



EUGENE OPERA

Who is Mozart?
(Pronounced MOH-tsart)



Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria on January 27th, 1756. He later adopted the more familiar name Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. His name is synonymous with classical music the world over. Most of us think of Mozart when we think of classical music. This is probably because he wrote over 600 pieces of music for the instruments of the orchestra, the piano, the voice and all sorts of combinations of these performing groups.

At 4 years of age, Mozart showed his amazing gift for music by playing musical games with his father Leopold at the keyboard. In Mozart's day the precursor of the piano was the harpsichord. Little Mozart was amazingly adept at playing it, and was able to play sections of Johann Sebastian Bach's music as well as even improvising his own musical ideas! At age 5, little Wolfy was composing already. His first piece is less than a minute long but filled with so much promise! I don't know about you but I was only playing with marbles at age 5! His first piece is called the Andante in C (pronounced ahnDAHntay in see). Have a listen: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3c/K1a.mid>. Not bad for a five-year old right?



The Mozart Family Live on Tour!

During Mozart's day, most musicians and artists were supported by their town's aristocracy. If they showed promise, the individuals would be required to do whatever was necessary to learn to be the best in their field. Money and other forms of support were used by the leadership to build up the promising people. The town's ability to show that they had such great levels of culture helped to establish them as wealthy, strong kingdoms. With the help of Leopold's aggressive skills of persuasion, the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg set his sights on Mozart and his family to help promote the city of Salzburg as the

cultural capital of Austria.

Let's hyper-space into Mozart's pre- and early-teen years: Leopold took full responsibility for teaching his children to be great musicians. During 1762-1773, Mozart, his father Leopold and his big sister Maria Anna (nick-named Nannerl), traveled all over Europe. To show off this amazingly gifted family, they performed for Kings, Queens, Emperors and Empresses. They were paid to do this and in some cases they were treated like royalty. Mozart would often improvise pieces "by request" for whichever Emperor or Queen he was performing. A great representation of this improvisatory skill of Mozart can be seen in the movie *Amadeus* (The DVD is probably available for rental in your library.) Yes, the movie depicts him as a bit irreverent at times because he was such a Smarty Pants! He did know how to behave himself in front of the right people though! In fact, in 1762 young Mozart performed for Empress Maria Theresa of Vienna and her 7-year-old daughter, Marie Antoinette (yes! that Marie Antoinette-future Queen of France)!



What about Mom? Anna Maria Pertl Mozart was basically travelling with them, hanging out in the background making sure the performers were prepared for the concerts. She didn't perform but she certainly took on the responsibilities of taking care of them. Unfortunately, in 1778 she became ill and passed away. It has been said by many music historians, that Mozart never fully recovered from the loss of his mother. Who can? The painting shows Mozart seated next to Nannerl at the keyboard, Leopold standing behind the keyboard, and hanging on the wall is a portrait of Mom.

From 1773 to 1780 Mozart continued to tour. He spent a great deal of time in Paris and back in Salzburg until finally in 1781, he returned to Vienna which was the classical music capital of Europe at the time. Although he was no longer able to get along with his supporters from Salzburg and lost their financial help, Mozart felt like he had hit his stride in Vienna.



Livin' like a Viennese! 1781 to 1791

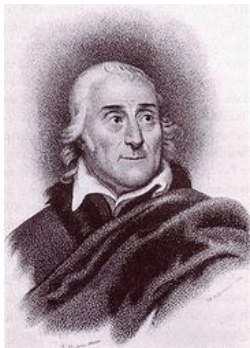
He became a freelance performer and composed some of his most famous works during his days in Vienna. Some of his operas like *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, *Don Giovanni*, many concertos for the piano and other instruments, symphonies numbers 39, 40, and 41 were all composed during Mozart's Vienna years. He also wrote large amounts of chamber music during these years. For example his famous "Eine kleine Nachtmusik" (pronounced AHEEenuh KLAEEenuh nahkt mooZEEK) was

composed in Vienna and the audiences loved it so much, everyone around town was whistling the tunes from the piece.



Enjoy this performance at YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKhH2hRa-WQ>.

He met his wife Constanze after her older sister rejected him! Mozart and Constanze had 6 children although sadly, and quite common for the time, only 2 boys survived. As if he wasn't busy enough during this time, Mozart became a Free Mason too, joining the secret society in 1784. He was sped through the initiation process to become a Geselle or "Fellow Craft" in only 10 days. He was no slouch!



Lorenzo my man!

Mozart tended to hang out with some of the most important artists of his time. One of them was a well known Italian librettist (see the glossary for that word) Lorenzo Da Ponte (pronounced dah POHNtay). As the court librettist for Vienna, Da Ponte wrote in all of the main languages and he was able to supply Mozart with truly wonderful texts. Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* (oh brother, here we go!-pronounced lay NOHTsay dee FEEgahro) is a terrific example of the collaboration between these two great masters. There is a good deal of information available about Da Ponte. Look him up! He's worth it!

Mozart went on to compose many more works after *Le Nozze* was premiered in Vienna at the still-standing and beautiful Burgtheater. He received such acclaim for this opera that the work was also premiered in Prague. The performances in Prague also led to more collaboration between Da Ponte and Mozart including the opera *Don Giovanni*.



Wars and Rumors of Wars!

By the end of the 18th century, most of Europe was somehow mixed up in some version of war and Austria was no exception. The effect of the wars on European economy was devastating. Sound familiar?

In spite of the many successes Mozart had enjoyed, he was finding that his income was becoming strained. Many of his patrons, bosses, and even friends were being affected financially and so they had to reduce or stop their funding of projects that Mozart had begun. Of course, as a result, he struggled financially and was often hounded by unpaid debts. Stresses began to mount for Mozart and he had to cancel appearances as a pianist or guest conductor or concerts were cancelled because the hosting hall couldn't afford to pay him.

In attempts to overcome the difficulties that were growing, Mozart set out to produce more music and he also went on tour again. During 1791, he created some of his most memorable pieces including the Clarinet Concerto, the string quartets written for the King of Prussia, his last symphonies, and his last two operas, *La Clemenza di Tito* (pronounced lah klayMAYNtsah dee TEEtoh) and *Die Zauberflöte* (pronounced dee TSOWberflertuh) also known as *The Magic Flute*. In fact, in September he traveled to Prague for a premier of his *La Clemenza* but he became ill while there. The details of that illness are still not entirely clear. He managed to conduct the premier of his *Zauberflöte* on September 30th back in Vienna and with much success.

[Requiem. Introitus.mp3](#)

Unfortunately, by November of 1791, Mozart's illness was getting the best of him and he became bedridden. He continued to write and during this time he began work on his final piece the Mass in d minor-the Requiem. It has been said that Mozart seemed to be writing his own Requiem which is music written for a Catholic mass to commemorate someone's death. He never completed this work and on December 5th, 1791, Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart died at the age of 35.



