WOLFGANG

A Basket?

NANNERL

Yes! It makes the skirt balloon – it flows more... Do you like it?

WOLFGANG

Wow... That's why it is so nice! You look even more elegant than usual.

NANNERL

You bet! But it is almost impossible to walk with it, and, obviously, I can never consider biking! But that is the fashion of the day! Men love it!

WOLFGANG

Well, yes. Yes, of course! What do you think! And that new style is so becoming! It gives you such a beautiful figure. It makes your waist look even slimmer.

NANNERL

That's all that you can say, 'Yes of course'... 'Yes of course'? And don't stare at me like that!

WOLFGANG

I beg your pardon, Sis, but you are beautiful... I just admire you! I really don't see where the problem is.

NANNERL

Honestly?... You don't?...

WOLFGANG

You mean that it is because of the basket? Show me! How does that work?

NANNERL

Listen,

*(She looks around right and left and lowers her voice)*

...you are my brother... There is nobody around... Just peek a second under my skirt; you'll see what I am talking about.

*(She lifts her skirt well above the knees. He is kneeling down and takes a peek)*

Do you see?

WOLFGANG

Not Really...



NANNERL

*(She raises her skirt higher)*

There... You must see it now... the basket... tied around my waist... and fanning out the skirt.

WOLFGANG

Oh, yes, I see now. Is that what it is?

*(He touches the basket)*

NANNERL

Yes! Ah! Don't touch me! I am ticklish. It is to make the skirt as puffy as imaginable. That's the style, now. They call it a 'French-style' skirt. Ah! Don't touch me!

WOLFGANG

*(Still looking underneath the skirt)*

'French-style', really? Sorry for the tickle... Yes, yes... I see now... It looks very nice to me... very elegant, indeed, and beautiful legs, by the way!

*(He keeps feeling the basket)*

NANNERL

"Oh, come on. Ah! You keep touching me!

*(She pushes him away gently)*

Get out of there! It is not easy to be dressed like that! You are a man and you don't want to understand! But that is what women have to wear to please...

*(Wolfgang keeps staring at her legs)*

And stop gazing at my legs!

WOLFGANG

Sorry!

NANNERL

*(Kind and gentle still)*

But you will agree with me that we need to change quite a few things in society, won't you?

WOLFGANG

*(Laughing and teasing)*

Mmm... Well, yes, sure, things can always be changed around, but surely not your skirt! It is really cute, Sis, especially because it is so long and puffy. You are just adorable! I did not know about the basket, but it is a neat trick! Any man will fall in love with you in a second...

NANNERL

Is that all?

WOLFGANG

I don't know what's up with you, Nannerl. To me your dress shows exquisite refinement... Maybe you should relax a bit. Just think how the basket enhances your figure! Wow!

NANNERL

*(Becoming upset)*

Are you done preaching? And all I can do if I want to go faster than by foot and risk falling flat on my face, it is to ride sidesaddle on a smelly horse! And that is very uncomfortable!

WOLFGANG

Is that right?

NANNERL

Yes! Stop acting dumb! And the only reason things are that way is because a woman cannot wear pants!

WOLFGANG

Sure, that's a very old tradition! What an idea you have... Wearing pants, you?

NANNERL

But then I can never bike, Wolfi! I cannot ride with my skirt rolled up, the legs straddling the frame!

WOLFGANG

Oh! My gosh, no! A woman sitting like that, straddling the frame of a bike and showing your whole leg, oh no, it would not be respectable at all. You might be arrested for being a loose woman... for indecent exposure.

NANNERL

*(Deriding with a smile)*

You are a total hypocrite! You'd love it if I did roll up my skirt. You are a voyeur that is all what you are!

WOLFGANG

Uh, well, but, anyway, riding sidesaddle will keep you from falling in the brambles... The bicycle needs improvements, that is for sure... You will excuse me for a minute, but I have to put the bike away and adjust my wig. Papa is coming and he cannot see me like this.

NANNERL

Wolfi! You are a grown up and you still shake like a leaf when your Father is coming! Come on, wake up!

WOLFGANG

Papa has probably never seen a bicycle and I must store it before he is here. I'll be right back.

*(He leaves)*

NANNERL

*(Mumbling)*

So, that is what it is about: the bicycle is for men only. The horse and the old ways are for us – women – to hold us back. This has to change!

**SCENE 8 – Nannerl, Leopold, Wolfgang**

*[Leopold walks in, holding a book – l'Émile. He overhears Nannerl]*

NANNERL

*(Still to herself, upset)*

I have had enough of this nonsense! I am going to Vienna!

LEOPOLD

What is going on, here? Leaving for Vienna? You?

NANNERL

*(Turning around)*

Yes, me! Father!

LEOPOLD

Like that? Alone? With no one to look after you? No chaperon? And how will you go through the city's gates? Bribing the guards with your charms?

NANNERL

No! I'll be myself! There, they will appreciate my talent as a pianist, and as a composer, and even more so than Wolfi's!

LEOPOLD

Oh-ho! Quiet down, will you! Beware of vanity, Nannerl! Even Ulysses, after a twenty-year journey, came humbly back home.

NANNERL

What does Ulysses have to do with going to Vienna?

LEOPOLD

Everything! It means that we cannot avoid our destiny, and that our traditions protect us.

*(Opening his book)*

Come on, Nannerl, take a deep breath, slow down! You seem bitter and agitated... And why are you jumping all over your brother?

NANNERL

Well, yes, because...

LEOPOLD

*(Cutting her off)*

...Listen to this, it will help you settle down... It is from Monsieur Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

NANNERL

I don't care for Mister Rousseau. He is a control freak!

LEOPOLD

*(He glances at her coldly and goes on)*

It is about education...

*(He looks for a passage, flips the pages and occasionally moistens his index finger)*

And Monsieur Rousseau is a great pedagogue, mind you! Here we go, listen: 'A woman exists to yield to the will of a man and to accept even his injustices.' That is the exact quote; what Monsieur Rousseau wrote in "L'Émile". His treaty has authority in the field of education. It is with that wisdom that your mother and I raised you and your brother.

WOLFGANG

*(He is back. He has adjusted his appearance and joins the conversation)*

Oh yes, I have read that, too, and Monsieur Rousseau writes somewhere that women, and that includes you, dear sister,

*(He grins and makes a mocking reverence)*

must please us, and make sure that we love you.

LEOPOLD

*(Sternly and with authority)*

Of course! All that is obvious. But Monsieur Rousseau goes further: he adds that women must take care of men, advise them, console them, and make their life pleasant and sweet.

*(Hammering the book with his knuckles)*

Those are the duties of women.

NANNERL

But I compose better than my brother, and I am also a better piano player!

LEOPOLD

*(Interrupting her and slamming loudly the book shut)*

Nannerl! That's enough! Stop it! How can you say that, especially in front of your brother! Show him some respect! He is your brother, for heaven's sake! My patience has limits! How can you say such stupid things!

NANNERL

'Stupid'? What I say is stupid!

LEOPOLD

Yes!

NANNERL

But when we were children and we used to go on tour, the prodigy who improvised at the piano fugues and variations for princes and dukes, that was me!

LEOPOLD

Correct! But you are no longer a child! You are a woman, now! Assume your responsibilities and your duties as a woman! Maybe it is a curse that you are endowed with creative gifts for music.

NANNERL

Because women cannot be creative artists? They cannot compose?

LEOPOLD

Take your place in society and stop complaining like a spoiled child! Yes! And stop composing also! What has bedeviled you?

WOLFGANG

I know what's happening... She put in her mind that she must get dressed like a man. That's what is going on...

LEOPOLD

What do you mean?

WOLFGANG

She wants to wear pants!

LEOPOLD

Pants? She wants to wear men's clothing?

WOLFGANG

Yep, because with pants she wouldn't have to ride on horseback anymore. She could ride a bike. She wants to use that new technological invention...

NANNERL

*(Cutting him off, exasperated)*

...Oh! You men... I will show you who compose best. Mark my words!

*(She rushes out, but changes her mind and comes back)*

Yes, but when it is Wolfgang who plays or composes or improvises, it is never 'stupid', right?

*(She runs offstage)*

**SCENE 9 – Leopold, Wolfgang**

*[Still in the family living room]*

LEOPOLD

*(He shakes his head and turns to Wolfgang)*

What the devil got into her? Anyway, tell me, my son, what is that, a 'bike'?

