

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Johann Chrysostom Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 91), born in Salzburg, Bavaria (Austria) was the seventh and last child of Leopold and Anna Pertl Mozart. Only two of their children survived infancy: Amadeus and Maria Anna (1751 - 1829; Insight, "Maria Anna Mozart"). Amadeus demonstrated extraordinary musical talent by the time he was four; before he was six he was composing music. Because that music was notated by Leopold, it is impossible to determine exactly how much of it Amadeus actually composed.



Amadeus never received any formal schooling; most of his musical training came from his father. At the age of six, the boy was a harpsichord virtuoso; soon he became an excellent organist and violinist also. Maria Anna's musical talent almost equaled her brother's. When Leopold realized that his children were unusually gifted, he decided to promote and exhibit their talents. In January 1762, he took them to Munich, where they played harpsichord for the Elector of Bavaria. It was the first of many journeys that filled most of the next decade of Amadeus's life. Also in 1762, the Mozart family visited Vienna, where the children performed in the homes of nobles and for Empress Maria Theresa in Schönbrunn palace; in 1763 the Mozarts went to Paris and in 1764 to London. Usually, they stopped at every significant music center en route so Amadeus could perform. Eventually, his talents were displayed in all of the principal cities and courts of Germany and Austria, as well as in France, England, Holland, and Italy. Frequently, he was subjected to tests, such as sight reading and improvising upon a given theme, to prove he was truly a prodigy. His extraordinary musical memory was astounding - he could accurately reproduce a work after hearing it only once, a capability he retained throughout his life. In many respects, the tours during Amadeus's impressionable years were beneficial; he met important composers and performers and was exposed to different musical styles. Elements of those styles appeared in his own compositions; some were used for a time and then rejected, others were absorbed into his musical style.

In Paris, early in 1764, Amadeus's first published compositions appeared - two pairs of sonatas for keyboard and violin, his Op. 1 (K.6, 7) and Op. 2 (K.8, 9). Six sonatas of the same type (K.10 - 15) were issued in London in 1765; six more (K.26 - 31) were printed at The Hague in 1766. In all of these sonatas, the keyboard part is self-sufficient, and the violin provides accompaniment. Harpsichord sonatas with violin ad libitum were especially favored by Johann Schobert (c. 1735 - 67), a German composer active in Paris in the 1760s. The influence of Schobert's keyboard works, particularly his Op. 3 D-major sonata, is apparent in these early Mozart works. Schobert's music made a lasting impression on Mozart; borrowings from Schobert's sonatas appear in some of Mozart's piano concertos and later keyboard sonatas, e.g., Sonata in A minor K.310, whose Andante contains a quotation from Schobert's Sonata Op. 17, no. 1. During the 15 months the Mozarts spend in England, Amadeus became acquainted with the sonatas and symphonies of J. C. Bach and C. F. Abel. In Chelsea, near London, Amadeus composed his first symphonies.

In autumn 1767, the Mozarts visited Vienna and several cities in Bohemia, then spent about a year in Vienna. By that time Amadeus had composed arias and scenes for voice and orchestra; now,

Leopold encouraged him to write an opera. *La finta semplice* (The feigned simpleton), a full-lengthy opera buffa, was completed but was not produced until May 1769, at Salzburg. However, other compositions by Amadeus were heard in Vienna in 1768: (1) a one-act *Singspiel*, *Bastien und Bastienne*, performed in October at the home of Dr. Franz Mesmer (1734 - 1815), inventor of "magnetism therapy" (mesmerism, hypnotism); (2) a festal Mass, K.139, performed at the dedication of *Waisenhauskirche* in December. Most of 1769 was spent in Salzburg, where Amadeus composed another Mass and several other sacred works, some minuets, and three instrumental serenades for university ceremonies. Late in October, he was appointed honorary *Konzertmeister* at the Salzburg court.

Between mid-December 1769 and March 1773, Leopold and Amadeus made three extensive journeys to various Italian cities. In addition to performing and sight-seeing, Amadeus had some counterpoint lessons from G. B. Martini (1706 - 84) at Bologna, met the celebrated castrato Farinelli, and, at Florence, formed a friendship with the precocious English violinist-composer Thomas Linley (1756 - 78; *Insight*, "Thomas Linley"), whose talents closely paralleled his own. That friendship was good for Amadeus, for it made him realize that he was not unique.

