

## **Biography of Wolfgang Mozart**

WOLFGANG GOTTLIEB MOZART, one of the greatest of musical composers, was born January 27th 1756, at Salzburg, where his father was sub-director of the Archepiscopal Chapel. His extraordinary musical talents were cultivated to the utmost by his father. At the age of four he played the clavichord, and composed a number of minuets and other pieces still extant. When only six years of age, his performances were so remarkable, that his father took him and his sister, who possessed similar gifts, to Munich and Vienna, where they obtained every kind of encouragement from the Elector of Bavaria, and the Emperor Francis I. In 1763 and 1764, the Mozart family visited Paris and London. At the age of seven, young Mozart surprised a party of musicians, including his father, by taking part, at sight, in a trio for stringed instruments. Symphonies of his own composition were produced at a public concert in London; and while there he composed and published six sonatas, and made acquaintance with the works of Handel, recently deceased. Two years later, when but twelve years of age, he composed the music for the religious service, and for a trumpet concert at the dedication of the Orphan House Church, in Vienna, and conducted it in the presence of the imperial court, in 1769, at the age of thirteen, he was appointed director of the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg's concerts; and in the same year travelled with his father to Italy, where he created an unheard of enthusiasm by his performances and compositions. He composed the Opera of Mithridates, at Milan, in October, 1770, and it was publicly performed there in December of that year.

At the age of sixteen, he was the first clavecinist in the world; he had produced two requiems and a stab at mater, numerous offertories, hymns and motets, four operas, two cantatas, thirteen symphonies, twenty-four piano-forte sonatas, not to speak of a vast number of concertos for different instruments, trios, quartets, marches, and other minor pieces. In 1779, he was appointed composer to the royal court at Vienna, where he then fixed his residence, and there the musical works were composed upon which his fame chiefly rest. His great opera of Idomeneo was composed in 1780, with a view to induce the family of Mademoiselle Constance Webber, afterwards his wife, to consent to the marriage, which they had declined to do on the ground of his reputation not being sufficiently established. The opera forms an epoch, not in the composer's life only, but in the history of music. In construction, detail, instrumentation, and every imaginable respect it was an enormous advance on all previous works of the kind, and established his repute as the greatest musician the world had seen.

In 1787, he produced his chef-d'oeuvre, Don Giovanni, which, though received with enthusiasm at Prague, was at first beyond the comprehension of the Viennese. To 1791, the last year of his short life, we owe Zauberflote, La Clemenza di Tito, and the sublime requiem, composed in anticipation of death, and finished only a few days before his decease. He died on the 5th of December, 1791, aged 35.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - (born Salzburg, 27 January 1756; died Vienna, 5 December 1791). Son of Leopold Mozart.

He showed musical gifts at a very early age, composing when he was five and when he was six playing before the Bavarian elector and the Austrian empress. Leopold felt that it was proper, and might also be profitable, to exhibit his children's God-given genius (Maria

Anna, 'Nannerl', 1751-1829, was a gifted keyboard player): so in mid-1763 the family set out on a tour that took them to Paris and London, visiting numerous courts en route. Mozart astonished his audiences with his precocious skills; he played to the French and English royal families, had his first music published and wrote his earliest symphonies. The family arrived home late in 1766; nine months later they were off again, to Vienna, where hopes of having an opera by Mozart performed were frustrated by intrigues. They spent 1769 in Salzburg; 1770-73 saw three visits to Italy, where Mozart wrote two operas (*Mitridate*, *Lucio Silla*) and a serenata for performance in Milan, and acquainted himself with Italian styles. Summer 1773 saw a further visit to Vienna, probably in the hope of securing a post; there Mozart wrote a set of string quartets and, on his return, wrote a group of symphonies including his two earliest, nos. 25 in G minor and 29 in A, in the regular repertory. Apart from a journey to Munich for the premiere of his opera *La finta giardiniera* early in 1775, the period from 1774 to mid-1777 was spent in Salzburg, where Mozart worked as Konzertmeister at the Prince-Archbishop's court; his works of these years include masses, symphonies, all his violin concertos, six piano sonatas, several serenades and divertimentos and his first great piano concerto, K271. In 1777 the Mozarts, seeing limited opportunity in Salzburg for a composer so hugely gifted, resolved to seek a post elsewhere for Wolfgang. He was sent, with his mother, to Munich and to Mannheim, but was offered no position (though he stayed over four months at Mannheim, composing for piano and flute and falling in love with Aloysia Weber). His father then dispatched him to Paris: there he had minor successes, notably with his Paris Symphony, no. 31, deftly designed for the local taste. But prospects there were poor and Leopold ordered him home, where a superior post had been arranged at the court. He returned slowly and alone; his mother had died in Paris. The years 1779-80 were spent in Salzburg, playing in the cathedral and at court, composing sacred works, symphonies, concertos, serenades and dramatic music. But opera remained at the centre of his ambitions, and an opportunity came with a commission for a serious opera for Munich. He went there to compose it late in 1780; his correspondence with Leopold (through whom he communicated with the librettist, in Salzburg) is richly informative about his approach to musical drama. The work, *Idomeneo*, was a success. In it Mozart depicted serious, heroic emotion with a richness unparalleled elsewhere in his works, with vivid orchestral writing and an abundance of profoundly expressive orchestral recitative. Mozart was then summoned from Munich to Vienna, where the Salzburg court was in residence on the accession of a new emperor. Fresh from his success, he found himself placed between the valets and the cooks; his resentment towards his employer, exacerbated by the Prince-Archbishop's refusal to let him perform at events the emperor was attending, soon led to conflict, and in May 1781 he resigned, or was kicked out of, his job. He wanted a post at the Imperial court in Vienna, but was content to do freelance work in a city that apparently offered golden opportunities. He made his living over the ensuing years by teaching, by publishing his music, by playing at patrons' houses or in public, by composing to commission (particularly operas); in 1787 he obtained a minor court post as *Kammermusicus*, which gave him a reasonable salary and required nothing beyond the writing of dance music for court balls. He always earned, by musicians' standards, a good income, and had a carriage and servants; through lavish spending and