WOLFGANG

*(Clearing his throat)*

Ah... a bike? Mmm... let's see... It is a brand new thing – an invention. You can ride on it and it has big wheels – two, only two – unlike the horse that has four legs.

LEOPOLD

Two wheels? Not four? That does not make any sense: how could you stay up on that?

WOLFGANG

That is what I am saying! You can't: you fall flat on you face! And that is why I believe that the bicycle has no future. It will be like other technologies: a passing fad.

LEOPOLD

You are right, Wolfgang! Who would ever need that: A riding machine with two wheels! We are blessed that the good Lord created the horse!

WOLFGANG

That reminds me of another weird invention: I read in a newspaper that in America, a certain Mister Benjamin Franklin has discovered a new fluid. They called it electricity but they have no idea what it can be used for.

LEOPOLD

'Electricity'? A new fluid? Who would ever need that?

WOLFGANG

That is what I am saying: we should stop inventing new things all the time; enough is enough!

LEOPOLD

It is so tiring to always have new things to deal with...

WOLFGANG

I would say so!

LEOPOLD

Anyway, let's come back to practical matters. Your mother and I have discussed your future, son, and we think that you spend too much time in our small town. You should move for a while to a large cosmopolitan city. I have been thinking that you should go to Paris. What do you think?

WOLFGANG

*(Anxious)*

I must go live in Paris? But, I like it here... I don't speak French. I really like it here...

LEOPOLD

Well, it is not the end of the world. You'll learn French once you get there! And your mother will go with you.

WOLFGANG

*(Relaxing)*

Oh! Mama is going! That's different! It makes a big difference to have a trusted companion for the road and Mama is the best friend that I can imagine!

LEOPOLD

Good!

WOLFGANG

Can Nannerl come?

LEOPOLD

No! Uh, I mean not this time... We are all set then. If you have no more questions go bid farewell to your friends; pack a small trunk and get ready. Your mother is finishing packing her trunk. The next diligence leaves tomorrow. There will be some transfers on the way but you should arrive in Paris by the end of the week or early next week. An easy trip, as you see. Once you are settled in Paris you must immediately meet with my friend Modeste Grétry. He will give you a letter of introduction to the nobility.

WOLFGANG

Do we know that Mister Grétry?

LEOPOLD

Oh, yes. He is a young musician, a friend of mine and a great composer. A good lad! He was my counterpart for the Prince-Bishop of Liège in the Holy Empire until he moved to Paris and traveled to Italy and Geneva. He is about fifteen years older than you and he has a very fine career as a musician. He is a good role model.

WOLFGANG

But if he is from Liège he speaks French, doesn't he?

LEOPOLD

Yes, of course, and he lives in Paris now. So what? That doesn't matter, I told you. You will learn French there! Relax! You go to play music, not to give lectures!

*(Back to his tone of command)*

So, you will have a nice easy trip and, once you are in Paris, with Grétry's letter in hand you will simply call on the nobles and they will gladly invite you to give concerts in their palaces and residences. Of course, you will compose symphonies and concertos as requested, and oblige when asked to improvise variations and fugues at the piano for the guests. Or whatever they ask you: duets, songs...

WOLFGANG

But... but I cannot compose that fast, Papa...

LEOPOLD

You sure can! That's why you are a genius! I am expecting that they will generously compensate you for your efforts. Ok, son, let's move on. I gave to your mother money for the trip and for at least a week in Paris after that. Go, let's get ready!

*(He leaves stage)*



WOLFGANG

*(Mumbling)*

Why does he always tell me what to do? If Nannerl could go also that would be a lot of fun. This is dreadful. It looks that the tour is set up for me only, for some reason... How can I compose music for the public, that way? It makes me feel agitated already... I want to create music that is fun.

*[He walks out. The lights are dimmed and off]*

**SCENE 10 – Nannerl, Leopold**

**TABLEAU 2**

*[Two months later. Outdoors. Two chairs and a table]*

NANNERL

*(In long dress – no basket. Bringing a letter to her father, seated and reading)*

Papa! Look, I have a letter that the post just delivered for you... It is from Paris... And it is from Wolfgang!

*(She hands the letter to her father)*

It is their first letter in more than a month, I think!

LEOPOLD

*(Putting the book down)*

A letter from Wolfgang? Great! But that is unusual... It is always Anna who gives me the news. And I haven't actually received a letter from her in quite a while.

NANNERL

...I did not know that she was writing to you so often. I also didn't receive any letter from my brother in weeks. Well, at least there is this one. What does Wolfgang have to say?

LEOPOLD

Let's see...

*(He opens the letter. Long pause)*

Oh, my Lord!... It is horrible!

NANNERL

What do you mean? What happened?

LEOPOLD

Read!

*(He hands the letter to Nannerl)*

NANNERL

Mama!... That is not possible!

LEOPOLD

It is not clear what Wolfgang says, is it? A fever? She died of a big fever? That can't be. He says that she died in early July, at their hotel, in the center of Paris... in the 'Isle de France', he says... and there was no doctor available? In Paris!

NANNERL

*(Agitated)*

That would not have happened if you had let me travel with them. I would have taken care of Mama! You know that Wolfi cannot even take care of himself!

LEOPOLD

*(Agitated)*

That was exactly not the idea of the...

*(Pause; He catches himself)*

NANNERL

What do you mean, that 'it was not the idea'... the idea of what?

LEOPOLD

*(His mood shifts to anger)*

I needed you with me here, Nannerl! I needed your help to tend to our affairs here in Salzburg. And with Anna Maria away with your brother, only you could replace her.

NANNERL

But I would have been more helpful to Mama! Wolfgang knows strictly nothing about caring for someone else. He only thinks of his music. He is selfish!

LEOPOLD

This is not the time for recrimination!

NANNERL

But Mama has died!

LEOPOLD

We need to be practical. We need to have a Requiem mass for Anna Maria... I will ask right away to see the Archbishop.

*(He rushes off stage)*

**END ACT I**

**ACT II****SCENE 11 – Nannerl, Wolfgang****TABLEAU 1**

*[Five years later. Living room of Salzburg home]*

NANNERL

I am so glad for you, Wolfi! It is wonderful that you got the job of organist for the Archbishop. Do you like it?

WOLFGANG

Well, I am not sure yet, I will see. It depends. But you can bet on this: I am not composing for the organ! I am just playing it. That instrument is not like me; it is too severe. It is fine for pompous weddings and funeral services or Sunday masses, but not for entertaining! I like to compose big music or theater music that catches the imagination. I like music that is scary or fun! I am sick and tired of fugues. That is not me!

NANNERL

Really?...

WOLFGANG

*(Becoming more and more agitated)*

Yes. And the fact that the Archbishop likes pompous church music grates on me. It is enough of a reason to hate the organ! My old piano teacher, Johann Christian Bach – you remember him? – also revolted against his father's starchy music. The old Bach was known for testing organs to the limit. The attendants had to pump air like mad in the bellows with their feet. They were sweating like crazy and could still hardly keep enough air pressure in the pipes. Can you imagine that! And there is the story when Bach was holding a stick between his nose and a low pedal to use even more air and make the pumpers work even harder... Bach was nuts...

NANNERL

...What is your salary?

WOLFGANG

My wages, you mean? Well yea, that is the other thing! It is less than one third of what Papa makes. Imagine that: one third! He makes 1,500 florins and I make 450! I know that I am still a beginner but how can I live on that? It is an insult

NANNERL

Wow!

WOLFGANG

Yes! But what is most important for me is that I compose fun vocal music – theater music. Things are different now. I want to compose musical plays and large operas in German. I have plenty of ideas rushing in my head. I want people to have fun!

NANNERL

That sounds great! I like the way you talk! You see big and it is revolutionary! And I agree that the Italian style is now out of fashion. A bit 'passé', wouldn't you say?

WOLFGANG

Oh, much more than 'a bit passé'! I want to do away with Italian. Almost nobody in the street understands it! I am not composing for the trees! I want my public to get goose bumps when they listen! Then, they will come back for more... Everybody enjoys a high!

NANNERL

You have been thinking quite a bit, I see... What you say is truly revolutionary. And I fully agree: you are right, our operas must reflect our culture, our language – German.

