COURSE GUIDEBOOK

# Great Masters: Mozart—His Life and Music




THE TEACHING COMPANY®
*The Joy of Lifelong Learning Every Day*
GREAT TEACHERS, GREAT COURSES, GREAT VALUE GUARANTEED.
1-800-TEACH-12 (1-800-832-2412) ★ www
4151 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100 Chantilly,



Great Masters: Mozart—His Life and Music
Professor Robert Greenberg


THE Great Courses℠

# Great Masters: Mozart—His Life and Music


**Professor Robert Greenberg**
***San Francisco Conservatory of Music***


THE TEACHING COMPANY®

## Robert Greenberg, Ph.D.

San Francisco Conservatory of Music


Robert Greenberg has composed over forty works for a wide variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles. Recent performances of Greenberg's work have taken place in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, England, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and The Netherlands, where his *Child's Play* for string quartet was performed at the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam in 1993.

Professor Greenberg holds degrees from Princeton University and the University of California at Berkeley, where he received a Ph.D. in music composition in 1984. His principal teachers were Edward Cone, Claudio Spies, Andrew Imbrie, and Olly Wilson.

Professor Greenberg's awards include three Nicola De Lorenzo prizes in composition, three Meet the Composer grants, and commissions from the Koussevitzky Foundation of the Library of Congress, the Alexander String Quartet, XTET, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and the Dancer's Stage Ballet Company.

He is currently on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he is Chair of the Department of Music History and Literature and Director of Curriculum of the Adult Extension Division.

Professor Greenberg is creator, host, and lecturer for the San Francisco Symphony's Discovery Series. The Discovery Series is a special subscription series in which participants attend four 3-hour lectures over the course of the concert season on topics that are geared to the repertoire under performance.

Professor Greenberg has taught and lectured extensively across North American and Europe, speaking to such corporations and musical institutions as Arthur Andersen and Andersen Consulting, Diamond Technologies, Canadian Pacific, Strategos Institute, Lincoln Center, the Van Cliburn Foundation, the University of California/Haas School of Business Executive Seminar, the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, and others. His work as a teacher and lecturer has been profiled in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Inc.* magazine, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Times* of London. He is an artistic codirector and board member of COMPOSER, INC. His music is published by Fallen Leaf Press and CPP/Belwin and is recorded on the Innova Label.

Professor Greenberg has recorded 256 lectures for The Teaching Company, including the forty-eight–lecture super-course *How to Listen to and Understand Great Music*.

## Table of Contents

## Great Masters: Mozart—His Life and Music






## Great Masters: Mozart—His Life and Music

**Scope:**

Mozart was a complex human being, and "human being" is the operative phrase here. Among the many myths surrounding Mozart the "legend" was the belief that he was some kind of divinity—a concept encouraged by the unworldly beauty of his music and by his middle name, Theophilus (by adoption, Gottlieb, or Amadeus)—beloved of God. His musical talents—his extraordinary memory, his ability to compose whole symphonies in his head—gave rise to the notion that he was a freak or possessed magical powers.

The reality is that Mozart, like any other composer, served an apprenticeship. What *is* extraordinary is that Mozart's apprenticeship began at such a tender age; he wrote his first symphony at the age of eight. He was a mature composer by the age of twenty, when most other composers are just beginning their training. He worked extremely hard, frequently to the point of exhaustion. And his music was not without its critics in his day—many found it "difficult" or "too complex," "too many notes, my dear Mozart," (Emperor Joseph II).

Mozart's life, from childhood until he was in his twenties, was dominated by his father. Leopold Mozart counted on his children's musical talents, particularly Wolfgang's, to bring him the fame and fortune he could not earn for himself. Young Wolfgang clearly possessed prodigious musical talent, which Leopold wasted little time in exploiting. The grand tour of 1763–66 made the Mozart family the sensation of Europe and turned the small, fragile, desperate-to-please Wolfgang into an international child celebrity and the family's main breadwinner.

Mozart learned his craft by absorbing the music of the best composers of his day, including Johann Christian Bach (eleventh son of Johann Sebastian Bach) and the legendary Franz Joseph Haydn. By the time of Mozart's second visit to Paris in 1777 at the age of twenty-one, his own original genius was emerging.

Mozart's second trip to Paris was a disaster. His mother died there, he failed to find a position, he had no money, and his domineering father was interfering with his life to a degree he now found intolerable. Leopold managed to make Mozart feel guilty enough to return to the life he hated in his hometown of Salzburg for a while longer. Mozart's abusive employer, Archbishop Colloredo, had little appreciation for his genius and, ultimately, Mozart was literally booted out into the world to make his living as a freelance composer. In an era when a composer's financial security usually meant tying himself to a wealthy, aristocratic employer, Mozart's willingness to break free from the archbishop and make a go at a freelance career was nothing short of revolutionary.

In 1781, Mozart settled in Vienna, an exciting place to live and work for artists at that time, thanks to the reforms of the enlightened Emperor Joseph II. He

married Constanze Weber against the wishes of his father. As a result, the relationship between father and son became even more strained; Leopold withheld Mozart's wedding dowry and would later totally disinherit his son.

Free of his father and his employer, Mozart's genius soared. He reached the peak of his career in Vienna in 1782–86. At this point, his piano concerti were his main source of income. Then, beginning in 1786, he collaborated with the great librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte on three of the repertoire's finest operas *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Cosi fan tutte*.

By the late 1780s, however, Mozart's popularity in Vienna was on the wane. His music had always had its critics, those who thought it too difficult, too complex, or too contrived. Mozart had never attempted to compromise his musical integrity just to please the masses. Even his so-called "entertainment" music is stamped with his inimitable and complex genius. His politically controversial opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, did not help to further his career in Vienna. Masterpiece though it is, it deeply offended the Viennese aristocracy. Mozart was, in essence, biting the hand that fed him.

Many have debated why Mozart did not move to Prague, where his music was so popular that it was played everywhere, even by street musicians. Mozart found Prague too provincial in comparison with Vienna. He and Constanze remained in Vienna, even though their financial situation worsened. Their marriage was also strained because of Mozart's real and perceived extramarital affairs. All the while, however, Mozart continued to pour out one masterwork after another, the expressive content of which rarely hinted at his unhappy circumstances.

Then, in 1790, Mozart's health began to deteriorate and he became depressed. That year, he wrote very little of significance. His creative recovery in early 1791 was inexplicable. The compositions of that year culminated in the great Masonic opera *The Magic Flute*, a work that put the genre of German *singspiel* on an equal footing with Italian-language opera.

By the end of the year, he was working on a Requiem Mass, anonymously commissioned by a nobleman who liked to pass off others' compositions as his own. The Requiem remained unfinished at Mozart's death on December 5, 1791. Few historical events have inspired as many myths and as much speculation as the cause of Mozart's death. The most famous myth is that he was poisoned by the Italian composer Antonio Salieri. This notion arose because decades later, Salieri, while a patient in an insane asylum decades later, claimed that he had done the dastardly deed. The most likely theory is that Mozart died from acute rheumatic fever and a stroke brought on by excessive bloodletting. He was buried in a common grave, according to his family's wishes. Luckily for us, although his body was ultimately lost, his music, with its genius and unique, unworldly beauty, was not.




# Lecture One

## Introduction

**Scope:** Much of today's Mozart scholarship is about debunking myths. For some, Mozart was an inexplicable God-like creature; for others, an idiot savant. One of the reasons for the Mozart mythology is the fact that few responsible accounts of Mozart's life and personality were written during his lifetime. Much was written years after his death. Mozart's extraordinary, prodigious talent also fueled the notion that he was some kind of freak. At the heart of the Mozart mythology is the otherworldliness of his music. His middle name, Amadeus, "loved of God," also helped to imbue him with a God-like image. The goal of these lectures is to show Mozart to be a person: a talented, hard-working, ambitious man who had friends and enemies and whose music was subject to criticism in his own day.

## Outline

**I.** During his obscenely brief life, Mozart wrote enough great music, suffered enough illnesses, traveled as many miles, and experienced enough psychological stress for three full lifetimes, let alone one abbreviated one.

- **A.** Who was Mozart?
  1. Was he the Hegelian apotheosis of musical perfection taken to God's bosom at thirty-five?
  2. Was he the horse-laughing idiot savant of recent theater and cinema?
  3. Was he the savvy and sometimes snobbish man we read in his letters?
  4. Was he a traditionalist or a social and musical rebel?
- **B.** Mozart's first operatic hit, *Mithridate, King of Pontus*, was written for the city of Milan and premiered there in 1770 when Mozart was fourteen years old. **Musical example:** Mozart's Overture to *Mithridate, King of Pontus*, K. 87/74A, Opening.

**II.** Much of today's Mozart scholarship is about debunking myths.

- **A.** First and foremost, no one who knew Mozart wrote contemporary and responsible accounts of him during his lifetime or immediately after his death.
  1. Most accounts of Mozart were written decades after his death.
  2. With very few exceptions, these often inaccurate, self-serving, and sometimes even fabricated accounts of Mozart's life and personality became the backbone of Mozart scholarship well into the twentieth century.

