

BACH ASKS FREDERICK AUGUSTUS II FOR A COURT TITLE

Letter Accompanying the Kyrie and Gloria of the B Minor Mass

To His Most Serene Highness, the Prince and Lord, Frederick Augustus, Royal Prince in Poland and Lithuania, Duke in Saxony,...My Most Gracious Lord.

My Most Gracious Lord, Most Serene Elector, Most Gracious Lord!

To Your Royal Highness I submit to you in deepest devotion the present slight labor of that knowledge which I have achieved in music, with the most wholly submissive prayer that Your Highness will look upon it with Most Gracious Eyes, according to Your Highness's World-Famous Clemency and not according to the poor composition; and thus deign to take me under Your Most Mighty Protection. For some years and up to the present moment I have had the Directorium of the Music in the two principal churches in Leipzig, but have innocently had to suffer one injury or another, and on occasion also a diminution of the fees accruing to me in this office; but these injuries would disappear altogether if Your Royal Highness would grant me the favor of conferring upon me a title of Your Highness's Court Capelle, and would let Your High Command for the issuing of such a document go forth to the proper place. Such a most gracious fulfillment of my most humble prayer will blind me to unending devotion, and I offer myself in most indebted obedience to show at all times, upon Your Royal Highness's Most Gracious Desire, my untiring zeal in the composition of music for the church as well as for the orchestra, and to devote my entire forces to the service of Your Highness, remaining in unceasing fidelity, Your Royal Highness's most humble and most obedient slave.

Johann Sebastian Bach
Dresden, July 27, 1733

Source: David, Hans T. and Arthur Mendel. "The Bach Reader: a Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents." New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc. 1972