WOLFGANG

The two big problems with my job are the ridiculous pay and that I cannot compose music for a real public. The Archbishop has no clue of what's going on in today's world.

NANNERL

Like Papa?... Stuck in the past?

WOLFGANG

Yes!

NANNERL

But it is Papa who got you the job, though...

WOLFGANG

I wish he hadn't... I would have found another one.

NANNERL

Here, in Salzburg?

WOLFGANG

What I am saying is that I know what the public likes! Papa doesn't. People want entertainment, an evening of fun and dramatic theater music that can sound crazy at times! They like to be surprised. If the public comes to listen to my music, I want to send them home happy!

NANNERL

That is very nicely said! There is a demand for dramatic operas with action. And my guess is that you will never consider composing somber works, like seeking a commission for a Requiem mass, for example... Right?

WOLFGANG

Of course not! What an idea! Not over my dead body!

NANNERL

*(Smiling)*

...Hmmm... It sounds to me that you are already working on a new opera and that you will use your new aria of the 'Queen of the Night', the one that is almost impossible to sing! Am I right?

WOLFGANG

*(Laughing)*

Ha-ha-ha! Exactly! And that is only one example of crazy music!

NANNERL

Well, that is all fine with me, but I will tell you this, brother: You will never be able to do any of what you just said as long as you are chained at the service of the Prince-Archbishop.

WOLFGANG

Why is that?

NANNERL

Because you are not fit for each other, that's why. He will not let you. You are like night and day. He will want to control you... and that will stifle your imagination!

WOLFGANG

How do you know?

NANNERL

First your salary is pathetic... Can you guess why it is so low? And do you know what that will do to you?

WOLFGANG

No.

NANNERL

*(Coming closer and closer to Wolfgang,  
almost in his face)*

It will destroy your self-esteem little by little, over time. If you don't fight back right now, you will get used to it... And your mind will become numb and turn into mush... You will become the shadow of what you could have been as a composer! Your brain will shrink to the size of a pea! And you will never know when that happened...

WOLFGANG

I don't like the bishop but you exaggerate. Papa made it.

NANNERL

*(Emphatic)*

Oh no! He should make a lot more money! He had a family to support and that is why he did not take any risk. He caved in! The bishop knew it. The bottom line is that Papa is not valued the way he should! He is also a fantastic pedagogue. His method of playing the violin is unique. Centuries from now they will still talk about his 'Treatise on the Fundamentals of Playing the Violin'. But Papa still gets a low pay. Why? Tell me why! He is just used to it. He didn't have the oompf it takes to pick up his sticks and go!!

WOLFGANG

I thought that he liked the Prince.

NANNERL

Think twice! He is chained to the court! To survive he had to navigate that world of niceties and deceit and he has to bow to people who try to stab him in the back. He had to learn to be diplomatic! The truth is that he always feared losing his job. And remember: when you went to Paris, whom did he ask that you call on first?

WOLFGANG

Uh... Modeste Grétry, you mean, a young composer colleague of his?

NANNERL

Yes, a much younger colleague. Grétry had decided early on to take his future in his hands: he moved to Paris, then to Italy and other places after leaving the diocese of Liège in the German Empire. You should think of that!

WOLFGANG

I see: that must be why Papa told me that Grétry was a good role model.

NANNERL

Wait a minute! Papa told you that?... Poor man... So, he always felt put down by the bishop. Oh My! Sending you to Paris and talking with Grétry was his way to tell you to get on with your life and not become like him... not cave in to the bishop's demands and be hung up on traditions!

WOLFGANG

I remember that Papa and you had words about becoming an independent musician.

NANNERL

True. But I am telling you this: it is better to be poor and free than rich and enslaved. Papa had the worst of all: he became neither rich, nor famous, nor free. His pay was low and the Prince constantly humbled him, exploited him. And that happens all the time to women – especially to women – who deserve appreciation, a good pay, and respect!

WOLFGANG

Papa could have become a great composer, then...

NANNERL

Yes. His talent was wasted. Like for many women! Like for me! He had plenty of ideas and marvelous skills. He respected traditions too long for his own good.

*[Lights out]*

## **SCENE 12 – Wolfgang, Constanze**

### **TABLEAU 2**

*[Outdoors. Five years later. Wolfgang is relaxed, pulls a garden chair and sits next to his wife]*

WOLFGANG

Ah... You are so tender, Constanze. I love you, my sweet wife... Married life is just wonderful! The quietness and the absence of worries let me compose in total serenity. It is so nice to be at home with you. We have now been married a year already... That's right, a year, and Mama passed away, what? five years ago? I wish you had known her. She helped me so much in Paris. She really wanted me to succeed. And every night at the hotel, by candlelight, she wrote a letter to Papa.

CONSTANZE

She wrote every night to your father? That must have been quite a diary that she compiled! How long were you there? And where are the letters now?

WOLFGANG

We staid several months in Paris. But, truth be, that is a lot of letters that she wrote! Papa kept them all, locked in a closet. Anyway, it is thanks to Mama and Nannerl that I decided to be on my own. What a relief it is to be free! I feel good! And, in the plus column, I can add that being free lets my imagination wander wildly because I don't have to deal with the Archbishop anymore! And I earn almost enough money to hire a maid who helps you in the daily chores! I only have to borrow a little bit from friends.

CONSTANZE

Sure, sure, I understand all that, but we have a lifestyle that we can hardly afford.

WOLFGANG

That is not true!

CONSTANZE

We borrow money or don't we?

WOLFGANG

Hardly any...

CONSTANZE

Ok, you make my point... But, then, why do I have to give up my singing career? If I give concerts, that will help with the money, doesn't it? We would not go in debt and sign IOUs every month.

WOLFGANG

Of course you cannot sing, Stanzi!... Let's not come back on that. A housewife from a respectable family does not work and you don't sing. Period. You know that very well... The wife's place is at home!... And the Church says...

CONSTANZE

*(Cutting him)*

...I am from a very respectable family of musicians, Wolfi: the Webers! We like to sing. We are a well-recognized name in Vienna and my older sister, Aloysia, is a fantastic singer, as you well know. She is a very beautiful virtuoso and she was your sweetheart, wasn't she?



WOLFGANG

Uh... just a good friend...

CONSTANZE

... A very, very, very good friend, then! Don't tell me fibs! Come on! I beg your pardon, but I meant to say that she was 'your lover'... I tried to be a bit more tactful... And, so that you know it, I observed your affair.

WOLFGANG

Ah? You did?...

CONSTANZE

You were doing more than holding hands...

WOLFGANG

Uh, yes... If you say so... but Papa did not like our liaison... She got tired of waiting for a proposal and she broke up.

CONSTANZE

What Aloysia told me also is that your father wanted to control everything. He did not want to hear about her family – my family. She is my sister! What should I think of all this?

WOLFGANG

Please don't criticize my father!

CONSTANZE

Come on! I am criticizing him! And you too! I am asking why you let her go if you loved her.

WOLFGANG

*(Lowering his eyes)*

...But... I... I loved you too...

NANNERL

*(Flabbergasted)*

...Me!... At the same time?

WOLFGANG

Hmm-hmm... I loved you first... at first sight, but you were too young... I had to wait for you.

CONSTANZE

*(Contented and smiling)*

Really! You waited for me! You didn't take me on the rebound... I always thought that you proposed to me after the Archbishop kicked you out unceremoniously for insubordination...

WOLFGANG

*(Cutting her off)*

...Don't bring that up, will you... Don't remind me of that! Those were sad days. And it did not happen that way.

CONSTANZE

*(Chuckling and pressing on)*

Did he really have his assistant kick you in the behind when he fired you, or not?

WOLFGANG

Constanze! That's enough! I resigned. He never fired me!

CONSTANZE

*(She goes on)*

Well, I just want to know... You were beaten... You had a lousy salary and you were grumpy... so, I thought that...

WOLFGANG

*(Cutting her)*

...No! Nothing is less true. I waited for you to be older. That is the truth!

*(Pause)*

But Nannerl was also right when she warned me about the importance of being free. I decided to be free, to be on my own, and break the chains of dependency. And here I am: totally free! And I truly love you! Let's ignore the rest!

CONSTANZE

Ah, Wolfi, I see that you are still struggling with the respect of outdated traditions, even after breaking from that bishop who looks every day more like an ogre. The burden of traditions still haunts you and hurts you...