**B.** The second reason for the mythologizing of Mozart was grounded in his prodigious talent—a talent so extraordinary as to be inexplicable.

1. He composed his first symphony at the age of eight. **Musical example:** Symphony in E Flat Major, K. 16 (1764), Movement 3.
2. We read of his musical abilities in accounts that by their sheer number carry with them the weight of truth.
3. He could sight read anything written to that time at the keyboard or on the violin.
4. He was able to remember the most complex music after only a single hearing and to later write it down, note perfect.
5. He could improvise better than anybody else could compose.
6. He could compose entire symphonies and concerti in his head and then write out the individual instrumental parts without having to first write out the score.
7. To explain this extraordinary talent, we have turned him into a freak, a god, a devil, or a musical monster. **Musical example:** Clarinet Quintet, K. 581 (1789), Movement 1.

**C.** At the heart of the Mozart mythology is the unworldly beauty of his music.

1. Mozart's music is sublimely beautiful, whether vigorous: **Musical example:** *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* (1787), Movement 1;
2. or lyric: **Musical example:** "La ci darem la mano" from *Don Giovanni* (1786);
3. or the extraordinary dreamscapes that are his slow movements: **Musical example:** Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major, K. 467, Movement 2.
4. Mozart's music combines the pure lyricism of song with a dramatic timing, a depth of expression, and a technical mastery of the complexities of phrase structure and harmony that allowed him to create a body of work unique in the repertoire. **Musical example:** Piano Sonata in A Minor, K. 310 (1778), Movement 1.
5. Let's listen to more of what Charles Rosen calls a "sensuous play of sonority." **Musical example:** Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622, Movement 2.
6. Mozart, even at his most dramatic and tragic, created in his music an alternative reality, an idealized place filled with hope and expectation—a musical Eden, before the expulsion into the age of revolution.

**D.** Another reason for the Mozart mythology lies in his name.

1. The Amadeus part of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart came from his third name Theophilus or Gottlieb—"loved of God."
2. The name Amadeus implies a God-like deity.




3. Mozart referred to himself by the French version of Amadeus—Amadé—never as Amadeus, which became universally adopted after his death.

**III.** Our primary goal is to sketch an unsentimental and nonmythological portrait of Mozart, the man and composer.

**A.** Mozart's music provides a balm for the bleakness of life.

**B.** Its lyricism, emotional restraint, and elegance bring to mind a better world. **Musical example:** *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, K. 525 (1787), *Romanze.*

**C.** Yet Mozart's music was not the popular music of its time.

**D.** It was criticized as being too rich in ideas, too "artful," too difficult, too full of unusual harmonies, too complex. **Musical example:** String Quartet, K. 465 (*Dissonant*), Introduction.

**E.** After its premiere in 1791, the Empress Maria Luisa of Bohemia dismissed Mozart's opera *The Mercy of Titus* as "German swinishness." **Musical example:** Overture to *The Mercy of Titus*, K. 621 (1791).

**F.** Like all great artists, Mozart and his music had friends and enemies.

1. His compositions were not the product of divine inspiration, but the creations of an intelligent, hard-working, and talented man.
2. In Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute,* a priest calls the hero Tamino "a prince." Sarastro, the high priest, replies, "Still more, he is a man!" **Musical example:** *The Magic Flute* (1791), Act II, Sarastro's line.

## Lecture Two

## Leopold and the Grand Tour

**Scope:** Leopold Mozart dominated the young Mozart's life from the very beginning. Leopold's own musical career was not as successful as he wanted it to be. When Leopold realized that his children, Marianne and Wolfgang, possessed prodigious musical talent, he set out to turn them into his source of wealth and fame. The Mozart family's grand European tour of 1763–66 made the family the sensation of Europe and turned Wolfgang into the child wonder by which we still measure prodigies today. The small, fragile, and desperate-to-please Wolfgang became his family's main breadwinner.

## Outline

**I.** If young Mozart possessed a monstrous talent, then his father, Leopold Mozart, was his Dr. Frankenstein.

- **A.** Leopold Mozart was Mozart's creator, teacher, booking agent, publicist, business manager, valet, and ultimately, his tormentor.
  1. Mozart's mother, Anna Maria, remains a shadowy figure in his life.
  2. Father Leopold called the shots in the Mozart household.
- **B.** Leopold Mozart was born in 1719 into a family of artisans in Augsburg, in southern Germany.
  1. At eighteen years of age, Leopold abandoned his recently widowed mother and moved to Salzburg, Austria, to take up a position as chamberlain and musician at the court of a nobleman.
  2. Leopold's family disapproved of his marriage to Anna Maria Pertl in 1747, and his mother withheld his inheritance.
  3. Monetary issues would also profoundly affect the nature of Leopold's relationship with his only son, Wolfgang.
  4. Eventually, Leopold became completely estranged from his mother.
- **C.** Leopold's career moved very slowly.
  1. He had contempt for authority.
  2. He was not a composer of the first, or even the second, rank.
  3. But his taste in music had a profound and lasting impact on Wolfgang.
  4. His *Hunting* Symphony is an entertaining special-effects piece, replete with barking dogs and cries of hunters. **Musical example:** Leopold Mozart's *Sinfonia di caccia,* Movement 1.
  5. The slow second movement of Leopold Mozart's Symphony in B Flat Major is a lyric symphonic *andante*, a solid, entirely competent work. **Musical example:** Leopold Mozart's *Sinfonia* in B Flat Major, Movement 2.
  6. Leopold's career as a violinist came to less than his career as a composer. He resented having to play in the Salzburg court orchestra and all but refused to give lessons.
  7. Leopold was convinced that his children, particularly Wolfgang, would assure him of wealth, success, and revenge for his past humiliations.

**II.** Mozart and his sister, Maria Anna (Marianne, nicknamed Nannerl), were the only two children to survive of a total of seven born to Leopold and Anna Maria Mozart.

- **A.** Marianne Mozart was born on July 30 or 31, 1751, and Johannes Christian Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart was born January 27, 1756.
  1. Both children began music lessons very early; Mozart was only three years old.
  2. By the time he was five, Mozart had written his first compositions.
  3. By the time he was six, he could play violin in trios and quartets.
  4. Mozart wrote his Minuet in G at the age of five. **Musical example:** Minuet in G major, K. 1 (1761)—at the piano.
- **B.** Leopold took over Mozart's entire education.
- **C.** In January 1761, the Mozart family traveled to Munich on a three-week concert tour.
- **D.** The following fall, the family embarked on a three-month visit to Vienna, Austria.
- **E.** Mozart's rise to fame began with the Viennese visit.

**III.** On June 9, 1763, the Mozart family left their hometown of Salzburg for a grand tour of Europe.

- **A.** This tour made Mozart the child wonder by which we measure prodigies to this day.
  1. The tour lasted over three years and included stops in eighty-eight different cities.
  2. The children had performed for thousands of people before returning to Salzburg on November 30, 1766.
  3. Leopold and his children were a traveling musical circus, celebrated throughout Europe, acclaimed by everyone from the middle class to royalty.
  4. The children were showered with expensive gifts.
  5. Mozart, tiny, blond, and adorable, was a pet of royalty.
  6. The family spent over fifteen months in London, where they received the most enthusiastic welcome of all.
- **B.** We should appreciate the fact that Mozart's prodigious talents blossomed into something even more astonishing in adulthood.

1. He was constitutionally incapable of being satisfied with the commonplace compositional formulas he mastered as a child.
2. Hence, his music was criticized as being too complex. **Musical example:** *The Abduction from the Harem*, Act II, No. 11 (*Martern aller Arten*), Introduction.

**C.** After the grand tour, Mozart—small, sensitive and desperate to please—became the main breadwinner for his family.

**IV.** Mozart was a small, physically fragile child with a malformed left ear, about which he was very sensitive.

**A.** He grew into an unusually small adult—about five feet, four inches, tall in his shoes.

**B.** As a performing prodigy, his smallness was an asset; everything he did seemed that much more amazing.

**C.** He was devoted to his parents and almost desperate to please his father.

**D.** He seemed outwardly to be a happy child who adored attention and adulation, yet he became profoundly upset by the absence or loss of friends, and constantly searched for affection and approval from friends and family.




## Lecture Three

## Mozart the Composer—Early Music

**Scope:** Leopold Mozart probably had a hand in the creation of Mozart's very early pieces, but Mozart also learned his craft from the leading composers of his day as he toured Europe. One such composer was Johann Christian Bach, whom Mozart met while on tour in London in 1764–65. There can be no doubt that Mozart was profoundly influenced by Bach's distinctive blend of Italian melodic style with German harmonic craft and by Bach's approach to the genres of the symphony and concerto. Mozart also modeled his early works on established Viennese symphonists, and he absorbed the Italian style on his tours of that country in 1769–73. By the time of his second visit to Paris in 1777, Mozart's own compositional voice had emerged.

## Outline

**I.** We cannot be sure how much of a hand Leopold Mozart had in the creation of Mozart's early pieces.

**A.** It was to Leopold's advantage that Wolfgang's early compositions were as polished as possible. **Musical example:** Mozart's Symphony No. 4 in D Major, K. 19 (1764), Movement 1.