poor management he suffered times of financial difficulty and had to borrow. In 1782 he married Constanze Weber, Aloysia's younger sister.

In his early years in Vienna, Mozart built up his reputation by publishing (sonatas for piano, some with violin), by playing the piano and, in 1782, by having an opera performed: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, a German Singspiel which went far beyond the usual limits of the tradition with its long, elaborately written songs (hence Emperor Joseph II's famous observation, 'Too many notes, my dear Mozart'). The work was successful and was taken into the repertoires of many provincial companies (for which Mozart was not however paid). In these years, too, he wrote six string quartets which he dedicated to the master of the form, Haydn: they are marked not only by their variety of expression but by their complex textures, conceived as four-part discourse, with the musical ideas linked to this freshly integrated treatment of the medium. Haydn told Mozart's father that Mozart was '**the greatest composer known** to me in person or by name; he has taste and, what is more, the greatest knowledge of composition'.

In 1782 Mozart embarked on the composition of piano concertos, so that he could appear both as composer and soloist. He wrote 15 before the end of 1786, with early 1784 as the peak of activity. They represent one of his greatest achievements, with their formal mastery, their subtle relationships between piano and orchestra (the wind instruments especially) and their combination of brilliance, lyricism and symphonic growth. In 1786 he wrote the first of his three comic operas with Lorenzo da Ponte as librettist, *Le nozze di Figaro*: here and in *Don Giovanni* (given in Prague, 1787) Mozart treats the interplay of social and sexual tensions with keen insight into human character that - as again in the more artificial sexual comedy of *Così fan tutte* (1790) - transcends the comic framework, just as *Die Zauberflöte* (1791) transcends, with its elements of ritual and allegory about human harmony and enlightenment, the world of the Viennese popular theatre from which it springs.

Mozart lived in Vienna for the rest of his life. He undertook a number of journeys: to Salzburg in 1783, to introduce his wife to his family; to Prague three times, for concerts and operas; to Berlin in 1789, where he had hopes of a post; to Frankfurt in 1790, to play at coronation celebrations. The last Prague journey was for the premiere of *La clemenza di Tito* (1791), a traditional serious opera written for coronation celebrations, but composed with a finesse and economy characteristic of Mozart's late music. Instrumental works of these years include some piano sonatas, three string quartets written for the King of Prussia, some string quintets, which include one of his most deeply felt works (K516 in g Minor) and one of his most nobly spacious (K515 in C), and his last four symphonies - one (no.38 in D) composed for Prague in 1786, the others written in 1788 and forming, with the lyricism of no.39 in E-flat, the tragic suggestiveness of no.40 in g Minor and the grandeur of no.41 in C, a climax to his orchestral music. His final works include the Clarinet Concerto and some pieces for masonic lodges (he had been a freemason since 1784; masonic teachings no doubt affected his thinking, and his compositions, in his last years). At his death from a feverish illness whose precise nature has given rise to much speculation (he was not poisoned), he left unfinished the *Requiem*, his first large-scale work for the church since the c Minor Mass of 1783, also unfinished; a completion by his pupil Süssmayr was long accepted as the standard one but there have been recent attempts

to improve on it. Mozart was buried in a Vienna suburb, with little ceremony and in an unmarked grave, in accordance with prevailing custom.

sharjeel iqbal