

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

What do you mean the great composer?

He was one of the greatest composers of all time and he died at only 35. Let's have a peek at his life. He was born here in a pretty town surrounded by mountains and full of music called Salzburg in Austria in 1756. The Mozart home was full of music. Wolfgang's father was a **composer** (someone who writes music) and a violinist and a music teacher. And when Wolfgang was still a baby in his cot he would listen to his older sister Nannerl play the harpsichord while his mother looked on. He probably thought I'm gonna be much better than her one day soon.

Do you know that he and his sister were the only two out of the Mozart's seven children to survive? Poor Mrs. Mozart.

As Wolfgang grew up, with lots of teaching from his father, encouragement from his mother and inspiration from his sister (and let's not forget a big dollop of genius) it wasn't long before he could play piano and violin better than everyone. And at just six years old he was composing his own music. (Minuet and Trio in G major)

Mozart's father saw at once how brilliant his son was and he had the bright idea to take him on a tour around the smartest palaces of Europe to show off his talents to kings and queens and princes and earn some money too. But touring was hard work and Wolfgang was still a small child, don't forget. Long bumpy journeys in a carriage were very tiring. The lodgings where they stayed were uncomfortable and there was lots of dirt and disease. At a time when medicine wasn't as good as it is today they often got sick. That tour lasted more than three years and then it was off on a tour of Italy for two years. In Italy the story goes that 14 year-old Wolfgang went to the Sistine Chapel with its beautifully painted ceilings and heard a piece of choral music called the Miserere by the composer Allegra. What's astonishing is that Wolfgang was able to write out the whole tune from his memory.

At just 17 years old he got a job in Salzburg as a court musician but it was badly paid and really boring and Mozart was so ambitious that he moved to Vienna, the capital of Austria. There he lodged with the Weber family and soon he fell in love with one of the daughters, Constanza Weber. Wolfgang's father didn't approve of this love affair at all but Mozart was determined and so the couple got married.

How did he make his money?

Well, he performed and he was a brilliant passionate **theorist**. (someone who understands how music is made) Soon his gigs were packed out with fans [and he composed by] The rich customers would ask him to compose music especially for them and he would write new music to perform to his fans.

So what kind of music did Mozart write?

He wrote **Sonatas** (that's a piece of music for one instrument, like the piano, or an instrument, say the violin, accompanied by the piano. He wrote **Concertos** (that's where the orchestra plays the background music and there's a star solo performance by an instrument, like the clarinet). He wrote a whopping 25 concertos for the piano. Have a listen to this, his Piano Concerto Number 21, now known as Elvira Madigan, and this is his Concerto Number Four for the Horn. He also wrote **Symphonies** (a big piece of music in four movements, some fast some slow) where the orchestra takes center stage. And he wrote a massive twenty-one **Operas** (when the actors on stage sing a story instead of saying it).

To relax Mozart liked to play billiards (like pool) but I bet he was humming a tune even as he bent over the table. Music was pouring out of Mozart all day long and wherever he went and he must have been busy composing almost non-stop. In his 35 years he managed to write over 600 pieces of music. That's a lot of paper!

Well, meet Ludwig van Köchel. He organized Mozart's music with his K numbers. K 1 was the first thing Mozart wrote and K 505 he wrote when he was 32, shortly before he died.

Mozart just didn't give himself a break and he was composing right up until his last breath. By the end of 1791 he was exhausted, depressed, overworked, and feeling very ill. He still managed to finish his last opera, The Magic Flute, and was working on funeral music for a customer when he died on December the fifth. Like everyone else who wasn't an aristocrat, Mozart was buried in a normal open grave in a cemetery in Vienna. Shortly afterwards people realized what a musical genius he was. People as brilliant as Mozart don't come around very often we're so lucky to enjoy all the wonderful music he left us and in his short 35 years. He made the world a much richer place for us all.

Thank You Mozart