Mozart

letter to his father about his Paris Symphony

I had to compose a symphony to open the concert spirituel. It was performed with applause on Corpus Christi day, and I hear, moreover, that it has been noticed in the Courrier de L'Europe — so that you can see it has been exceptionally well received. I was exceedingly anxious at rehearsal, for never in my life have I heard a worse performance. You can have no conception of how they bungled and scrambled through it the first time and the second. Really I was quite frightened and would have liked to rehearse it once more, but there was so much else to rehearse that there was no time left. Accordingly I went to bed, fear in my heart, discontent and anger in my mind. I had decided not to go to the concert at all next day; but it was a fine evening, and I finally resolved to go with the proviso that if things went as ill as at the rehearsal I would certainly make my way into the orchestra, snatch Herr Lahouse's (the first violin's) instrument from his hand and conduct myself! I prayed God it might go well, dedicating all to His greater honour and glory, and ecce! — the symphony began! Raff stood near me, and in the midst of the first allegro came a passage I had known would please. The audience was quite carried away—there was a great outburst of applause. But, since I knew when I wrote it that it would make a sensation, I had brought it in again in the last — and then it came again, da capo! The andante also found favour, but particularly the last allegro because, having noticed that all last allegri here opened, like the first, with all instruments together and usually in unison, I began with two violins only, piano for eight bars only, then forte, so that at the piano (as I had expected) the audience said "Sh!" and when they heard the forte began at once to clap their hands. I was so happy that I went straight to the Palais Royale after the symphony, ate an ice, said the rosary I had vowed — and went home — for I always am and always will be happiest there, or else with some good honest German, who, if a bachelor, lives alone like a good Christian or, if married, loves his wife and brings up his children well!