**B.** Mozart's Symphony No. 2, K. 17, has now been attributed to Leopold Mozart.

**C.** Mozart's Symphony No. 3, K. 18, has now been attributed to Carl Friedrich Abel.

**II.** Mozart's musical training came from his father and from the European musical scene. The leading composers of Europe became his unwitting teachers.

**A.** One such composer was Johann Christian Bach, whom Mozart met while on tour in London in 1764–65.

1. Johann Christian Bach (1735–82) was the eleventh son of Johann Sebastian Bach.
2. Like his older brothers, Wilhelm Friedmann, Carl Philip Emanuel, and Johann Friedrich, Johann Christian was a musician of great talent.
3. Johann Christian Bach perfected his musical talent in Italy, where he learned the art of engaging, lyric melody. **Musical example:** J. C. Bach's *Symphonia Concertante* in A Major for Violin and Cello, Movement 2.
4. Johann ("John") Bach arrived in London in 1762 and rapidly rose to success.

5. He was appointed music master to Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III. He expressed his gratitude by composing a piano concerto movement based on the English national anthem. **Musical example:** J. C. Bach's Piano Concerto, Op. 1, No. 6, Movement 3 (Theme and Two Variations).
6. J. C. Bach was enchanted by the young Mozart and Mozart adored Bach.
7. Bach's symphonies, though rarely heard today, exerted a tremendous influence in their time, and this was music that Mozart would have heard and discussed with Bach.
8. There can be no doubt that Mozart was profoundly influenced by J. C. Bach's distinctive blending of Italian melodic style with Germanic harmonic craft, as well as Bach's approach to the genres of keyboard concerto and symphony. **First musical example:** J. C. Bach's Symphony in G Major, Op. 6, No. 1 (1770), Movement 1. **Second musical example:** Mozart's Symphony No. 1 in E Flat Major, K. 16 (1764).

**B.** Mozart lived, worked, and studied in a European community in which live music was as important as sports, television, movies, and technology are today.

**C.** Mozart's early works invariably reflected the mentorships and influences he encountered on his journeys.

**III.** Leopold Mozart made sure that Wolfgang modeled his early music on compositions that were already popular in a particular city or region.

**A.** Such a work is Mozart's Symphony No. 8, K. 48, written during a stay at Vienna in 1768.
1. This work, like most of the music Mozart wrote during this period, would have been performed at private concerts in the homes of the aristocracy.
2. Written when Mozart was twelve, this work shows the degree to which he had absorbed the stylistic, rhetorical, and structural musical elements of such established Viennese symphonists as Vanhal, Dittersdorf, Gassman, and Haydn. **Musical example:** Symphony No. 8 in D Major, K. 48, Movement 1.

**B.** By the time of Mozart's visit to Vienna in 1767–68, the public fascination with his prodigious talent had given way to a degree of disinterest and even skepticism.

**C.** Leopold attributed these new challenges encountered in promoting Wolfgang's career to conspiracies by rivals.

**IV.** Between 1769 and 1773, Mozart and his father toured Italy three times.

**A.** On the first trip, Mozart wrote his second opera, entitled *Mithridate, King of Pontus*. **Musical example:** *Mithridate, King of Pontus*, K. 87/74A, Act III, Finale, Quintet ("Non si ceda al campidollio").




1. During these Italian tours, Mozart "the serious composer" supplanted Mozart "the virtuoso wonder-child."
2. He was astonishingly productive, writing operas, concert arias, serenades, divertimenti, sacred works, string quartets, and symphonies.
3. Mozart's Italian journeys were a triumph.
4. This success was significant, because Italy was the capital of European music and Italian audiences were not as easily impressed as their neighbors to the north.

**B.** The most famous story from Mozart's Italian tours is the one concerning Georgio Allegri's *Miserere*, a lengthy choral work performed at the Sistine Chapel, which owned it exclusively. **Musical example:** Allegri's *Miserere*, Conclusion.
1. Leopold Mozart reported that Wolfgang listened to the work and later wrote it all down note for note.
2. The *Miserere* is not as complex as Leopold and posterity would have us believe, and copies of it were in circulation.

**V.** Mozart and his father returned home to Salzburg in March 1773.

**A.** Their tours had been largely subsidized by the Salzburg court; Wolfgang's native city was his single greatest patron in terms of commissions and performances.

**B.** On December 15, 1771, the Archbishop of Salzburg died and was succeeded by Count Hieronymous von Colloredo.
1. Archbishop Colloredo was a fiscal conservative with little interest in music.
2. Under Colloredo, the city of Salzburg became increasingly less supportive of music performance.
3. By this time, Mozart was, like his father, an employee of the archbishop.
4. In March 1777, the archbishop turned down Leopold's request to take Wolfgang on a trip to Paris.
5. Leopold was unable to leave Salzburg on threat of dismissal.
6. For years, the Salzburg court had regularly granted Leopold leaves of absence and special favors, because Wolfgang was such an asset to the city.
7. Now Leopold was expected to fulfill his musical duties. His career as an impresario was over.
8. Mozart quit his job at the archbishop's court and set out for Paris, accompanied by his mother, on September 23, 1777.

**VI.** By 1777, Mozart's mature compositional style had emerged.

**A.** While living in Paris in 1778, Mozart wrote his Piano Sonata in A Minor, K. 310.

1. Of Mozart's more than six hundred compositions, only about thirty begin in the minor. **Musical example:** Piano Sonata in A Minor, K. 310, Movement 1, Opening.
2. Leopold was alarmed by this piece, criticizing his son's insistence on unusual harmonic progressions and technical difficulty.

**B.** Leopold recommended that Wolfgang write easy, popular music for publication.

**C.** Mozart had ceased to be a master imitator, becoming a truly original composer in the years immediately before the Paris trip of 1777.




## Lecture Four

## Paris

**Scope:** The study of Mozart's musical style is often linked with two myths. The first is that Mozart was a vessel for divine inspiration. The second is that he composed without effort, automatically, subconsciously. Neither of these myths is true. Like all composers, Mozart served his apprenticeship. What makes him different is that he began his apprenticeship at an incredibly young age and was a fully matured composer by the time he was twenty years old—an age when most other composers would just be starting their apprenticeships. Among the most important works of his early maturity are his serenades. In 1777, Mozart left Salzburg for Paris—a disastrous trip during which his mother died.

## Outline

**I.** In answering the question of when Mozart's musical style blossomed into full maturity, we come face to face with a couple of Mozart myths.

**A.** One myth pictures Mozart as a vessel for divine inspiration; the other suggests that he composed effortlessly and subconsciously.

1. These myths do Mozart a terrific disservice, because they remove the elements of blood and sweat, craft and taste from his compositional process.
2. Mozart was not a born composer any more than Babe Ruth was a born baseball player.
3. They were both born with a genetic predisposition to their crafts, but both had to work hard to perfect their skills.
4. Mozart served his apprenticeship for about thirteen years.
5. What *is* remarkable about Mozart is that he began his apprenticeship at such a tender age and, by the age of twenty, was a fully realized composer—an age when most other composers have just begun their apprenticeships.

**B.** Mozart found his compositional voice in the early to mid-1770s.

1. Any number of works dating from the years 1773–74 have been identified as being truly and uniquely Mozartean.
2. Such works include the String Quintet in B Flat, K. 174; the Piano Concerto in D, K. 175; the Symphony in A Major, K. 201/186a; and the so-called *Little* G Minor Symphony, K. 183, of 1773. **Musical example:** Symphony in G Minor, K. 183, Movement 1, Theme 1.
3. Note the stormy, offbeat introduction, followed by a rising melody that veritably tears the musical atmosphere before it. **Musical example:** Symphony in G Minor, K. 183, Movement 1, Theme 1.

4. Beethoven liked this opening theme so much that he stole it and used it as his opening theme in his Piano Sonata in F Minor, Op. 2, No. 1. **First musical example:** Mozart's Symphony in G Minor, K. 183, Movement 1, Theme 1. **Second musical example:** Beethoven's Piano Sonata in F Minor, Op. 2, No. 1, Movement 1, Theme 1.
5. The second movement of Mozart's Symphony in G Minor, K. 183, is a gentle *andante*, in which the bassoons echo the thematic phrases played by the violins. **Musical example:** Symphony in G Minor, K. 183, Movement 2.
6. Mozart used wind instruments both to reinforce the strings, as was typical in his day, and as important musical voices in their own right.
7. The third movement of the Symphony in G Minor is a minuet, which is typical of the Classical symphony. What is not traditional is its boldly dramatic flavor, reinforced by a return to the home key of G Minor. **Musical example:** Symphony in G Minor, K. 183, Movement 3, Minuet 1.
8. The final movement returns to the fiery mood of the symphony's opening. **Musical example:** Symphony in G Minor, K. 183, Movement 4, Conclusion.
9. This music is proud, dramatic, and original. Mozart at seventeen was clearly in the process of finding his own compositional voice.