*(Long pause. Softly)*

...But, if I hear you well you are still keeping a soft spot in your heart for pretty singers – sopranos especially – like my sister Aloysia... and like me, too? Don't you, my love? And you love to compose for them, Right?

WOLFGANG

*(Stiffening)*

I... yes, I always compose with someone in mind. That is true. I imagine someone who can perform my music... like a horn player...

CONSTANZE

*(Cutting him teasingly)*

...Or a very cute soprano, maybe?

WOLFGANG

Uh, yes, a soprano, also... It depends what I am composing, of course... I wrote the five horn concertos that way, for my friend here in town.

CONSTANZE

Of course, of course! And why do you do that?

WOLFGANG

Why I compose for someone?

CONSTANZE

Yes. Why?

WOLFGANG

Well... well, I don't know... I think that focusing on someone stimulates my imagination... I like to compose on something concrete... Yes, that must be it! You see, it helps me find stability to create. It is not easy to compose good music.

CONSTANZE

I see... So, about 'stimulating the imagination', where does my older sister, Aloysia, fit in all of that? Does she still 'stimulate' you?

WOLFGANG

You just can't let go, can you? Well, uh, I was thinking of her, of Aloysia, for the Aria of the 'Queen of the Night' that I composed for an opera that I will finish some day. Are you satisfied?

CONSTANZE

Wait a sec! Is that the aria with the very, very high notes up to the 'high E'? Nannerl talked to me about that one.

WOLFGANG

Yes, that's the one...

CONSTANZE

Oh my Gosh! So you really keep dreaming of my sister and her extraordinarily beautiful voice! That is a difficult aria! I could never sing it... How do you think I feel about that?

WOLFGANG

I don't know.

CONSTANZE

Are you focusing on her voice, as you say, or are you in love with her voice?

WOLFGANG

*(Long silence; he closes his eyes and takes a deep breath)*

Stanzi, darling, you seem to forget that in my opera 'The Abduction from Seraglio' – a very successful opera, by the way – I named the main character 'Constanze'... because it was you that I had in mind. When I composed that opera, your voice was the model for the main character. I had observed you singing, and I studied the elegance, the expression of your body language while you were singing.

CONSTANZE

Really? That is what you did?... But it does not change the fact that your father almost refused that you marry me, because I am a singer, because I am a Weber, and because my family owns a bed and breakfast business, and we rent rooms to travelers!

WOLFGANG

But you will agree with me that renting out rooms does not exactly have much class.

CONSTANZE

That's it! I knew it:

*(With irony)*

Not enough class for Maestro Leopold Mozart at the court of his highness Hieronymus Colloredo, Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg! Give me a break!

*(Moving close to him)*

But remember, sweetie, it is because you had rented our cheapest room at half a Florin a night, that we crossed each other in the hallway in the middle of the night... by candle light...

*(She smiles)*

The first time we crossed, I was in my pretty short, sleeveless light blue nightshirt... It had the scooped

neckline with a bowtie in the front... Do you remember? You untied the bow of my nightie...

WOLFGANG

...But you tied it back...

CONSTANZE

...You were untying too fast...

WOLFGANG

...I did not forget... I had spotted you already when I checked in... How could I not remember...

CONSTANZE

*(Continuing, smiling and tender)*

...And when I helped you lighting your candle you blew mine out...

WOLFGANG

...That's because I had spotted you already.

CONSTANZE

...We courted in secret every night by candlelight... Do you remember that, too?

WOLFGANG

...Yes, of course! How couldn't I? How could I forget your first smile?... I saw so much rightness in your tender beautiful eyes. But before that, at the very first second, in the hallway, when you had not yet noticed me, I made the promise to myself that you would be mine...

CONSTANZE

*(Smiling)*

...You told me that story many times, but I like to hear it over and over again!

WOLFGANG

...And so you must also remember the first kiss I gave you? Don't you?

CONSTANZE

*(Lowering her eyes)*

Yes...

WOLFGANG

*(He holds her tenderly in his arms)*

...Where? Where did I kiss you? Show me...

NANNERL

*(Raising her eyes to meet his gaze and putting her left index on her neck, cocking her head to the right)*

Here, right here, on my neck... almost on my bare shoulder... I was sitting at the table and you passed on my left... coming from behind... My hair was pulled up for the night... You leaned over and gave me a little peck, just a little peck, right here... You went by... You looked back at me with a smile... How could I forget? I still feel your warm breath and the shiver all over my body... and you came back to me...

WOLFGANG

*(Smiling and kissing her in the neck...)*

Right! In every detail! And remember that my father only consented to our marriage because I decided to hold my ground!

*(He straightens up, proud)*

CONSTANZE

*(Teasingly)*

Come on! Relax, honey! You mean that he forgot to bully you, this time, right?

WOLFGANG

*(Sitting down. Protesting feebly)*

Oh, Constanze! Don't say that! You spoil the moment! I really stood up!

CONSTANZE

*(With irony)*

Okay, okay, don't be too upset: I am touched by all what you say and I am very thankful to you, darling. But I have to live with a father-in-law who is - how can I say this nicely - old fashioned and rigid. And he hurts you... And that hurts me!

WOLFGANG

I cannot change him... He is old.

CONSTANZE

He makes it hard for me to love him. And when you say that you 'held your ground', you were resisting his will.

WOLFGANG

You cannot speak that way of my father!

CONSTANZE

*(She takes a deep breath. Long pause)*

You have to free yourself from your father, Wolfi... I would rather live with you poor and free, then rich and enslaved to the past or to a rigid Prince-Archbishop. At least, you left him! But our freedom will only come when we both earn enough money and are on our own! And for that we cannot be held back by traditions... Women must earn money.

WOLFGANG

That is not possible!

CONSTANZE

Leaving the bishop was a good first step but you remain in the shadow of your father... Why is it that, like him, you prefer Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his antiquated book of traditions to the progressive writings of Monsieur Voltaire?

WOLFGANG

Voltaire? My goodness! There you go again! No! Of course not! Don't you speak of that heretic philosopher! He is a dangerous fanatic!

CONSTANZE

*(Calmly)*

Really? He is satirical – I can see that – and his humor can be biting and sarcastic! But he feels for the little people, Wolfi... His heart is well placed. He is a no nonsense philosopher!

WOLFGANG

*(Agitated)*

He also drags the Church in the dirt! That's what he mostly does! If they listen to him in France, it will soon be like in England, hundred years ago: chaos and revolution. And then – God forbid! – someone could think of executing the king and even the queen! Is that what you want? Chaos! Let's stay out of this!

CONSTANZE

*(Calm still)*

But there could also be a parliament that cares for the people and for the poor. They would distribute the stocks of wheat when there is a famine caused by a fire or a drought, or a locust invasion, or whatever... And the poor would no longer die of hunger. I read that most people in Paris are poor and go hungry, while the Queen is parading in Versailles in luxurious clothes...

WOLFGANG

But with that reasoning the monarchy will be gone, Constanze! And all the traditions will be gone, too! That is a recipe for revolution! A disaster! Do we need that? Stay out of this! It is not a place for women. It bothers me to talk about this. I want stability!

CONSTANZE

*(Standing up)*

Okay, as you wish, darling... You carry so much anxiety that it paralyzes you. But, before I go, tell me one more thing: what do you think of what Monsieur Voltaire says about tolerance, social justice and progress...

WOLFGANG

*(Exploding)*

Progress? 'Progress'! For goodness sake, Constanze! So you want to reject everything? And what will you put in place, instead? You want to reject our past because, like Nannerl, years ago, you put in your head to wear pants and be like a man? Please, stop it! I need quiet!

CONSTANZE

Honey, I don't want chaos... I want to share opportunities; I want compassion for those who are hurting. You look afraid, darling. How can justice and respect for everybody be a threat to you? to us?

*(She gives him a kiss on the forehead and leaves. Wolfgang remains alone, shocked).*

WOLFGANG

*(To himself)*

I don't understand... I am simply asking to leave things as they are, and have some quiet to compose... to live my life my way... Is that too much to ask?

### **SCENE 13 – Leopold, Wolfgang**

LEOPOLD

*(Barging in the living room, waving a piece of paper)*

Wolfgang! Ah, there you are! I just found a note that your sister left yesterday on my desk... She is insisting that I come and listen to her. What is going on?