In Italy, Amadeus became acquainted with works of leading Italian composers. The influence of G. B. Sammartini (c. 1700 - 75) of Milan is apparent in several of the symphonies Mozart wrote at this time. In general, Sammartini's symphonies are characterized by a texture similar to that of chamber music, with frequent passages of dialogue between instruments, intense rhythmic drive, varied treatment of sonata form, and structural continuity achieved by frequent elision of themes and/or section. Slow movements are rich in lyricism and imitative passages. Some portions of Sammartini's late symphonies have been described as "Mozartean," when, in reality, it was Mozart who assimilated characteristics from Sammartini. In Italy, Mozart composed his first seven string quartets: K.80 (1770) and K.155 - 60 (1772 - 73); they also reflect Sammartini's influence.

While in Rome, the Mozarts visited *Sistine Chapel*, where they heard Allegri's *Miserere* for double choir sung. Its notation was a carefully guarded secret, but Amadeus reproduced it after hearing the work once. A few months later (June 1770), the pope named Amadeus a Knight in the Order of the Golden Spur.

Most significant of the compositions Amadeus wrote during these years in Italy are two *opere serie* that were produced in Milan: *Mitridate rè di Ponto* (*Mithridates, King of Pontus*; December 1770) and *Lucca Silla* (December 1772). For Venanzio Rauzzini, *primo uomo* of *Lucca Silla*, Mozart wrote the motet *Exsultate, jubilate* (*Rejoice greatly, jubilantly*; K.165; soprano, orch.), a three-movement work that concludes with a brilliant *Alleluia*.

After several months' stay in Salzburg in spring 1773, Leopold took Amadeus to Vienna, where the youth heard Haydn's *Opp. 17 and 20* string quartets and absorbed some features of Viennese musical style. Haydn's quartets inspired Amadeus to compose another set of six, K. 168 - 73, in which some of those characteristics took root. For example, K.168 and K.170 have full-fledged fugues as finales - but fugues more like Fux's than Bach's. These finales are the first complete fugues in Mozart's secular works; undoubtedly, they were inspired by those in Haydn's *Op. 20*.

Back in Salzburg, in December 1773, Mozart wrote his first original piano concerto, K.175 (D major) and his first string quintet, K.174 (Bb major), modeled after a quintet by Michael Haydn, court musician at Salzburg from 1763 - 1806. Mozart's choice of quintet instrumentation - a second viola

added to string quartet - was probably determined by the fact that he enjoyed playing viola and may have participated in the work's initial performance.

THE VIENNA YEARS

Amadeus decided to remain in Vienna and took lodging with the Webers. Aloysia had married Joseph Lange in 1780, and now Amadeus's name began to be linked with that of her younger sister, Constanze (1762 - 1849). To squelch the rumors, Amadeus moved elsewhere but maintained contact with the family. During the winter of 1781 - 82, the friendship between Constanze and Amadeus deepened; on 4 August 1782 they were married in St. Stephen's Cathedral. In fulfillment of a vow made at that time, Amadeus began to write the Mass in C minor (K. 427) but completed only Kyrie and Gloria. Most of the Sanctus and its Benedictus were notated and the Credo was begun, but, for an unknown reason, they were abandoned. On 25 October 1783, the Kyrie and Gloria, supplemented by other Mass movements previously composed by Mozart, were performed at St. Peter's in Salzburg. Constanze sang one of the soprano solo parts. Her voice was well trained and pleasing, but she was not gifted with outstanding musical talent.

Amadeus's first few years in Vienna were prosperous, though he had no permanent position or patron, no steady income. He had several pupils, and his talents as pianist and composer were in demand. His first Vienna publication was a set of six sonatas for piano and violin (K. 296, K. 376 - 80; 1781). Composition of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The abduction from the harem) occupied much of his time during the spring of 1782.

