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Music Appreciation

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Across America, every man, woman, and child has heard this name and understands the significance of his musical excellence. He is taught to us as one of the greatest and most famous classical composers the world has ever seen. Mozart was born on January 27, 1756 to Leopold Mozart and Anna Maria in Salzburg, Austria (Kelling, 9). His official baptized name is Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart and he was the last of 7 children to be born in his family (Melograni, 3). Unfortunately, all other children died during infancy except Mozart and the 4th child, Anna Maria “Nannerl” Mozart survived. Leopold, Mozart’s father, was an extremely talented violinist and composer who took his children under his wing and made them musical prodigies. One of the most remarkable things about Mozart that drew attention to him then and even now was how young he was when his musical career began. He started performing music exceptionally by the age of 4 and by age 6 he had already begun composing (Yudkin, 134). Mozart was brilliant and by the time he was 8 with already published music, he knew how special he was. Throughout his life, he and his father traveled across Europe to perform, which is where he was influenced by other musical sounds. Unlike other composers who focused on certain types of music pieces, Mozart wrote for all the main types of classical music. This includes symphonies, opera, string quartet, and sonatas. He had extensive range throughout his 800 compositions, varying in themes, sound, and

experimentation. Some of Mozart's most famous works were his last symphonies (Nos.39, 40, and 41) which he composed in 1788. Only 3 years later, He unexpectedly died on December 5, 1791 at the early age of 35.

As briefly mentioned before, Mozart's early life was the most exceptional the world had ever seen before. Leopold was the one responsible for teaching Mozart and Anna Maria in subjects such as math, language arts, dance, religion, but most importantly music. His father stated that by the age of four, Mozart had already learnt pieces from his sister's music book and wrote his earliest composition at only 5 years old (Eisen and Sadie). Leopold quickly realized how gifted his children were and acted swiftly by making them perform in court or in public concerts. Mozart's first noted public performance was a dancing part of a play that took place in Salzburg University in 1761. Just one year later in 1762, Leopold took his children to Munich to play the harpsichord in front of the Bavarian Elector (Kelling, 10). Later in the year, the family took a trip to Vienna, where they played for the Empress of Austria Maria Theresa, which was a huge success (Yudkin, 123). This new traction they gained, allowed them to receive more invitations to perform by nobles and royalty all across Europe. They reached a level of fame that led them to playing for Louis XV in January 1764, which would make young Mozart only 9 years old at the time (Eisen and Sadie). In April 1764, at the age of 10, the Mozarts arrived in London and by May, the children would have already played in front of George III twice. In 1765, in London, Mozart got to meet Johann Christian Bach, son of famous composer, Johann Sebastian Bach. Both Bach and Carl Friedrich Abel were influences on Mozart and it said that it was Bach who introduced him to the world of opera. It is important to note that during this time Mozart had already started composing full symphonies. Due to the industrial revolution, England

was in a state of prosperity which is partially why the family stayed for over a year in London (Melograni, 17). Throughout his life, Mozart was to have been said to be small in stature, pale, fragile looking, and had issues with his health. It was during his time in London where he became sick which also prolonged the family's trip. Once he regained his health, the Mozart's continued to travel back to other parts of Europe, including France, Holland, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany.

By the time he returned home after going back and forth between countries, he was already 17 years old. Even though by this time Mozart was a fully established artist, it was difficult to find a job. This was due to the fact that the Archbishop of Salzburg felt contempt towards Leopold because of his extended absence. Leopold was his deputy music director which is why it mattered to the Archbishop. Luckily, he gave Mozart a junior position, in which Mozart wrote various different pieces (Yudkin, 123). Both he and his father grew to detest Salzburg due to its musically inadequate environment. It would be at this time in 1778, where Mozart and his mother leave Salzburg in hopes to find him employment (Kelling, 15). Their trip consisted of going to Munich, Mannheim, and Paris. Unfortunately it was during their trip to Paris, when his mother fell ill and died on July 3rd. To add onto this misfortune, Mozart was also unable to obtain a job because employers felt intimidated because of his "over qualification" (Yudkin, 123). After finishing up with commitments in Paris, Mozart headed home in 1778 after a position opened up and the Archbishop offered him a salary raise. After a draining trip, he finally made it back home in January 1779 (Eisen and Sadie). During this job is when Mozart went on a trip to Vienna with the Archbishop and was outraged by the maltreatment towards him. In 1780, Mozart immediately resigned and this is what kick-started Mozart's freelance career (Yudkin, 124).

Though Mozart had a very exciting and vagabond-like lifestyle, that is not why he is so notable; his music was. While becoming an independent musician, Mozart moved to Vienna where he wrote several piano concertos and sonatas. In July 1782, Mozart experienced the success of his German comic opera, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. It is also important to note that in this year Mozart also got married to Constanze Weber. Mozart's own first public concert was believed to be at the Burgtheater where the concertos *Lucio Silla* and *Idomeneo* were played. He continued to compose several works, including more piano concertos and string quartets. After some personal hardships of losing his child, Mozart returned back to Vienna from Salzburg in late 1783. It was during this time that he achieved his greatest success and fame. Mozart performed many huge concerts in which he composed 12 of his most important piano concertos to this day. Along with public concerts, he was requested to perform multiple different private concerts for high ranking world leaders. He had numerous amount of works published at the time including three sonatas, three concertos, six string quartets dedicated to Haydn, and later in his career his most famous symphonies (*Eisen* and *Sadie*). Though by the late 1780s, his fame had declined and he began facing financial difficulties, he created some of his most famously known compositions that we know today. In the summer of 1788, he composed symphonies 39, 40, and 41 which are applauded for their details and uniqueness from each other. Though these symphonies were monumental parts of his work, arguably the greatest achievement were his operas that he completed in the last few years of his life. He wrote 5 great operas but the most famous and well known are *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *the Magic Flute*. Each of the operas attacks a different theme of life and human nature while all being distinctly different

from one another. Mozart changed the norms of the opera stage into a platform to illicit some of the most profound human feelings. (Yudkin, 125)

Unexpectedly in November 1791, Mozart became sick while he was working on a Requiem Mass. Shortly after on December 5, 1791, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart passed away. Though his times were centuries before any of us could enjoy his music in person, we still to this day appreciate his brilliance and masterpieces. Back then, just as today, people are so attracted to his music due to his humanistic themes and dramatic storytelling. Also notable is his ability to compose rich and versatile music that was new to the western world. What made him so popular is that his music could reach such a large demographic in the audience. Throughout all his compositions, there is such a large variety of types of music and themes. One composition can make you joyful and euphoric while the next can have you question the philosophical meaning of life. He broke down musical barriers and helped pave the way for the future of western music. Musicians and non-musicians alike, appreciate his genius and continue to enjoy his music today. From being a talented composer to being a natural musician at every instrument he picked up, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart has always drawn the spotlight to him for good reason. He is one of the greatest composers and musicians to ever live and will most likely remain at the top for all of human existence.

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