WOLFGANG

Yes, I know. We were surprised that you weren't there. She sang and I accompanied her at the piano.



LEOPOLD

*(Agitated)*

Singing? She did sing? Where and what did she sing?

WOLFGANG

An aria from her new oratorio. I accompanied her at the piano... The audience and the Archbishop loved it...

LEOPOLD

*(Cutting him)*

What?... You went back to the palace? The Archbishop was there? Oh my God! And you played a song composed by your sister - by a woman - in front of the Archbishop!

WOLFGANG

Yes, he did not object to me accompanying, either. We simply told a little white lie: we wrote in the program that it was my newest aria.

LEOPOLD

Excellent.

WOLFGANG

And, rather pleasantly, the Archbishop liked it very much!

LEOPOLD

Hmmm? Ok, good.

WOLFGANG

But it was really Nannerl's aria! We were testing the public's reaction to her music.

LEOPOLD

And?

WOLFGANG

As I said: they loved it. They thought that it was really profound and beautiful, better than the other aria on the program. But that one was mine!

LEOPOLD

So, she is still composing! A new aria, you say, and she sang in front of everyone at the palace!

**SCENE 14 – Mannerl, Leopold, Wolfgang**

NANNERL

*(She walks in; calm and majestic, with a fancy mounted hairpiece, wearing a tight black tank top that accentuates her silhouette. Her shoulders are bare. A wide red cummerbund holds her at the waist. Her floor length French-style skirt with basket is colorful and ballooning. Her gait is solemn and self-assured. She pauses as she faces them.)*

Yes, I did sing yesterday, Father!

*(Suddenly, with a quick gesture of the hand, she tosses her wig to the floor and appears with short blond hair coiffed in a boyish style. She quickly unties her skirt that drops to her feet, revealing the basket around the waist. Her legs are bare. She shuffles the skirt away with her foot, then unties the basket and throws it away with disdain. She appears in tight fitting blue jean shorts and sneakers. Silence...)*

Mother died in Paris five years ago... And yesterday, to commemorate that anniversary, I invited you to come and listen to the best aria from the Requiem I composed for her. By respect for Mama's memory the Archbishop had invited us to play... We just didn't say that it was my aria. I had left a note on your desk.

LEOPOLD

*(Waving his hand to interrupt her)*

Come on, Nannerl! What is this comedy all about? I did not know anything about this! And writing a 'Requiem'? You! And singing for the Archbishop without my permission! How pretentious! But look at yourself! Who are you, showing off like that? And your hair? No hairpiece... not groomed... not dressed... How shameful! Did you look like that for the Archbishop?

NANNERL

Of course not!... Also, my Requiem is not a mass, Papa; it is an oratorio and I was singing with dignity a new aria for soprano, in memory of Mama.

LEOPOLD

That's enough! Stop! I thought that I had told you long ago to stop composing.

NANNERL

I put all my heart and my love in this composition, Papa.

LEOPOLD

*(Cutting her)*

That's enough, I said! This is almost an insult to the memory of your mother... Yes it is insulting!

NANNERL

No! How can you say that?

LEOPOLD

*(The voices are raised)*

Yes! You are offending her memory! Never forget this: before she was your mother, Anna Maria was my very dear wife! We toiled, raising you and your brother. We sacrificed everything we had for you! We went hungry... Don't throw dirt on Anna Maria's name! She deserves the best, the most beautiful melody, the most beautiful aria that a man can compose. She was a most beautiful woman...

NANNERL

...And I composed my most beautiful aria for her and for you.

LEOPOLD

*(Getting furious)*

Come on! Let's get out of here! Yes, this charade is an insult to Anna Maria and to her memory! You are crazy!

NANNERL

*(Angry)*

So, now, I am not just 'stupid', I am also 'crazy'!

LEOPOLD

*(Leopold is becoming enraged, threatening, and about to be physical)*

Yes!

WOLFGANG

*(Interposing himself)*

Father! Father! Maybe Mother would see this differently... Nannerl's music was really good! When we were in Paris... I remember that Mama said how she was proud of us. I think that she would like that Nannerl – her daughter, your daughter – compose a large oratorio...

NANNERL

*(Turning to her brother, triumphant)*

I was always sure of that. Mama liked that I compose. But, Wolfi, when you were in Paris with Mama, remind us of what happened?

WOLFGANG

It was a cold and rainy summer, and it felt raw... We had almost no money and no food... We stayed in a cheap hotel. The day before Mama felt sick, she went to the fish market in the Halles. The next day she had the chills.

NANNERL

Where were you?

WOLFGANG

I was there in the room, trying to compose. I was very agitated and my mind froze... a mental block... And we had only a few engagements to play because we didn't understand French.

NANNERL

What happened to Mama, then? Wasn't there a doctor to help?

WOLFGANG

But I explained all that in my letters, Nannerl: she had a big stomach fever...

NANNERL

And?

WOLFGANG

I went on the street to call for a doctor. I could only shout "Docteur! Docteur!" One went by and he stopped...

NANNERL

And?

WOLFGANG

He spoke in Latin and he bled her.

NANNERL

And?

WOLFGANG

He spoke in Greek and bled her more.

NANNERL

And in Hebrew, too?

WOLFGANG

Oh no, he did not speak Hebrew... Mama died...

NANNERL

So, you were at her side all the time?

WOLFGANG

Yes, I was holding her hand...

NANNERL

Were you crying?...

WOLFGANG

*(Dropping his head, sobbing)*

She said how much she loved us... She had the best care... The doctor was good. I can say that his Latin and his Greek were very good. But medicine could do nothing to save her... After paying the funeral expenses I needed money to come home. So, I gave a concert in the Isle de France and rushed home by the first diligence.

LEOPOLD

*(He is visibly moved by his son's account and clears his throat)*

Mmm... I am so sorry, son... You did what you could... Well, Nannerl, I wish I had come yesterday to listen to you... I found out too late. So, let's add your little tune to my next concert. You will sing it Sunday at the Palace!

NANNERL

Oh, thank you, Papa!

LEOPOLD

Yes, but we cannot risk offending the Archbishop, and the name of the composer cannot appear on the program.

NANNERL

But...

LEOPOLD

*(Cutting her short)*

...Just like yesterday, we will say that it is your brother's aria because you already said that. And your brother will accompany you at the piano.

*[Lights off]*

**SCENE 15 – Leopold, Nannerl, Wolfgang****TABLEAU 2**

*[Mountains in the background. The three characters walk home after the concert]*

LEOPOLD

That was a very nice concert! Let's walk home, children! We can talk about it on the way. Thank you – both of you. I think that the Archbishop was pleased.

*(To his son)*

Wolfgang, I cannot believe that you did not compose the last number... You must be mistaken.

WOLFGANG

Well, that's what it is, Papa, I know what I compose! It is Nannerl's aria, not mine, I swear.

LEOPOLD

*(Not listening)*

It was so strong, so convincing, and so pure... and what good internal counterpoint... and it also had a special flavor of freshness. Almost like something a man would not think of composing.

NANNERL

It's from me, Papa! It is from the oratorio that I composed for Mama and for all the victims of war, violence and injustice. Mama and I used to talk about that. She liked the idea of the oratorio. She embraced the fight for justice... with new music.

LEOPOLD

*(He is speechless. He gestures and stares at her, lips trembling)*

...?...

NANNERL

*(Coming close to her father and speaking softly)*

You remember, Papa, Mama often said that we need new ideas

*(She rests her hand gently on his arm)*

...for social progress... She believed that a time of Enlightenment will come soon and will lead us, all of us, to a better and more just world.

LEOPOLD

*(Calming down)*

She believed in that, yes.

NANNERL

And I share her hopes for peace and justice in my Requiem. I tried to pour as much of my soul as I could in this aria.

LEOPOLD

Yes, she believed in all what you say, in all that... You are right, but she is still so present in my mind. I miss her, Nannerl... It is so hard that she is not with me, at my side. I was not with her in Paris in her last moments... I miss her so much... I cannot let anyone touch my memory of her... And you remind me of her... your voice... you are as beautiful as she was, but you are not her. You are too young to comprehend my pain.