**II.** Among Mozart's most important compositions of this period are his serenades.

**A.** His serenades, scored for six to twelve instruments, were intended as background music.

**B.** Mozart adapted the serenade style to movements of larger works, such as concerti, symphonies, and even operas.

**C.** The melodic clarity, intimacy, and delicacy of his serenade style is evident in his operatic trio from *Cosi fan tutte,* written ten years later. **First musical example:** Serenade in D Major, K. 320 (1779), Movement 4 (*Rondeau*). **Second musical example:** *Soave sia il vento* ("May the wind be gentle") from *Cosi fan tutte* (1789).

**III.** Mozart and his mother left Salzburg for Paris in October 1777.

**A.** Mozart wanted a new position.
1. He had been refused for a position in Mannheim.
2. One of the great historical questions concerning Mozart is why he seemed unable to find a position commensurate with his abilities.
3. Perhaps the answer is that he did not really want one; he may have been too apolitical and a little too proud of himself.
4. He stayed in Mannheim for several months, on his way to Paris, earning a living as a freelance composer and music teacher.




**Musical example:** Flute Concerto, K.314/285d (1777), Movement 3.

**B.** In Mannheim, Mozart also fell in love with Aloysia Weber.
1. Mozart wrote to his father to tell him of his plan to stay in Mannheim, where Aloysia's father would help him find work.
2. Leopold Mozart was horrified; he did not want Wolfgang to gain independence from him through marriage, nor did he wish to be deprived of his son's future income as a result of marriage.
3. Mozart obeyed his father's wishes and departed for Paris with his mother on March 23, 1778.

**IV.** Mozart's typical productivity was reduced during his visit to Paris.

**A.** Among the masterworks of this trip was the Piano Sonata in A Minor, K. 310/300d. **Musical example:** Piano Sonata in A Minor, K. 310/300d (1778), Movement 1, Opening.
1. This powerful and darkly colored music reflects, as much as any of Mozart's music could, his unhappiness in Paris.
2. He turned down a position as court organist at Versailles.

**B.** On July 3, 1778, Mozart's mother died.
1. Mozart was traumatized.
2. He tried to prepare his father and sister for the tragic news before telling them that his mother was actually dead.
3. When Leopold finally received the news that his wife was dead, he tried to blame her death on Wolfgang.
4. This is the same Leopold Mozart who had insisted that Anna Marie accompany Wolfgang to Paris, refusing to let her return alone from Paris, even when both she and Wolfgang felt it was for the best.
5. Leopold also emotionally blackmailed his son into returning to Salzburg, where he had secured a position for Mozart as court organist.
6. Mozart was reluctant to return to Salzburg, believing his prospects were better elsewhere—most likely in Mannheim.
7. Leopold finally accused Mozart of owing him money.
8. Mozart—disheartened and confused—made his way back to Salzburg.
9. He stopped off in Mannheim to visit Aloysia Weber.
10. Unfortunately, Aloysia was no longer interested in him.
11. He reacted to her coldness toward him by singing her a bawdy song.

**C.** Mozart had a penchant for toilet humor and sexual innuendo.
1. The Mozart family seems to have had a preoccupation with bodily functions.
2. Mozart's letters to his cousin Maria Anna Thekla Mozart are famous for their raunchiness and obscenities.

## Lecture Five

## The Flight from Salzburg and Arrival in Vienna

**Scope:** Mozart's trip to Paris had been a disaster. His mother had died there. He had not found a suitable position. He had no money to call his own. His departure from Mannheim for Paris had cost him his relationship with Aloysia Weber. Leopold made matters worse by accusing his son of causing his mother's death. His father's skill at emotional blackmail succeeded in forcing Mozart back to Salzburg to serve his hateful master, Archbishop Colloredo, as concertmaster of the archbishop's court orchestra and as court organist. Amazingly, Mozart's creative energy never flagged. Longing to compose an opera, Mozart succeeded in convincing the Elector of Munich to commission the opera *Idomeneo* from him. The opera was premiered in Munich in 1781 with great success. That spring, Mozart's strained relationship with his employer was stretched beyond his endurance, ultimately resulting in his being literally booted out of the archbishop's service. At the age of twenty-five, Mozart was at last, for better or worse, a free man. He found an apartment in Vienna. The Webers had moved from Mannheim to Vienna, and Mozart began to court Constanze Weber, Aloysia's sister. Mozart married Constanze in August 1782, against his father's protests. The relationship between Leopold and Wolfgang would be severely strained until Leopold's death five years later.

## Outline

I. Mozart returned home to Salzburg on January 15, 1779.
   A. His trip to Paris had been a personal and professional disaster.
      1. His mother had died.
      2. He was still without a position.
      3. He had no money.
      4. Aloysia Weber had rejected his marriage proposal.
   B. Mozart slowed the development of his career by returning to Salzburg.
      1. Leopold Mozart had debts that he claimed were forced on him by Wolfgang.
      2. Wolfgang returned to Salzburg to try to pay off "debts" that could never truly be paid.
      3. As well as discouraging his son's relationship with Aloysia Weber, Leopold also insisted that Wolfgang break off his relationship with his cousin Maria Anna Thekla.
   C. In many ways, Mozart grew up too fast, not too slowly, as many biographers have claimed.




   D. Incredibly, Mozart's creativity never flagged during his enforced return to Salzburg.
      1. From 1779–80, he was concertmaster of the court orchestra, court organist, and keyboard teacher to aristocratic children.
      2. He also managed to compose, among other works, three symphonies, the *Posthorn* Serenade, the Concerto for Two Pianos, the *Coronation* Mass, various divertimenti, church sonatas, and the *Sinfonia Concertante* in E Flat for Violin, Viola and Orchestra, K. 364/320d.
   E. The *Sinfonia Concertante* shows the influence of music Mozart heard at Mannheim in 1777 and 1778. A Mannheim s*infonia concertante* was a symphonically structured work with solo parts. Unlike a concerto, it was not intended as a showpiece for the soloists.
      1. Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante*, however, does treat the soloists as if they were soloists in a concerto—with virtuosic parts.
      2. Typical of his mature compositional style, Mozart uses the woodwinds and horns as important instrumental voices unto themselves.
      3. About two minutes into the work, the solo violin and viola begin to play and develop the thematic material first stated by the orchestra.
      4. Mozart's effortless lyricism partly obscures his typically irregular phrase structures and complex harmonies, elements that would have bothered listeners in his day. **Musical elements:** *Sinfonia Concertante* in E Flat for Violin, Viola and Orchestra, K.364/320d, Movement 1.
      5. The second movement is a lush, dark-toned *andante*. **Musical example:** *Sinfonia Concertante* in E Flat for Violin, Viola and Orchestra, K. 364/320d, Movement 2.
      6. The third movement is brilliant and dancing. In the following selection, the violin and viola go head-to-head, each trying to outdo the other, until finally, friendly combatants that they are, they sing and play together. **Musical example:** *Sinfonia Concertante* in E Flat for Violin, Viola and Orchestra, K. 364/320d, Movement 3.
      7. It is likely that Mozart wrote this Mannheim-inspired work to impress the newly appointed Elector Karl Theodor of Munich, who had just moved there from Mannheim.

II. In 1780, Mozart managed to secure a commission from the Elector and the city of Munich for the opera *Idomeneo, King of Crete*.
   A. He secured a six-week leave of absence from Salzburg and left for Munich on November 5, 1780.
      1. *Idomeneo* is a so-called "serious" opera (*opera seria*) but a highly original one.
      2. Its premiere was a huge success. **Musical example:** Overture to *Idomeneo*, opening.

**B.** The following spring, Mozart was called to Vienna by Archbishop Colloredo, who wanted to show off his musicians to the Viennese nobility.
1. The archbishop forbade Mozart to concertize on his own.
2. Mozart, who hated the archbishop, was totally outraged.
3. The archbishop responded to Mozart's outspokenness with accusations and threats.
4. Ultimately, Mozart was literally booted out of the archbishop's service.
5. At the age of twenty-five, he was a free man.

**III.** In May 1781, Mozart took a room at the Weber residence in Vienna.

**A.** The Webers had moved to Vienna from Mannheim.
1. Although Aloysia Weber was now married, three unmarried Weber girls were still available: Josepha, Constanze, and Sophie.
2. Mozart fell in love with Constanze Weber.
3. Again, father Leopold flew into a tantrum.

**B.** On July 16, 1782, Mozart's opera *The Abduction from the Harem (or Seraglio)* was premiered.
1. Note the extraordinary interplay of the voices in the quartet and the Turkish flavor of the celebratory closing chorus. **Musical example:** *The Abduction from the Harem*, Finale, Closing Quartet, and Chorus.
2. *The Abduction* was Mozart's first international success.

**IV.** Over Leopold's objections, Mozart and Constanze were married on August 4, 1782. The relationship between Mozart and his father would be strained until Leopold's death five years later.

**V.** The compositional genre that occupied the best of Mozart's efforts during the early Viennese years was the piano concerto.

