



NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS

Letter from King Louis XIV



Versailles, France

Dear Signor Vivaldi,

I am instructed by His Majesty, King Louis of France, to thank-you for your inventive music which we received last week, and which was immediately performed by the court orchestra, the Violons du Roi. His Majesty greatly enjoyed the performance and would be interested in commissioning you to produce music for the court here.

His Majesty has a further proposal for you. He provides dowrys of goods, money, and boat passage to Montréal for hundreds of poor and orphaned young women. Because His Majesty acts as a parent in providing their trousseaux, the girls are known as “les filles du roi” (daughters of the king). As a result of His Majesty’s kindness, many young families are now flourishing in our colony.

We know that you too help poor young people, and that your school is, in fact, an orphanage. In both cases our young orphans grow up to be useful to themselves and others. Our young women learn skills as pioneers of an untamed land, and yours become musicians, musicians as fine as any in the whole of Europe, we have been told. Vivaldi’s orphan musicians must be fine indeed if they can perform music like that we heard this week in our court!

The king worries about the hardships his people endure in New France. They enjoy few of the comforts of culture that we take for granted here: our parties, dinners, paintings, gardens, ballets, and, above all, our music. He requests that you recruit ten volunteers from your orphanage (or the young men’s orphanage) to travel to the New World under his sponsorship. It is hoped that they will spread the joy and solace of music far and wide in their new homeland.



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In order to encourage the young people considering this move, His Majesty suggests that the young people in question correspond directly with others of their own age in New France. Please forward letters to me so that I can pass them on to our colony. His Majesty requests a response from you at your earliest convenience on this matter and is looking forward to future collaboration on this matter.

En espérant vous lire sous peu, je vous prie de recevoir, mon cher Seigneur Vivaldi, mes sentiments les plus respectueux.

*Le Comte Henri De LaChasse
Secretary to His Majesty, King Louis XVI*

Note to Teachers:

We have taken a small historical liberty with the chronology here: Louis XIV sponsored the Filles du Roi from 1675 to 1685 but Vivaldi did not start teaching at the Pietà until 1703. For the purposes of this lesson, the two groups are considered to be contemporaries. The letter itself is entirely fictional.