NANNERL

I am trying to understand your loss, Papa. But for Mama, the pursuit of happiness was not a privilege for the few, for the nobles, or for the powerful who own the land and who own the people who live on the land... It is a right for all... whoever we are. It is a Human Right... In my Requiem I want to make everyone aware of her dream. There is too much suffering around us. I want people to think of our common humanity thanks to music.

LEOPOLD

*(He leaves silently, shaken and head low)*

NANNERL

*(She watches him go and exclaims)*

Papa!

*[Lights off]*

## SCENE 16 – Wolfgang, Nannerl

### TABLEAU 2

*[Same décor]*

WOLFGANG

*(Alone with Nannerl)*

Nannerl!... I'll say it again: your new aria is very nice, really! I enjoyed accompanying you today as much as last time! It is much more than a 'little tune', as Papa calls it.

*(Teasing)*

And the tone of your music still reminds me of the melodies that you used to write when we were young...

NANNERL

*(Loudly, cutting him off)*

...And that I keep composing, but much better now, Wolfi! Do you understand that?... Father and you hurt me so much! Why do you reject me constantly? Didn't I prove myself? I compose like you but I am never recognized...

WOLFGANG

What I said was meant to be a compliment. I meant to be nice.

NANNERL

*(Her voice grows sharper)*

'Nice'? Listen to me, Wolfi: I have been deprived of my great love... to express myself in music... to compose... to give concerts and to sing my works... To be applauded on stage for the beauty that I create and share... Yes! To compose, and be played in Germany, in France, in Italy and in London! All that, all what gives you joy, but that I cannot reach because I am a woman... That – music – should have been my life... But now I will seek a different way to give love, the joy of love that only a woman can attain: the power of giving life because I am a woman... I will get married and I will have children!

WOLFGANG

You make it sound as if someone was stacking the deck against you...

NANNERL

*(Repeating her statement firmly, calmly)*

Because that is what it is! Let me repeat myself, Wolfi: I have decided to get married! I will pursue my way... my woman's way... Today, you heard in concert my farewell to music. There will be nothing left of my compositions. Nothing!

WOLFGANG

No, don't do that! I want to have all your music and all your manuscripts!

NANNERL

No!

WOLFGANG

Your music is divine! It is magnificent!



NANNERL

I will destroy every manuscript. I told you! Every page... in a thousand pieces. All of it! Gone! Nothing has been performed, anyway!

WOLFGANG

But what did I do to you? How can I fix what is wrong? You just sang your music.

NANNERL

Are you kidding me? That does not count: just one piece! And my name was kept under wrap, hidden! It is an insult! I do not know what can still be done, Wolfi... I am tired of being put down... that my work must have your name to be played. It is too late now... But... Wait... That's it... I am thinking of this: maybe we can still do something... We can fight for social equality with our music, because our problem - the Mozart family conversation - is every family's conversation. The lack of social equality and respect is really the cause of all frustration. Let's work on it together, you and I! Let's talk about social equality through music!

WOLFGANG

You sound like Mama in Paris – You project hope!

NANNERL

*(Following her train of thoughts)*

We can do it, Wolfi! We can change attitudes. It is the mission of true artists. Our God given talent must have a purpose! The magic of our music can move us towards our future and honor our past.

*(Recomposed and joyous)*

Yes! And when my first child is born, if it's a boy, I will respect the traditions and I will name him Leopold, like his grandfather! If it is a girl, I will name her Anna, like Mama!

*(She rushes off)*

**SCENE 17 – Wolfgang, Constanze**

**TABLEAU 2**

*[Same décor]*

CONSTANZE

*(Constanze has returned, agitated)*

I need to talk with you, Wolfi!

WOLFGANG

*(Distracted)*

I am still thinking of Nannerl's aria... Wasn't it marvelous, Constanze? I can still hear in my head that long solemn phrase.

CONSTANZE

Wolfgang! Listen! Your sister is all upset by the concert!

WOLFGANG

*(Coming back to reality)*

What? I thought that she enjoyed herself. Her aria stole the show! It is pure and intense... so poignant. It was almost perfect. 'Requiem aeternam dona eis'... Give them eternal rest... Yes, I must also compose a Requiem... but not an oratorio, no, it will be a mass. And it will be perfect.

CONSTANZE

*(Exclaiming)*

Wolfi! Wolfi! Wake up! If your sister's aria is so great and so beautiful, why, for heaven's sake, didn't you praise her as loud as you could, face to face, while she was here? You are minimizing your sister and that is cruel.

WOLFGANG

Uh... I... I wonder if her aria can still be improved... I want to compose a Requiem.

CONSTANZE

What is that about, now? For years and years you said that you would never compose somber music like a Requiem! That you would only compose entertaining operas, dramatic operas, virtuoso concertos and big noisy symphonies, all intended to have people at your knees and feeling thrilled!

WOLFGANG

Well, that is true, but I was wrong... I did not know much of what Johann Sebastian Bach had composed. I knew only some songs, some madrigals, and his reputation as an organist. But his music is profound and brings out feelings for humanity... his concertos, his masses, his cantatas, his passions... I will compose a solemn Requiem Mass. The Lacrimosa is already in my head, and I can hear in my mind the words "Dies irae, dies illa" - That day, that day of wrath... It will be tragic and beautiful...

CONSTANZE

... Is that what is really going on? Writing a Requiem Mass because you are tired of operas? Or are you jealous of Nannerl's Requiem? Are you envious that she has reached Bach's grandeur? Her marvelous oratorio goes beyond a man's emotions. It seems that, at last, you appreciate the woman – your sister – who composed her Requiem...

WOLFGANG

'The woman who composed', that is what Mama repeated constantly in Paris: 'we need women composers to bring music to a higher level'... I didn't understand until now, until Nannerl showed me. Mama wished that Nannerl would compose her oratorio...

CONSTANZE

And even your father used to remind you that it is she, your big sister, who gave you self-confidence when you first started composing, as a little boy.

WOLFGANG

Yes, Nannerl was always a sweet big sister. She gave me self-confidence... She gave me ideas for my first melodies.

CONSTANZE

It is good that you remember that! But now she calls it quits! She wants to enjoy being a woman and fulfill her womanhood. She wants to be a mother.

WOLFGANG

What? 'Be a mother'? Her? And since when?

CONSTANZE

Since now! Why can't you stay focused? She has announced that she will be married... You are only listening when it is about music.

WOLFGANG

What did she say about quitting music? She has so much talent, so much to offer. She is like me. She is at least my equal. What a loss... What about my Requiem? How will I write it without her?

CONSTANZE

That is something that you will have to discuss with your sister, later... Hopefully, raising her family can soothe the pain of never seeing her musical talent flourish... What hurts Nannerl and all women – and me to – is that, as

sisters sharing a common destiny, we see that progress toward justice and equality is so slow in coming.

*[The lights are dimmed; Constanze walks off stage; Wolfgang stays alone and follows her with his eyes. Lights off]*

### SCENE 18 – Wolfgang

#### TABLEAU 2

*[1790. Wolfgang is alone. Outdoors decor and a Café terrace: a table and two chairs. Inkpot and writing quill. He will become delusional]*

#### WOLFGANG

*(Seated at the Café terrace, He looks for Nannerl as he jots down a letter for her. He reads back to himself before leaving. He will become increasingly agitated)*

I have to go now. My sister did not come... I waited as long as I could. Maybe she did not receive my letter. Let's go over my note one more time. I really wish that we could talk with each other: 'Nannerl, my very dear sister, did you receive the letter where I asked that we meet at the Café? We have not seen each other since Papa died, three years ago. I really need to talk about the letters that Mama wrote when we were in Paris. It is awful. After Papa died, I found the stack of letters locked in his closet. We had to crank the vault open. No one had the key. I read them and I am still in shock. I am so confused. But I have decided to share the letters with you. How can we do that? I also want to ask you to move to Vienna to be near us – Please! You will give concerts and you will compose again. You will inspire me to write the opera where I show that women are as powerful and as determined as men. Do you remember the aria of the 'Queen of the Night', the one with the high notes? I called that opera 'The Magic Flute'. I need your help. I am kissing your hands and say goodbye, my dear sister. But we must especially talk about Mama's letters. Your devoted brother, Wolfi'

*(He stands up and talks to himself)*

I must leave now or I will miss the last diligence.