**A.** Mozart was the composer, performer, and impresario for his piano concerti.

**B.** He produced and promoted his own subscription concerts.

**VI.** In a letter to his father, Mozart describes the successful performance of his Quintet for Piano and Winds, K. 452. **Musical example:** Quintet for Piano and Winds, K. 452, Movement 1, Introduction.

**A.** The third and final movement of this work adds elements of dance to the lyricism and delicacy of the first two movements. **Musical example:** Quintet for Piano and Winds, K. 452, Movement 3, Opening.

**B.** Its subtlety and delicacy mark this quintet as one of the great masterworks of the chamber repertoire.




# Lecture Six

## Life in Vienna

**Scope:** Between 1782 and 1786, Mozart reached the peak of his career as a pianist and composer in Vienna. Although dependent on commissions by wealthy aristocrats, Mozart retained his skepticism of enlightened despots and, indeed, of all authority. Among his supreme achievements of this period are his piano concerti, string quartets, and the C Minor Mass. The piano concerti, his primary source of income at that time, vaulted him to the forefront of Viennese musical life. His six string quartets, inspired by and dedicated to Haydn, exhibit an expressive range and intensity of feeling that go beyond their model. The dedicatory letter Mozart wrote to Haydn when he sent Haydn copies of his quartets reveals an intelligent and thoughtful man—not the idiot portrayed in *Amadeus*. Mozart worked extremely hard and earned a great deal of money. His speed of composing and ability to compose in his head are the stuff of legend. His social life was equally successful. But his achievements did not improve his relationship with his embittered father, who disinherited his son before dying in 1787.

## Outline

**I.** Mozart's piano concerti were his primary source of income from 1782–86.

**A.** Mozart's piano concerti vaulted him to the forefront of Viennese musical life.
1. Between 1782 and 1786, he composed fourteen piano concerti.
2. Each concerto is a masterwork.
3. With all due respect to Haydn and J. C. Bach, Mozart invented the Classical piano concerto.
4. His piano concerti overshadowed every other genre of composition during this period with the exception of the string quartet.

**B.** Mozart's string quartets, written during 1782–85, were inspired by and dedicated to Haydn.

**C.** Haydn was the one living composer Mozart admired.
1. Haydn and Mozart participated together in several chamber music parties with other musicians.
2. The letter Mozart sent to Haydn, along with copies of his newly published *Haydn* quartets, reveals an intelligent, thoughtful man—not the idiot portrayed by Hollywood.
3. The so-called *Dissonant* Quartet features a brilliant, upbeat, tuneful first movement *allegro*. **Musical example:** String Quartet (*Dissonant*), K. 465, Movement 1 (*Allegro*), Opening.

4. The second movement of this work, typical of the Haydn model, provides a lyric respite. **Musical example:** String Quartet (*Dissonant*), K. 465, Movement 2, Opening.
5. The third movement is a traditional, stately minuet. **Musical example:** String Quartet (*Dissonant*), K. 465, Movement 3, Opening.
6. The fourth movement is frisky and playful. **Musical example:** String Quartet (*Dissonant*), K. 465, Movement 4, Opening.
7. This quartet gets its nickname from its extraordinarily dissonant introduction. **Musical example:** String Quartet (*Dissonant*), K. 465, Movement 1, Introduction.
8. Even Haydn was said to have been "deeply disturbed" by this incredibly dissonant, modern-sounding introduction.
9. Although Mozart's six *Haydn* quartets were inspired by Haydn, they exhibit an expressive range and intensity of feeling that go beyond their model.

**D.** Mozart's supreme achievements between 1782 and 1786 are his piano concerti, string quartets, and the C Minor Mass, K. 427/417a.

**II.** Between 1782 and 1786, Mozart reached the peak of his popularity as a pianist and composer in Vienna.

**A.** He made a lot of money and spent it as fast as he made it.

**B.** Who can blame him? He was twenty-seven years old and free of the financial and emotional clutches of Leopold and Salzburg.

**C.** Mozart's letters to his father and sister during these years show that he was a hard worker.
1. He would be up by 6:00 a.m. and compose for two or three hours from 7:00 a.m.
2. He gave lessons until about 1:00 p.m., then had lunch.
3. If he had no concert, he would return to work at 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. and compose until 9:00 p.m., sometimes until 1:00 a.m.
4. Typically, he got five or six hours of sleep a night.
5. Many years after his death, Constanze claimed that he often worked until 2:00 a.m., getting only two hours of sleep before getting up and starting again at 4:00 a.m.

**D.** The legends about Mozart's speed in composing are well known.
1. What others call composing, Mozart called "copying out."
2. He sketched very little, preferring to work out his musical ideas somewhere in the recesses of his brain.
3. This practice has prompted the speculation that Mozart was everything from partially autistic to an alien.
4. Mozart "copied out" his last three symphonies (K. 543, K. 550, and K. 551) in six weeks, faster than a copyist could have copied out the parts.




5. He wrote the overture to *Don Giovanni* on the day of the opera's final dress rehearsal.
6. He composed the bulk of *The Marriage of Figaro* in six weeks.

**III.** Mozart also led a rich and busy social life.

**A.** He had a large circle of friends, including aristocrats, bureaucrats, professional musicians, actors, playwrights, and impresarios.
1. He was an inveterate opera and theatergoer.
2. Constanze and Wolfgang were part of the Viennese *beau monde*.
3. Mozart was also a diligent correspondent and, after 1784, a Freemason.

**B.** Mozart kept pets, including a canary, a horse, and a starling.
1. Mozart was particularly fond of the starling, because it had learned to sing the theme from the last movement of his Piano Concerto in G Major, K. 453 (1784). **Musical example:** Piano Concerto in G Major, K. 453, Movement 3, Theme.
2. During the course of this movement, this theme is successively varied a number of times. The string accompaniment in the second half of the first variation is birdlike. **Musical example:** Piano Concerto in G Major, K. 453, Movement 3, Theme and Variations 1 and 2.

**IV.** Mozart had little respect for rank or position and was skeptical of all authority.

**A.** Unlike Beethoven, who would be fooled by Napoleon, Mozart was not fooled by enlightened despots, probably because he knew these men personally.

**B.** By pouring his radical impulses into his bawdy and antic sense of humor and his sublime music, Mozart was able to live with the emotional tensions imposed on him by his experiences of life.

**V.** On February 11, 1785, Leopold Mozart came to Vienna to visit his son and his son's family for two and a half months.

**A.** The antagonism between father and son had not diminished.

**B.** The visit was an object lesson for Leopold of his own impotence.

**C.** Mozart gave nearly a dozen concerts in that period.

**D.** Mozart played his Piano Concerto in B Flat Major, K. 456, in the presence of the emperor. The audience and the emperor reportedly went wild. **Musical example:** Piano Concerto in B Flat Major, K. 456 (1785), Movement 3, Conclusion.

**E.** As part of Mozart's entourage, Leopold attended many balls, parties, and banquets.
1. Mozart also made his father a member of the Masonic Lodge.

2. Leopold was impressed by the elegance of Mozart's apartment and was a guest of honor at banquets given by Constanze's mother and her sister Stephanie.
3. The highpoint of Leopold's visit was a reading of three of Mozart's so-called *Haydn* string quartets, K. 458, 464, and 465, at Mozart's apartment.
4. The legendary Haydn himself was in attendance and told Leopold that his son was the greatest composer he knew.

**F.** Despite his son's triumphs, or probably because of them, Leopold became increasingly depressed.
1. Leopold headed back to Salzburg in late April 1785.
2. For the next two years, the correspondence between father and son was limited to a couple of lines written, perhaps, once a month.
3. In the fall of 1786, Leopold's health began to fail and on May 28, 1787, he died.
4. Documentary evidence reveals no clues as to what Mozart really thought or felt about his father's death.
5. However, when his pet starling died three days after Leopold's death, Mozart was grief stricken and wrote a eulogy for the bird.
6. After his father's death, Mozart discovered that he had been almost entirely disinherited.
7. His sister, Marianne, had inherited nearly everything, including Mozart's own scores that he had left with his father for safekeeping.
8. Mozart had been denied his share of the money that he had earned in his childhood and adolescence from the various tours he and Leopold had undertaken.

**G.** The first piece Mozart composed after Leopold's death was a pre-PDQ Bach musical parody that deliberately mocks all the rules of good composition that Mozart's father would have taught him.
1. The piece contains endless examples of compositional amateurism and bad taste, many of them very subtle: bizarre harmonic progressions, banal melodies, pointless virtuosic scale passages, incomplete phrases, and so forth.
2. The players are not spared either, to wit the disastrous conclusion of the fourth and final movement. **Musical example:** *Ein Musikalischer Spass* (*A Musical Joke*), K. 522 (1787), Movement 4, Conclusion (*Presto*).




# Lecture Seven

## Operas in Vienna

**Scope:** Thanks to the reforms of the enlightened Emperor Joseph II, Vienna in the 1780s was an exciting place to live. Artists flocked to the Austrian capital. Among them was the poet and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, who collaborated with Mozart on his great operas: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Cosi fan tutte*. Mozart's popularity in Vienna began to wane in the late 1780s. It did not help that the politically controversial *The Marriage of Figaro* offended the Viennese aristocracy; many felt that Mozart was biting the hand that fed him. The late 1780s were also times of great financial hardship for Mozart and Constanze, and their marriage was strained because of Mozart's real and perceived extramarital affairs. Yet Mozart continued to write a series of masterworks, the expressive moods of which seldom, if ever, betrayed his unhappy circumstances.

