

### **Introduction**

This paper is being written to review the life and works of one of the most famous and most performed composers of all times, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who lived from 1756 to 1791. Wolfgang was born into a musical family. His father Leopold Mozart was an accomplished musician in his own right but once Wolfgang's talents were recognized he dedicated himself to promoting and furthering his career. Wolfgang Mozart composed music in every musical format and composed more than 800 pieces. He wrote Operas, choral works, concertos, symphonies, chamber music, solo concertos and sonatas (Yudkin 122-126).

Wolfgang Mozart's musical career began at a very early age and because he was so gifted, he was considered a "boy genius". From a young age his father Leopold took him on tours around Europe and during those travels he was able to interact with and learn a lot from older more seasoned musicians. After his initial travels with his father and a brief return to his hometown of Salzburg, it was apparent that Wolfgang was too advanced for his hometown and would not be able to flourish there, so he went back on tour, but with his mother instead of his father. Unfortunately, his mother died in Paris while they were travelling there. After his mother's passing, he briefly returned to Salzburg was still not able to find any job that matched his talents. He went to work for the archbishop but and he still felt stifled and unsatisfied, so he demanded to be released from his employment and began his freelance career. Throughout his career he was respected, admired and recognized as a musical genius. Mozart died on December 5, 1791 at the young age of 35 but he had such a profound impact on the world of music that he is still recognized as one of the greatest musicians of all time (Yudkin 122-126).

### **Main Body**

The legend of Wolfgang Mozart begins with his parents, his father Leopold Mozart and his mother Ana Maria who were married on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1747. His parents had a total of seven children but only two of those children survived to adulthood. The two children who survived were Maria Anna, born in 1751 and Wolfgang, born in 1756 (Eisen). “Mozart was born into a musical family. His father, Leopold, was a distinguished violinist and composer who held the post of music director at the court of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg in Austria. He was also the author of an important book on violin playing. Mozart’s older sister was also a talented musician, though she did not pursue a life in music, as this was not considered appropriate for women at the time” (Yudkin 122). Wolfgang’s father was very proud of him and his musical talents and once referred to his son as ‘this miracle God has caused to be born in Salzburg’ (Yudkin 123). Although it seemed as if his father stopped working on his own music and focused on Wolfgang’s development, Leopold did continue to work and made contributions to his son’s early works:

Leopold Mozart’s collaboration in Wolfgang’s early works up to about 1766 was probably considerable (the trio of no.48 in the so-called ‘Nannerl Notenbuch’, an arrangement of the trio of the third movement of Leopold’s D major serenade, also appears as Menuet II in Wolfgang’s sonata K6) although he seldom drew direct attention to it. After this time he served chiefly (but not exclusively) as proofreader and editor; until the early 1770s scarcely a single autograph of Wolfgang’s is without additions or alterations in his father’s hand. Even later, the attributions and dates on Mozart’s autographs are frequently by Leopold, who apparently preserved his son’s manuscripts with painstaking orderliness. Thus, the elder Mozart fulfilled a universal function as

teacher, educator and private secretary to his son, and when necessary also served as valet, impresario, propagandist and travel organizer. (Eisen)

Leopold Mozart died in 1787, just four years before his son Wolfgang. “In short, Leopold sacrificed his own considerable career to further that of his son. No one was better qualified to recognize Wolfgang’s gifts than his gifted father” (Yudkin 123).

Mozart’s musical gifts started showing at a very young age. “At the age of four he could learn a piece of music in half an hour. At five he was playing the clavier incredibly well. At six he began composing, writing his first *symphonies* at the age of eight” (“Wolfgang”). Although Mozart was born in Salzburg, he spent most of his life and career travelling and touring throughout Europe for his music. His first set of travels with his father, “Between the ages of seven and fifteen, the young Mozart spent half of his time on tour. During these tours, Mozart heard, absorbed, and learned various European musical idioms, eventually crystallizing his own mature style” (“Wolfgang”). After a brief return to Salzburg where he could not find a suitable job, he went on tour with his mother, “in 1777 Wolfgang went on a tour with his mother to Munich, Mannheim, and Paris. It was in Paris that his mother died suddenly in July, 1778” (“Wolfgang”). After another brief return to Salzburg, he left again to start his freelance career and settled in Vienna where he met and married his wife Constanze without his father’s approval.

After Marrying Constanze in 1782, Mozart’s career took off, his career flourished and he became very popular. “Then for a time, things began to look bright for the young composer. Beginning in 1782 with the *Singspiel* *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), Mozart began turning out one masterpiece after another in every form and genre”

("Wolfgang"). Most of his greatest works were composed during the height of his career from 1784 to 1786. "A sampling of Mozart's mature works comprise a virtual honor roll of musical masterpieces: the last ten string quartets, the string quintets, and the Quintet for clarinet and strings; the Mass in C minor and the unfinished Requiem; the Serenade for thirteen wind instruments, the Clarinet concerto, the late piano concertos, and the last six symphonies" ("Wolfgang"). It was in 1786 that he composed his famous opera, *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*) followed by *Don Giovanni* (*Don Juan*) in 1787 and *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*) in 1791 (Yudkin 124-125).

Wolfgang Mozart died on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1791. Although he had periods of great success, he was never a wealthy man. "By 1790 he was writing letters to friends, describing himself and his family (he and Constanze had six children, only two of which survived) in desperate circumstances and begging for money" ("Wolfgang"). When he died, he was working on a Requiem Mass (Mass for the Dead). The end of his life was summed up beautifully in Peattie's *Mozart: A Fantasy*:

Thus it came about that the Harmonies, ever striving through this body for their ultimate utterance, reached at the climax the great moan called Mozart's Requiem Mass. It is the processional to which souls, cassoed for Death, march forth into the Presence. It is a ladder of song by which the sorrowful may climb from the grief of the grave to the peace of it. One night came a stranger, knocking, and commanded: "Write me a mass for the dead." "Surely my hour is almost come," said the musician. "I must write." And again came the stranger in the night and asked: "Is the mass for the dead ready for the playing?" The tension of toil was tightened. The Harmonies, filled with such rapture as only immortal spirits know, did their utmost. The musician lay dead, with the Requiem Mass

in his hand. The next night came the stranger querying: "Is the mass for the dead complete?" In the wonder and majesty of the stars the seven Harmonies went their way. Their flight left a quiver of light like that a burning meteor streaks across the affrighted sky. The soul of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart winged back to the Place of Souls, and the body was tumbled in a pauper's grave, a grave in which two others rested, very humble and much worn with toil. No stone marks the spot. The place has been forgotten. But the labors of the Harmonies are among the deathless things. And whenever a man can fittingly reproduce them, all discord dies in the air and in the soul, and those who listen are as little children lifted into a world where sin and greed are not, and where Harmony is perfect, the Harmony which includes all things. (Peattie, 1998, 635-636)

No one actually knows where Wolfgang Mozart's body is buried. "He was buried, like most Viennese in those days by the decree of Emperor Joseph, in a common grave, the exact location of which remains unknown" ("Wolfgang"). "Mozart is probably the only composer in history to have written undisputed masterworks in virtually every musical genre of his age. His *serenades, divertimenti and dances*, written on request for the entertainment and outdoor parties of the nobility, have become synonymous with the Classical age of elegance" ("Wolfgang").

One thing that is certain, Wolfgang Mozart's soul lives on is his music that has made an eternal impression on the hearts and minds of humankind. His music and his legacy will continue for generations to come because his music is beautiful, timeless and classic.

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