*(He slips the letter in an envelope, leaves it on the table and walks away disappointed)*

The letter will be posted tomorrow... Should I explain what Mama's letters are about? No, she must read them; she must find out by herself. Our parents never believed in me and they crushed Nannerl's talent... They wanted me to succeed

for their financial gain... How I wish that the letters had been lost... I would still have the illusion of my talent and my parents' love.

*[The lights are slowly fading. He gestures at the mountains. He is delusional, close to delirium]*

Where is my exile, my escape – my refuge from despair?  
If I could hear the glitter of the stars, would someone from the mountains, from the valley, tell me how to rekindle my love of life?

*(Pointing to the mountain top)*

There! Look! look, high at the edge of the cliff, in the starry night, gliding high on its wings, the bird pondering my destiny and showing me the abyss...

It is my dark Angel, flying from the East, dressed like an eagle. I can see the eyes: they are dark and hard...

*(Louder and louder)*

My love!... My Love!... Where is my Love?... My music!...

*(Pausing and bordering on tears)*

But... Angel of despair, why don't you come back? You just showed me the abyss...

*(Pointing to the sky)*

Stars, stars, behind the sky, where is my escape? Where is my refuge from betrayal?

Can the Angel come back, and whisper in the wind memories of true love and memories of the sound of music lost in the willows?

"Dies irae, dies illa"... the day of wrath... the day of requiem.

*[Lights off]*

*[A deep sounding bell rings slowly from backstage to mark the tragic moment. About 30 seconds]*

**END ACT II**

**ACT III****Scene 19 – Nannerl****TABLEAU 1**

*[Late 1791. Nannerl is still in the Salzburg family house. She wears a simple strait long black gown, Empire style, and no wig. She is mourning the loss of her husband]*

**NANNERL**

*(Alone. Seated at the table)*

My husband, my devoted husband, was a good father... affectionate and generous. Now that he has died and that Mama and Father are also gone, I am a widow and I am alone.

*[Three slow rapping knocks at the door]*

*(She stops abruptly. Pause)*

What is that? It sounds like someone is rapping at the door... Did someone knock?... No, it stopped... Must be nothing... Maybe the wind, a branch or a bird... Whatever it is, it sends shivers up my spine... It feels like destiny is calling...

*(Back to her thoughts)*

I still have my brother, but the wheel of time turns for all of us... I haven't seen him in so long. I can't put out of my mind the strange letter he sent three years ago. It was weird... cryptic. Wolfi seems so disturbed by the letters that Mama wrote in Paris years before. What is that all about? Maybe I should have moved to Vienna. I haven't seen Wolfgang and Constanze in years... I can't understand what he meant by his despair over Mama's letters.

*[Three loud sharp knocks on the door]*

*(Jump from her chair and rush to the door)*

Oh my goodness! That noise again! Who is it? Yes! That is the call of destiny!

*(She swings forcefully the door wide open)*

Nobody?!... What is this?... A letter<sup>(1)</sup> ... from Constanze! Oh, no! That is a bad omen. It is always Wolfi who writes. What does she say?

*(She walks back to her chair. She breaks nervously the seal, unfolds the letter and reads slowly in a monotone voice. Lights are dimmed at the end of the reading)*

Oh my... 'Dear Nannerl, I condole with you. We have lost a most dear and valuable relation. But it is the will of God and nature that mortal bodies be laid aside when the soul is to enter into real life. A man is not completely born until he is dead. Our friend – your brother, my husband – and we are invited abroad to a party of pleasure which is to last forever. Wolfgang's chair was ready first, and he is gone before us.'

*(Exclaiming)*

Wolfgang!... Wolfi!... Oh, my Lord...

*(Back to the monotone reading)*

'He has been carried away by a long fever. On his deathbed he finished dictating to his pupil, Süßmayer, the 'Requiem Mass'. It was played at his funeral, on December 10, Anno Domini 1791. Affectionately, Constanze'...

*(She remains seated, devastated)*

Oh Goodness... Oh Lord! Why do I have to bid farewell to everyone, even my young brother? Why was I born? I wish that the walls of the house would crumble on me and take me away.

*[The lights are dimmed. From backstage, the deep bell rings slowly to mark the passage of time. About 30 seconds. Lights off]*

<sup>(1)</sup> The style of this letter is historical. It paraphrases a letter of condolences written in late 18<sup>th</sup> C by George Washington to a relative.

## SCENE 20 – Constanze

### TABLEAU 2

*[1812. Outdoors. Older and dressed in more contemporary, simple Empire fashion]*

#### CONSTANZE

*(Monologue standing up)*

My Wolfgang died so long ago – twenty years – and I still can't find the courage to talk to Nannerl. She still does not know why she never became a star musician and what ravaged her brother. She is old and blind and I am the only one who knows the Mozart family secret; why Wolfi became desperate when he found the letters... His parents didn't believe in him. How wrong they were! Those whom he loved the most, his own parents, did not trust him... They wanted to control him and Nannerl. They ruined her career so that as a girl she would not stand in the way of her brother, my Wolfi. He surely never made much money but he loved me. He loved his family... He loved music... He loved people.

He was an introverted genius who composed the most beautiful concertos, symphonies, operas... all composed to make people happy and feel good about themselves, or to recollect in deep thoughts, like in the Requiem Mass. Wolfi was generous. He was tender with me... He held no grudge. He forgave everyone, including his domineering father...

*(Pause)*

Yes, I can't wait any longer; I must share with Nannerl the burden of our past... I'll go back to Salzburg. The journey is long but it is my duty to share what I know.

### SCENE 21 – Nannerl, Constanze

#### TABLEAU 1

*[Salzburg, in the family home sitting room. An old-fashioned typewriter is set on the table. There is a sofa and one chair at the table]*

*[Nannerl, old, blind and bent over, uses a cane to walk]*

#### NANNERL

*(Alone, bent over and holding her cane with one hand, she is sitting at the table and feels with her free hand the typewriter)*

Good, good... I received the typewriter from Italy! What a story. I had heard that a newspaper, 'La Libertà' of Rome, had printed the fascinating story of an inventor who made a writing machine for his lady friend, a blind 'contessa'. Now they write to each other although she is blind like me! What a technological marvel! How kind of him to do that! I am also old and blind...

*(She perks up. Her voice is getting louder and joyful)*

...but now I am writing letters to my friends and tell about the Mozart family that gave me the love of music.

*(She hums a tune and walks around the table, guiding herself with one hand and banging the cane on the table with the other hand)*

La-la-la... La-la... La-la-la...

*[Nannerl is suddenly interrupted by a friendly voice]*

#### CONSTANZE

*(She comes in)*

Hello, dearie!



NANNERL

*(She stops singing and speaks to herself)*

I don't expect anyone... Who can that be?

*(Loud, not turning her head)*

Who is it?

CONSTANZE

It's me, it's Constanze!

NANNERL

Constanze! Is that you, coming all the way from Vienna?  
Come in, come in!

CONSTANZE

My goodness, don't you sound happy!

NANNERL

Ah, Constanze! What a surprise! Come in, dear! What brings you in Salzburg? It's such a long way from Vienna.

CONSTANZE

*(She embraces Nannerl and leads her by the arm to the sofa)*

Yes, it is a long story, Nannerl... I came because I waited too long to talk with you... I feel guilty... I have things to tell. But, what was all the racket and agitation about?

NANNERL

Oh, listen to this, Constanze! I am celebrating! You won't believe it. I received the mechanical writing machine that I had been waiting for. It was delivered last week, all the way from Italy!

CONSTANZE

A 'writing machine'?

NANNERL

Yes!

CONSTANZE

But don't we write with a quill that we dip in ink?

NANNERL

Yes... but, no! Not any more! You don't have to. There, look! It is on the table, you will understand.

CONSTANZE

*(She walks to the table)*

What a weird thing... I never saw anything like that. I see alphabet letters printed on buttons but they are in the wrong order... It reads 'Q-w-e-r-t-y', Qwerty! what is that about?

NANNERL

Oh, that's a detail... The keys are not in the alphabet order so that you don't get stuck pushing down letters that are often close together in words. It is to avoid that the fingers stumble on each other.

CONSTANZE

Uh... well... Ok... That is mumble jumble to me! And it is coming from Italy?

NANNERL

Yes, and the story of this invention is a true tale of love.

CONSTANZE

Love? You mean that machines and technology can do good? I always thought that the purpose of machine is to take jobs away from people... or to make more deadly weapons to go to war against other people.