## Outline

**I.** In 1780, the Empress Maria Theresa, Archduchess of Austria and Queen of Hungary, died and was succeeded by her son Joseph.

**A.** Maria Theresa had been no friend of Mozart.

**B.** She had little use for writers or artists of any kind and routinely censored the cultural community she ruled, so that Austria became a cultural backwater in comparison with such countries as France or England.

**C.** Her son Joseph, on the other hand, was more enlightened and, as emperor, quickly achieved many reforms, including establishing a more encouraging cultural environment.
1. Vienna, under Emperor Joseph II, became an exciting place for artists who flocked to the capital.
2. It was in Vienna that Mozart met the Italian poet and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte.
3. Da Ponte was an educated and cultivated man of letters, a converted Jew, a failed priest, and a protégé of Antonio Salieri.
4. He would write the libretti for three of Mozart's greatest operas: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Cosi fan tutte*.

**II.** Da Ponte and Mozart collaborated on Mozart's great masterwork *The Marriage of Figaro*.

**A.** In his memoirs, Da Ponte recalled that Mozart had asked him if he could make a libretto out of the comedy *The Marriage of Figaro* by the French playwright Beaumarchais.

1. Da Ponte liked the idea but was aware that the emperor had recently banned the comedy because of its politically controversial overtones.
2. He and Mozart nevertheless went ahead with the opera.
3. As luck would have it, the Viennese opera house needed a new opera score.
4. Da Ponte and Mozart finished the libretto and the bulk of the music in six weeks!
5. Da Ponte persuaded the emperor that he had cut enough of Beaumarchais's play to produce an opera libretto that would not be offensive. He also took care to praise Mozart's music.
6. The emperor sent for Mozart, who played various selections for him. The emperor was more than pleased.
7. In fact, he ordered the restoration of cuts in the score that the Italian opera house administrators had demanded. (Mozart had threatened to burn the score if the cuts were made.)

**B.** All those involved in the opera's premiere were aware that this work was truly original and inspired—quite unlike any other opera they had heard before.
1. Mozart's friend, the singer Michael Kelly, sung the parts of Don Basilio and Don Curzon at the opera's premiere.
2. Kelly recalled that at the first full rehearsal, Mozart was giving instructions to all the performers.
3. Francesco Benucci sang the role of Figaro, and his performance of *Non piu andrai* had the effect of "electricity." **Musical example:** *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), "Non piu andrai" (last verse).

**III.** Unfortunately, the Viennese premiere of *The Marriage of Figaro* was not an unqualified success—the opera had its critics.

**A.** With the hindsight of history, we can see that Mozart's star in Vienna had begun its descent.

**B.** By 1786, the popularity of Mozart's subscription concerts—for which he composed his piano concerti—had almost completely petered out.

**C.** *The Marriage of Figaro*, despite general recognition of its genius, deeply offended many members of the Viennese aristocracy, who had previously been among Mozart's staunchest supporters.

**D.** Through the opera's critical portrayal of the ruling class, Mozart was, in essence, biting the hand that fed him.

**IV.** Although his popularity was waning in Vienna, Mozart was idolized in Prague.

**A.** *The Marriage of Figaro* was enthusiastically received from the very outset in Prague.




**B.** When Mozart visited Prague in January 1787, he witnessed a veritable "*Figaro* craze."

**C.** By the time he left that city in early February, he had a contract to write a new opera.

**V.** Back in Vienna, Mozart composed a number of new works.

**A.** These included the following (**Musical examples**):
1. Rondo in A Minor for Piano, K. 511.
2. String Quintet in C Major, K. 515 (Movement 4, Opening Theme).
3. *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, K. 525 (Movement 1).

**B.** The big project for 1787, however, was the new opera, *Don Giovanni*, commissioned for premiere in Prague.

**VI.** Mozart and Constanze returned to Prague in October 1787.

**A.** *Don Giovanni* was still incomplete.
1. According to legend, Mozart composed the overture the night before the final dress rehearsal. He was exhausted and had been drinking. He kept dozing off, and Constanze's job was to keep him awake.
2. The overture is in two parts; the first is a tragic dirge that presages Don Giovanni's violent death at the end of the opera. **Musical example:** Overture to *Don Giovanni,* Beginning.
3. The second part of the overture is, in contrast, light and brilliant, preparing us for the comic aspects of the opera. **Musical example:** Overture to *Don Giovanni*, Exposition, Opening.
4. If anything, *Don Giovanni* was an even bigger success in Prague than *The Marriage of Figaro.*

**B.** Mozart should probably have stayed in Prague, where he would have enjoyed celebrity and a profitable career, but he had no desire to make Prague his permanent home.

**C.** On his return to Vienna, Mozart was appointed chamber composer to Emperor Joseph II.
1. The Viennese, however, increasingly undervalued Mozart.
2. Viennese critics found *Don Giovanni* "artificial," and Mozart's music in general was thought to be too difficult.
3. The majority of Viennese opera-goers preferred the light, formulaic operas of Italian composers.

**VII.** The years 1788 to 1789 were difficult for the Mozart family.

**A.** Between 1788 and 1791, Austria was engaged in a costly and unpopular war with the Ottoman Turks.
1. The war necessitated austerity measures that included the curtailment of concerts and opera performances in Vienna.
2. Mozart and Constanze, who had lived too extravagantly, went into debt.

3. Mozart begged loans from his friends, including his Masonic brother Michael Puchberg.
4. In the summer of 1788, Mozart and Constanze were ill; their infant daughter Theresa had died in June.

**B.** Incredibly, Mozart continued to compose as magnificently as ever.
1. His last three symphonies, K. 543, 550, and 551, were "copied out" over a period of six weeks during the summer of 1788.
2. The dark and stormy G Minor Symphony has been attributed to Mozart's midsummer grief, fear, and rage. **Musical example:** Symphony in G Minor, K. 550, Movement 4.
3. Yet, the E Flat Symphony of the same period conveys a completely different mood of Classical grace and restraint. **Musical example:** Symphony in E Flat Major, K. 543, Movement 1 (*Allegro*).
4. The Symphony in C Major, "copied out" immediately after the stormy G Minor Symphony, is among the most joyful of all of Mozart's output. **Musical example:** Symphony in C Major (*Jupiter*), K. 551, Movement 4
5. Mozart biographer Wolfgang Hildesheimer has suggested that Mozart was slightly autistic, because he could write music that was completely unrelated in its mood to his circumstances at the time he was writing.
6. But Mozart would no more have conceived of the genre of symphony as an appropriate outlet for his emotional turmoil than he could have imagined space shuttles and computers.
7. The question is not "Why don't we hear Mozart's interior landscape in his music?" but rather "Why, given his time and place, should we expect to hear Mozart's interior landscape in his music?"

**C.** The years 1788 to 1789 also revealed cracks in Mozart's marriage.
1. There is little doubt that Mozart, over the years, indulged in extracurricular liaisons.
2. During the spring and summer of 1789, Constanze, suffering from financial strain and furious over her husband's affairs, became ill.
3. On the advice of her physician, she traveled to the spa at Baden to "take the cure."
4. Mozart wrote to her expressing concern that she might retaliate by taking a lover.
5. Against this background of real and perceived infidelity, Mozart wrote his opera about the infidelity of women, *Cosi fan tutte*.




# Lecture Eight

## The Last Years

**Scope:** Mozart's *Cosi fan tutte* of 1789 was no more successful in Vienna than *Don Giovanni* had been. By late 1790, Mozart was in financial straits and his health, never good to begin with, began to deteriorate. He became depressed and wrote little of significance in 1790. Then in January 1791, he suddenly began a compositional rebirth, culminating in *The Magic Flute*, an opera that elevated the popular genre of German musical comedy—*singspiel*—to equality with Italian-language opera. The autumn of 1791 saw Mozart writing an anonymously commissioned Requiem Mass, which remained unfinished at his death on December 5.

Few historical events have inspired as much speculation as the cause of Mozart's death. Among the most famous myths is that he was poisoned by the Italian composer Antonio Salieri. The most likely theory is that he died from rheumatic fever and shock induced by massive bloodletting. He was buried, according to his family's wishes, in a common grave. And so passed a man who gave us a "picture of a better world" (Franz Schubert) or as the composer Rossini put it, "the only composer who had as much knowledge as genius and as much genius as knowledge."

## Outline

**I.** Da Ponte and Mozart created *Cosi fan tutte* in 1789.

**A.** *Cosi fan tutte* is a story about two women who are tricked by their boyfriends into being unfaithful.
1. Apparently the subject was suggested to Da Ponte by Emperor Joseph II.
2. Later generations found the opera shamelessly immoral.
3. Beethoven was said to want no part of the opera, yet he appropriated chunks of it for his own opera *Fidelio*.

