



Composer Profile: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Born in Salzburg, Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart is renowned as one of the most gifted musicians in the history of classical music.

Raised as a Catholic, Mozart was the youngest of seven children, five of whom died in infancy. His father, Leopold, was an ambitious composer and violinist, and by the age of 5 years Mozart was already proficient on keyboard and violin.

By the age of 11 years, he had composed his first opera, *Apollo et Hyacinthus*. And a year later the emperor Joseph II commissioned him to write *La finta semplice*.

Mozart worked tirelessly to become not only a great composer, but also a conductor, virtuoso pianist, organist and violinist, with his music embracing opera, symphony, concerto, chamber, choral, instrumental and vocal music.

Though he was considered a genius, and also had a keen sense for languages being fluent in Latin, Italian, French, and German, Mozart was also known to be tactless, vain, arrogant and with an obscene sense of humour.

In 1782 he married Constanze Weber, and together they had six children, but only two survived.

Although Mozart's output was prolific at over 800 works, he and Constanze liked to live luxuriously in their early years together, with an expensive apartment, furniture, servants and their son enrolled at boarding school.

Between 1782 to 1786 Mozart produced some of his best work; the *Haffner* and *Linz* symphonies, five string quartets, nine piano concertos; three concurrently with *The Marriage of Figaro*. And in 1787 his second opera *Don Giovanni* premiered.

However, Mozart didn't tend to save much of his earnings and in his later years, as he stopped appearing frequently in public concerts, and the level of prosperity and ability of aristocracy to support music declined, his income shrank. Within a period of seven years Mozart saw his income shrink by almost 70%.

In the few years before he died, Mozart was highly productive with *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, the Clarinet Quintet in A, *Cosí fan Tutte*, three piano trios, the Coronation piano concerto, two piano sonatas, three string quartets, and three symphonies (to bring his overall tally of symphonies to 41), which saw his financial situation begin to improve as he paid off some debts.

However, in 1790 Mozart's health began to fail and his output slowed.

Although he improved sufficiently during 1791 to compose *The Magic Flute*, the *Requiem*, and the Clarinet Concerto, he died in December of that year, at the age of 35.