NANNERL

Not in this case, Constanze! No, this machine makes life better... Months ago I heard of a man, an inventor named Pellegrino Turri who has a lady friend – an old countess who is blind like me – and he imagined making for her a machine that writes without using the eyes. Now she keeps sending him letters and she is no longer by herself.

CONSTANZE

What a beautiful story! She must write him a lot of love letters wouldn't you say?

NANNERL

Let me show you how it works.

*(She walks to the table, leaning on her cane, and sits down at the typewriter)*

It goes like this, watch: with the fingers I hit the letters on the little circles – you see that? – the little circles with the letters QWERTY and so on, and the words now appear on the sheet of paper. The thing you have to remember, of course, is that there is paper in the machine

before you type. You want to see how it works? Here we go...

*(She types slowly)*

C, O, N, S, T, A, N, Z, E. Look at the paper! What do you see?

CONSTANZE

"Constanze", wow!

NANNERL

And Voilà!! How is that?

CONSTANZE

Very nice! But there is something else, something very important that you can do with that machine.

NANNERL

Me?

CONSTANZE

Yes, Nannerl, you! Now you can write your memoirs: the story of your life, the story of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, your brother – my husband, the story of the Mozarts!

NANNERL

Oh no! Why would I do that? Wolfgang is plenty well known already and I am not, because the story of my life is insignificant.

CONSTANZE

But that is not the true story, Nannerl! It is not your story! That is where you are wrong...

NANNERL

Pardon me!

CONSTANZE

Listen, that is why I am here. I want to tell you that you were a genius like your brother. Your parents knew it. They knew that you could do all what Wolfgang did, but better!

NANNERL

I don't understand.

CONSTANZE

In Paris, your mother wrote a letter every day to your father.

NANNERL

I know that.

CONSTANZE

Your parents had concocted that trip so that Wolfgang would be by himself, without you around. And, after the tour, they prevented you to compose to make sure that you wouldn't shine more than he did... Our family was very old-fashioned, Nannerl. For your parents, only a boy – especially a prodigy – could compose, not a girl... never! For them, what they did was justified in an old book on education.

NANNERL

The book by Jean-Jacques Rousseau?

CONSTANZE

Exactly!

NANNERL

I knew it! I always knew it. And did Wolfgang know this also?

CONSTANZE

After your father died, he found all the letters in the secret closet and took them to Vienna... And that almost destroyed your brother when he read them... He tried to let you know... but he had a nervous breakdown.

NANNERL

Oh my... How sad... I don't like to relive what you are telling me, Constanze... It hurts. Is it Wolfi who told you all that?

CONSTANZE

Yes, and then I read the letters... I have them at home.

NANNERL

You should write the family memoirs, Constanze, not me! I can't. I can no longer read.

CONSTANZE

No, only you should tell that story, Nannerl! It must come from your heart. You are his only blood relative left.

NANNERL

But my eyes don't work. I cannot read...

CONSTANZE

Write your memories with your typewriter! Go way back to your childhood the best you can in light of what I said about the letters – And reveal to the world the truth of your own genius.

NANNERL

*(Relaxing, smiling)*

Ok, I will try... It is true that there are cute intimate anecdotes that only I can tell. You make me think when I explained to Wolfi, when he was fifteen, what was the basket under my French-style dress and he tickled me! And also when he learned to ride a bike and fell in the ditch!

CONSTANZE

There you go! And as you sift through your memories you will realize how Wolfi loved your music. He admired you. You inspired him... For him, your music had a different sound, a different color. He often told me: "Nannerl has her own sound!" And, coming from a genius like Wolfi, that is a huge compliment! That your music has a sound that only you have, is the hallmark of a great composer. He even wondered if you deliberately sprinkled your music with imperfections to get your special sound effect!

NANNERL

Imperfections? Really? Where?

CONSTANZE

That is what he could not tell... But your musical language seduced him totally and made him anxious: he saw a secret that he could not pierce. Was it your feminine way of composing?... being a woman?... being jealous of a rival?... of his sister? That was a lot to swallow, even for a genius like your brother!

NANNERL

*(She is getting agitated)*

Constanze, none of that matters any longer! Years ago, I destroyed my music... I am blind and I see the world with my soul. I no longer use spoken words or music to express my emotions... Wolfgang was the creative and revolutionary genius in the family. End of story!

CONSTANZE

No! That is not the end of the story!

NANNERL

*(Powerful)*

But what can be greater than his last symphonies, his great piano concertos... the adagio of the clarinet concerto... the Requiem Mass... his superb operas... The Marriage of Figaro... Don Giovanni... all so full of love of life, tragedy and fear of life... all so human? I've said enough! Let's stop here!

CONSTANZE

*(Quietly, slowly)*

No, Nannerl! There is also his Requiem Mass... and there, there is the hand of someone else in the music... Someone whom we have not talked about yet... and that is what I want you to tell me...

*(Pause. She changes her tone and the subject of conversation to calm Nannerl down)*

As you say, his greatest masterpieces, his last operas and the Requiem Mass, all capture his genius... but to achieve that, you both had to put your minds together.

NANNERL

*(Pause. Quietly)*

... True... but, in turn, my brother inspired me to compose the main aria of my own Requiem... Yes, I think that you are right: I owe to him to write my memoirs...

CONSTANZE

*(Calm. Solemn)*

...When Wolfi first heard your aria – at that very moment – he decided to compose his own Requiem – the Requiem Mass. I heard him say that... Until then he never wanted to compose a Requiem mass... You made him change his mind... you inspired him and he composed his most solemn work!

NANNERL

I know. He kindly acknowledged that. He expressed his gratitude. But, everything must come to an end, Constanze... The light of an oil lamp grows dimmer and fades with the last drop of oil, like Wolfi faded away on the last note of 'Requiem'. He accessed immortality.

CONSTANZE

Yes, he did... but your music liberated him. He saw in it expressions of femininity that add depth and humanity.

NANNERL

*(Acquiescing with a faint smile)*

Uh-huh...

CONSTANZE

So, you were his guiding light?

NANNERL

Perhaps... Yes.

CONSTANZE

... Now I understand that he meant to thank you in 'The Magic Flute' when Tamino and Pamina, promised to him, are initiated together to the sacred rite. Wolfi makes them both equal: Man and Woman are elevated on the same pedestal

NANNERL

Yes! And I thanked Wolfi for making so clear that symbol of equality between men and women...

*(Pause followed by a broad smile)*

So, that is the reason why you came? You wanted to know if Wolfi's music and mine are intertwined in the search of social justice.

CONSTANZE

Yes.

NANNERL

Well, yes, they are indeed! But besides you, Constanze, no one will understand any of this.

CONSTANZE

I don't see why not... We must tell to the generations to come that your music, your compositions, are imbedded in his work! That is what we all need to know!

NANNERL

No one will believe that my music is not composed by a man – and I destroyed my music, by the way. No one will believe that my music is imbedded, as you say, in my brother's works, undistinguishable from his music.

CONSTANZE

Your music and his are one, you say? It appears nowhere by itself?

NANNERL

That is correct.

CONSTANZE

What a loss for mankind! The world has changed Nannerl; it welcomes women artists. We must know what you have done!

NANNERL

But what you say is for now, Constanze... not back then! Wolfgang and I were messengers: through the strength of our joined music, we proclaimed the message that mankind must progress on the journey towards equality for all.

CONSTANZE

So, your music and his are one and the same...

NANNERL

Yes... It is just that, on the title page, the name of the composer reads "Wolfgang Mozart" and not "Nannerl Mozart".

CONSTANZE

Just like when, long ago, you attributed your aria played at the court of the Archbishop to your brother? I can understand that you did that back then, but why did you do it over and over?

NANNERL

What matters for mankind's progress is the message, not the messengers. We chose an expedient way to move on.

CONSTANZE

...You will write your memoirs, won't you, Nannerl?

*(Smiling)*

Your new writing machine will come handy!

NANNERL

I will do my best. But I am old... If I can't, I will pass the torch on to you and it will be up to you to write the story of the Mozarts, the Mozart conversation.

CONSTANZE

I promise! We will glorify the Mozart name! Glory to the Mozarts!

*[Nannerl and Constanze walk offstage. Nannerl leans on her cane with one hand, and on Constanze's arm with the other]*

**THE END**

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