

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)



Born: 1756 (Salzburg, Austria)
Died: 1791 (Vienna, Austria)

FAST FACTS

- Toured Europe with his dad and sister as a child prodigy musician
- Wrote more than 150 musical works by age 18, and over 600 in his lifetime
- Made a living out of teaching students, writing pieces, and performing in concerts he organized
- Died when he was only 35

Mozart was a child prodigy, and is one of the greatest musicians in history. Because he was born into a family of musicians, Mozart and his sister Nannerl showed incredible talent early on. Their father, who was a violinist and composer for the archbishop of Salzburg, took young Amadeus and Nannerl on tours throughout Europe to display their talent in concerts. The frequent performances were exhausting, but they allowed Mozart's talent to develop at an rapid pace.

By age 3, Mozart developed perfect pitch, which means that he could sing any note you asked him to without having to use a piano for help (some musicians spend a lifetime *trying* to develop perfect pitch!). Mozart began composing music at age 6, and could improvise (make up music on the fly) on any tune by age 7. He later combined these skills by improvising many of the cadenzas in his piano concertos when he performed them. Mozart also wrote 34 symphonies, 16 quartets, 5 operas, and 100 other pieces by the time he was 18. He was truly a musical genius!

Through his family's travels, Mozart learned about many different styles of music, and met important composers, such as J.C. Bach (one of J.S. Bach's sons) and Joseph Haydn, who he became good friends with. Haydn even called Mozart the greatest composer he had known! Mozart became concertmaster for an archbishop in Salzburg when he was 16, but did not get paid, and was more interested in writing operas and instrumental music anyway, so he eventually moved back to Vienna, where he took on piano and composition students. He earned a great deal of money and a big reputation through writing, teaching, and performing with his students, but died suddenly in 1791, at age 35, probably because he didn't manage his money well, and could not pay for medical treatment when he fell ill.

Even though Mozart sadly died at a young age, the amount of incredible music he produced in his lifetime established him as one of the most important and talented composers in the classical period, and in the history of music.



Let's Listen!

- The Metropolitan Orchestra performs Mozart's Overture to *The Magic Flute*, premiered in 1791, about 2 months before he died: [click here](#).
- Watch Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 5, Movement 1*: [click here](#).