**B.** *Cosi fan tutte* is a diamond of an opera.

**C.** The role of Fiordiligi was created for Adriana Ferraresi, Da Ponte's mistress, who was reputed to be ugly and arrogant.
1. Mozart despised her and wrote her a difficult aria, full of monstrous vocal leaps—*Come scoglio*.
2. Mozart was banking on Ferraresi's tendency to lower her chin on the low notes and throw back her head on the high notes, making her head bob back and forth just like a chicken. This sort of joke would have tickled Mozart to death. **Musical example:** *Cosi fan tutte*, "Come scoglio."

D. *Cosi fan tutte* met with almost no interest in Vienna when it was premiered on January 26, 1790.

II. By late 1790, Mozart was deeply depressed.

A. His health began to deteriorate and his financial problems grew worse.

B. With the exception of the String Quartets, K. 589 and 590, he wrote almost no significant music at all in 1790.

C. His creative recovery in January 1791 was, by any standard, remarkable.

D. The big project of the first half of 1791 was the opera *The Magic Flute*.

1. Mozart had been commissioned to write an opera in German by Johann Josef Emanuele Schikaneder, a well-known actor, singer, and theater director.
2. Schikaneder's theater was a public theater, catering to the middle and working classes, not the aristocrats for whom Mozart had composed at the Imperial Opera Theater.
3. The Viennese public taste was for *singspiel*—a German-language musical comedy with almost as much spoken dialogue as music.
4. Schikaneder had met and befriended the Mozart family in Salzburg in 1780. In 1787, he joined the Masonic Lodge in Regensburg but was later kicked out of it for some philanderous peccadillo.
5. *The Magic Flute* is full of Masonic rituals and symbolism masquerading as a fairy-tale.
6. Schikaneder, who wrote the libretto, sang the role of Papageno, the simple, down-to-earth bird-catcher. **Musical example:** *The Magic Flute,* Papageno's Aria, "Der Vogelfanger bin ich ja" ("The Birdcatcher, That's Me").
7. At the other end of the spectrum is the Queen of the Night.
8. In her famous showpiece aria, "Der Hölle Rache" ("With Hellish Revenge"), the Queen of the Night shows us that she is a vulture with the voice of a nightingale. The crowning glories of this aria are four high Fs that are two and one-half octaves above middle C. **Musical example:** *The Magic Flute*, "Der Hölle Rache."

E. When *The Magic Flute* was premiered on September 30, 1791, it was immediately clear that Mozart and Schikaneder had a hit on their hands.

F. Single-handedly, Mozart had raised the popular genre of the *singspiel* to a level of operatic art equal to that occupied by Italian-language opera.

III. By the fall of 1791, Mozart was once again in high spirits.

A. His letters to Constanze betray no indication that he was obsessed with thoughts of his impending death, as the myths would have us believe.

B. From his childhood on, Mozart appears to have suffered from a constant stream of illnesses.




C. Yet his creative energy rarely flagged. In his last four months, Mozart composed *The Magic Flute*, *The Mercy of Titus*, the Clarinet Concerto, most of the Requiem, a Masonic cantata, and various other pieces.

IV. Few historical events have been subject to as much speculation as the cause of Mozart's death.

A. In the summer of 1791, Mozart was anonymously commissioned to write a Requiem Mass.

1. More than any other element, this fact helped create the myth that he was murdered.
2. Near the end of her life, Constanze supposedly told Mozart researchers Vincent and Mary Novello that Mozart was obsessed with the notion that he was being poisoned with aqua toffana (a mixture of arsenic and lead) and the Requiem was really for himself.
3. Less than a month after Mozart's death, a Berlin news weekly reported that his body swelled up after death, giving rise to the idea that he was poisoned. The reporter also mentioned that Mozart was the object of conspiracies during his life.
4. Alexander Pushkin, in his play *Mozart and Salieri*, suggested that Salieri murdered Mozart. Pushkin's play was turned into an opera by Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov and is the backbone of the play by Peter Shaffer and the movie *Amadeus*.
5. This idea came from the fact that Salieri, who had gone rather mad in his last years, claimed to have poisoned Mozart.
6. G. F. Daumer, writing in 1861, suggested that the Masons had killed Mozart, because he had revealed Masonic secrets in *The Magic Flute*.
7. That it was Schikaneder who wrote the libretto, and who died a natural death in 1812, does not seem to have bothered Daumer.
8. Another theory claims Mozart's death as the result of a Jewish-Roman, Catholic-Masonic conspiracy.
9. Mozart experienced none of the symptoms of aqua toffana poisoning.
10. His death certificate states the cause of death to be "milletary ["miliary"] fever."

B. My favorite theory appeared in an article by Josie Glausiusz, published in *Discover* magazine in 1994, which suggests that Mozart died from a chronic subdural hematoma (slow leakage of blood into the space between the skull and the brain).

1. In the early 1990s, a skull reputed to be Mozart's was analyzed by French anthropologists who found a crack in the left temple.
2. According to Dr. Miles Drake of Ohio State University, such a fracture could have torn veins leading from the surface of the brain and allowed blood to leak into the subdural space. As blood

accumulated and dried, it would have put increasing pressure on Mozart's left hemisphere, causing mood swings and depression.

3. Chronic depression figures in Mozart's letters of 1790.
4. Mozart's doctors recorded that they suspected he had a "deposit on the brain."
5. Mozart might have survived the hematoma, but in December of 1791, he contracted an infection (probably rheumatic fever, from which he had suffered several times during his life) and had a high fever.
6. His doctors prescribed heavy bloodletting—a standard treatment at that time.
7. The sudden drop in blood pressure caused by the bloodletting almost certainly precipitated Mozart's death.

**C.** As it turns out, the Requiem was commissioned by Count Franz Walsegg, a wealthy musical amateur whose practice was to commission works from professional composers and pass them off as his own.

1. Mozart, desperate for money, went along with Walsegg's scheme.
2. The Requiem was unfinished at Mozart's death. **Musical example:** Requiem, K. 626, Introitus–*Requiem aeternum*.

**D.** Mozart died on December 5, 1791, and was buried simply, in a common grave, according to his family's wishes.

1. The exact location of his grave was lost.
2. The deification process began immediately.
3. Constanze grew rich off Mozart's legacy.

**E.** In the words of the great Italian composer Gioacchino Rossini, Mozart blended the "charm of Italian melody" with the "profundity of German harmony …the only composer who had as much knowledge as genius and as much genius as knowledge."




## Vocal Texts

### The Magic Flute
### Aria— "The Birdcatcher, That's Me"

**Papageno**
The birdcatcher, that's me
And always merry, whoop dee dee!
As the birdcatcher I am known
By old and young throughout the land.
I know how to use decoys
And whistle just like my prey!
So merry and carefree can I be,
Knowing all the birds belong to me.

The birdcatcher, that's me
And always merry, whoop dee dee!

### The Magic Flute
### Aria— "Hell's Revenge"

**Queen of the Night**
Hell's revenge is boiling in my heart.
The flames of death and despair blaze all around me!
If Sarastro does not die by your hand,
You will be my daughter no more.
Forever rejected, forever abandoned,
Forever destroyed by all the ties of nature
If Sarastro's blood is not shed by your hand!
Hear, hear, hear me, you gods of vengeance!
Hear a mother's vow!

## Timeline

| | |
|---|---|
| 1756 | Born in Salzburg, Austria, January 27. |
| 1761 | Musical tour of Vienna. |
| 1763 | Mozart family begins grand tour of Europe and London. |
| 1769–73 | Three tours of Italy. |
| 1770 | *Mithridate.* |
| 1778 | Second visit to Paris; Mozart's mother dies. |
| 1779 | *Sinfonia Concertante*, K. 364/320d. |
| 1781 | Premiere of *Idomeneo.* |
| 1782 | *The Abduction from the Harem* is premiered; Mozart moves to Vienna; marries Constanze Weber. |
| 1782–85 | *Haydn* string quartets. |
| 1785 | Piano Concerto, K. 456. |
| 1786 | *The Marriage of Figaro.* |
| 1787 | Leopold Mozart dies; Mozart visits Prague; *Don Giovanni* is premiered in Prague; Rondo in A minor, K. 511; String Quintet, K. 515; *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, K. 525; Joseph II appoints Mozart imperial chamber composer. |
| 1788 | Last three symphonies: K. 543, K. 550, K. 551. |
| 1790 | Premiere of *Cosi fan tutte* in Vienna. |
| 1791 | *The Magic Flute* is premiered in Vienna; the Requiem, K. 626 is begun but not completed; Mozart dies in Vienna on December 5. |




## Glossary

**Baroque**: In music history, the period from about 1600 to 1750, divisible into three parts: early baroque (1600–50), mid-baroque (1650–1700), and high baroque (1700–50). Music of the high baroque is characterized by emotional exuberance tempered by intellectual control—very elaborate melodies controlled by harmonies that change in an orderly, predictable manner.

**Cadenza**: Virtuoso music designed to show off a singer's or instrumental soloist's technical ability.

**Classical musical style**: Designation given to works of the later eighteenth century, characterized by clear melodic lines, balanced form, and emotional restraint. The style is brilliantly exemplified by the music of Franz Joseph Haydn.