That Singspiel was favorably received when produced at Vienna's Burgtheater in July; it remained in the repertoire there for several years. Many of Mozart's finest compositions - most of the works responsible for his being considered a great composer - were written during the Vienna years. During this decade, his compositions were influenced principally by works of J. S. Bach and Joseph Haydn. In 1782, Amadeus became acquainted with Baron van Swieten, and for several years he attended the weekly gatherings at van Swieten's home that were devoted to studying the music of Handel and Bach. In those sessions, Mozart was introduced to *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, *The Art of Fugue*, and other Bach works. He reorchestrated some of Handel's oratorios, arranged five fugues from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Volume II, for string quartet (K. 405), and composed a Fugue in C minor (K. 426) for two pianos. (That he made other arrangements of Bach's fugues is dubious.) After 1783, Mozart used counterpoint increasingly.

In 1781, poet Lorenzo da Ponte (1749 - 1838) came to Vienna; he achieved his first success as opera librettist working with Mozart. Their collaboration produced the operas *Le nozze di Figaro* (The marriage of Figaro; 1786), *Il Don Giovanni* (Don Giovanni; 1787), and *Così fan tutte* (Thus do they all; 1790), an opera buffa.

Between December 1782 and January 1785, Mozart composed his finest string quartets: K. 387, K. 421, K. 428, K. 458, K. 464, K. 465. Published as a set, in 1785, they were dedicated to Haydn. In 1782, Symphony No. 35 (K. 385) was created for a Haffner family celebration; Symphony No. 36 (K. 425) was dashed off for concert at Linz in 1783. For about three years, Mozarts wrote no symphonies. Then, Symphony No. 38 (K. 504; 1786) was written for performance at Prague. A year and a half later, in approximately six weeks in summer 1788, Mozart composed his finest

symphonies, Nos. 39 - 41 (K. 543, 550, 551). In 1785 - 86, he wrote six piano concerti, including K. 466 (D minor) and K. 467 (C minor); the former became his most popular piano concerto in the nineteenth century. Between 1787 and 1791, he wrote the string quintets K. 515 - 16, K. 593, K. 614, and created the excellent Clarinet Quintet, K. 581 (A major; 1789) for clarinetist Anton Stadler (1753 - 1812).

Gluck died in 1787, and Mozart hoped to be appointed to fill that vacancy at court. He was named Imperial Chamber Music Composer, at a small fraction of Gluck's former salary. Even such a minor appointment for Amadeus would have pleased Leopold, but he did not live long enough to learn of it; he died in May 1787. Amadeus turned over to his sister all of Leopold's estate except the music manuscripts.

Amadeus became a member of a Vienna Lodge of the Brotherhood of Freemasons in 1784. The ideals of Freemasonry and his affiliation with the Brotherhood meant a great deal to him. He translated some elements of Masonic ritual into musical symbols, which he incorporated into some of his works, e.g., *Die Zauberflöte* (The magic flute), and wrote a number of compositions for Masonic occasions. Among them are *Mauerische Trauermusik* (Masonic Funeral Music, K. 477; 1785); the lovely *Adagio in Bb*, K. 411 (1785), for two clarinets and three bass horns; and the *Cantata*, K. 623 (November 1791), his last completed composition.

During the last years of his life, when he had few pupils, commissions, or playing engagements, Mozart felt no compunction about entreating his fellow Masons to assist him financially. Neither Amadeus nor Constanze could manage money very well, but they never experienced abject poverty. They had six children, only two of whom survived to adulthood: Carl Thomas (1784 - 1858) and Franz Xaver (1791 - 1844). Both sons were talented musically; Franz, like his father, played piano and composed.

The Requiem was commissioned anonymously by Count Franz Walsegg zu Stuppach, a dilettante who enjoyed commissioning works and having them performed in his own chapel as his own compositions. He intended to use the Requiem as a memorial Service for his deceased wife. Mozart worked on the Mass intermittently in 1791 but gave priority to other works. The Mass was still unfinished at the time of his death and was completed by his pupil and close friend, Franz Xaver Süssmayr (1766 - 1803). Undoubtedly, Mozart and Süssmayr had discussed the composition.

W. A. Mozart died on 5 December 1791. There was no public ceremony honoring him, and no crowds attended his funeral. He was buried in a mass grave at St. Marx churchyard, outside the city limits; the location of that grave is unknown.