**Concerto**: Musical composition for orchestra and soloist(s), typically in three movements.

**Consonance**: Two or more notes sounded together that do not require resolution.

**Continuo**: Abbreviation for *basso continuo*, the Italian term for the keyboard part in most baroque music that provides harmonic and rhythmic support, usually reinforced with a bass instrument such as a cello or viola da gamba.

**Crescendo**: Gradually increasing in volume.

**Dissonance**: Two or more notes sounded together that require resolution.

**Double fugue**: Complex fugue with two separate subjects, or themes.

**Enlightenment**: Eighteenth-century philosophical movement characterized by rationalism and positing that individuals are responsible for their own destinies and that all men are born equal.

**Exposition**: Opening section of a fugue or sonata-form movement in which the main theme(s) are introduced.

**Fugue**: Important baroque musical procedure, in which a theme (or subject) is developed by means of various contrapuntal techniques.

**Holy Roman Empire**: "New Roman Empire" based on Christianity, proclaimed in 962 C.E. and ultimately accepted only in Germania. By 1400, it was a loose confederation of princely, ecclesiastical, and free imperial states. It was ruled by the Habsburg dynasty from the mid-fifteenth century until the early nineteenth century.

**K. numbers**: Koechel numbers, named after Ludwig von Koechel (1800–77), who catalogued Mozart's works.

**Mannheim School**: Important group of German composers of the mid-eighteenth century, centered at Mannheim and associated with the orchestra of Elector Karl Theodor. Johann Stamitz (1717–57) developed the orchestra's distinctive pre-Classical style, which included abandoning baroque contrapuntal techniques in favor of a homophonic style and creating novel dynamic devices, such as the famous *Mannheim* crescendo.

**Minuet**: Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dance, graceful and dignified in moderately slow three-quarter time.

**Minuet and trio**: Form of a movement (usually the third) in a Classical symphony. The movement is in ternary form (ABA), with the first minuet repeated after the trio and each section itself repeated.

**Movement**: Independent, self-standing piece of music within a larger work.

**Musical form**: Overall formulaic structure of a composition, such as sonata form; also the smaller divisions of the overall structure, such as the development section.

**Overture**: Music that precedes an opera or play, often played as an independent concert piece.

**Pedal note**: Pitch sustained for a long period of time against which other changing material is played. A pedal harmony is a sustained chord serving the same purpose.

**Recitative**: Operatic convention in which the lines are half sung, half spoken.

**Requiem**: Mass for the dead, traditionally in nine specific sections.

**Rococo**: Light, decorative, pre-Classical style characterized by lyric, relatively simple melodies and expressive restraint.

**Rondo**: Musical procedure in which a single theme alternates with various contrasting episodes.

***Singspiel***: German-language musical comedy—usually romantic or farcical in nature—with spoken dialogue; popular in the eighteenth century.

**Sonata**: Piece of music typically in three or four movements, composed for a piano (piano sonata) or a piano plus one instrument (violin sonata, for example).

**Sonata form**: Structural formula characterized by thematic development; usually used for the first movement of a sonata, symphony, or concerto.

**String quartet**: (1) Ensemble of four stringed instruments: two violins, viola, and cello; (2) composition for such an ensemble.

***Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Stress*)**: Pre-Romantic artistic movement bent on expressing great personal feelings and emotions.




**Symphony**: Large-scale instrumental composition for orchestra, containing several movements. The Viennese Classical symphony typically had four such movements.

**Trio**: (1) Ensemble of three instruments; (2) composition for three instruments; (3) type of minuet, frequently rustic in nature and paired with a traditional minuet to form a movement in a Classical-era symphony.

**Voice**: Range or register, commonly used to refer to the four melodic ranges: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.

## Biographical Notes

**Colloredo, Hieronymous Count von** (1732–1812). Last of the Salzburg prince-archbishops, Count von Colloredo became archbishop of Salzburg (Mozart's hometown) in 1772. Although hated as an imperious philistine by Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart, Colloredo has been considered by others to be an enlightened and conscientious ruler. He disliked musical extravagance, including operatic displays by soloists, and he preferred his music to be brief.

**Da Ponte, Lorenzo** (1749–1838). Famous Italian poet, man of letters, and librettist, Da Ponte settled in Vienna in 1782 and became official poet to the Imperial Theater. He was a close friend of Mozart and was the librettist for Mozart's most famous operas, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Cosi fan tutte*.

**Habsburg**. Austrian royal family, one of the oldest and most prominent dynasties. From 1452, the Habsburg family retained rule of the Holy Roman Empire until 1806 (with the exception of one brief period). By 1732 (the year of Haydn's birth), the Habsburg/Austrian Empire, headquartered in Vienna, was a Catholic, German-language, multinational empire consisting of greater Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary.

**Joseph II** (1741–90). Holy Roman Emperor, eldest son of the Habsburg Emperor Francis I and Empress Maria Theresa, Joseph II carried out progressive reforms of church and state in the Austrian Habsburg domains in accordance with the rationalistic principles of the Enlightenment. He was a champion of Mozart, but thought Haydn's music to be "tricks and nonsense."

**Maria Theresa** (1717–80). Wife of Holy Roman Emperor Francis I, Archduchess of Austria, and Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, Maria Theresa strengthened and unified the Austrian monarchy in the eighteenth century. Pious and unfriendly to the principles of the Enlightenment, she was pragmatic, a shrewd judge of her ministers, and often contemptuous of artists and musicians, such as Mozart.

**Mozart, (Johann Georg) Leopold** (1719–87). Wolfgang Mozart's father, Leopold was a German-born Austrian composer, violinist, and music theorist. He received a bachelor of philosophy degree in 1737 at the Benedictine University in Salzburg, Austria, where he settled. In 1743, he became a violinist at the court of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg. In 1762, he was appointed vice-conductor of the court orchestra. In 1747, he married Anna Maria Pertl. Of their seven children, only Maria Anna (Marianne/Nannerl) and Wolfgang survived infancy. Leopold dedicated his life to the musical education and professional promotion of his children and of Wolfgang in particular.

**Mozart, Maria Anna,** nicknamed Nannerl (1751–1829). Austrian pianist and teacher, daughter of Leopold Mozart, and sister of Wolfgang Mozart.




**Puchberg, Michael**. Textile merchant, amateur cellist, friend of Mozart, and fellow Freemason, the indulgent and uncomplaining Puchberg made several loans of money to the financially distressed Mozart. The composer dedicated his String Trio in E flat, K. 563 (1788) to Puchberg.

**Schikaneder, Johann Emanuel** (1748–1812). Austrian actor, singer, playwright, impresario, and Freemason, Schikaneder settled in Vienna in 1784. He commissioned Mozart to write *The Magic Flute* opera for his Theater-auf-der-Wieden in Vienna. He supplied the libretto and created the role of Papageno for himself. He later opened another house, the Theater-an-der-Wien, for which he commissioned Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*.

**Weber, Constanze** (1762–1842). Soprano and wife of Wolfgang Mozart, Constanze was one of four daughters born to Fridolin Weber, a German singer and violinist. Constanze's sisters—Josepha, Sophie, and Aloysia— were all sopranos. Mozart had been in love with Aloysia before courting and marrying Constanze.

## Bibliography


Anderson, Emily, ed. and trans. *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, third ed. London, 1985.

Baudelaire, Charles. *The Mirror of Art: Critical Studies*. Jonathan Mayne, ed. and trans. London, 1955.

Bauer, Wilhelm; Deutsch, Otto; Eibl, Joseph. *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*. Kassel, 1975.

Braunbehrens, Volkmar. *Mozart in Vienna: 1781–1791*. Grove Weidenfeld, 1989.

Chailley, Jacques. *The Magic Flute*. Knopf, 1971.

Deutsch, Otto. *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, Blom, Branscombe, and Noble, trans. London, 1965.

Hildesheimer, Wolfgang. *Mozart*. Vintage, 1983.

Jahn, Otto. *W. A. Mozart*. Pauline Townsend, trans. London, 1882.

Landon, H. C. Robbins. *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, Volume 2. Indiana University Press, 1976.

———. *Mozart: The Golden Years*. Schirmer Books, 1989.

Mann, William. *The Operas of Mozart*. Oxford University Press, 1977.

Mersmann, Hans, ed. *The Letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*. Dover, 1972.

Niemetschek, Franz Xavier. *Leben des K. K. Kapellmeisters Gottlieb Mozart*. Prague, 1798.

Schenk, Erich. *Mozart and His Times*. Richard Winston and Clara Winston, trans. New York, 1959.

Schlichtegroll, Friedrich. *Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart*. Gotha, 1793.

Solman, Joseph, ed. *Mozartiana*. Vintage, 1990.

Solomon, Maynard. *Mozart: A Life*. Harper Collins, 1995.

Stafford, William. *The Mozart Myths: A Critical Reassessment*. Stanford University Press, 1991.

Woodford, Peggy. *The Illustrated Lives of the Great Composers: Mozart*. Music Sales Corporation, New York, 1990.