

Discovery

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - Man, Musician and Mason

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Portraits of Mozart show him to be a dignified, unsmiling and serious person. These portraits, which are characteristic of the eighteenth century, do not always reflect the true nature of the subject, because portrait painters of that period depicted all their subjects in the same static manner. Such portraits of Mozart present a limited view of his true character. Written accounts suggest that he was of a lively, even jocular and ebullient nature.

His father described him as being on occasion both rash and impatient and yet too easy-going. After Mozart's death a family friend interviewed his widow, who had thought that he had demonstrated a wide culture and a high level of intelligence. She said that he derived great enjoyment from reading and had read Shakespeare. He took pleasure, also, in painting and sculpture and was able to draw with a certain degree of competence. Descriptions of Mozart do not provide an image of an introvert or a person who isolated himself from people. It is apparent that Mozart's life was not entirely bounded by music, though it was his major interest in life and dominated his final years.

Mozart's grandfather was a bookbinder by trade. The business was prosperous and the family could afford a good education for their children.

Leopold, Mozart's father, had a good grounding in Latin, Greek, Italian, French, history, mathematics together with some knowledge of chemistry, physics, botany, anatomy, geology and astronomy. As a result, he felt fully equipped to undertake the education of his son. Leopold was a violinist with the Salzburg Orchestra and a competent, though unremarkable musician.

Because his knowledge of music enabled him to recognize his son's great musical gift, he devoted his life to being his manager.

Thus it was that Mozart and his sister were taken around Europe to give special performances. Both children were talented, but Mozart excelled and became the major attraction of the twosome. Mozart and his sister, Nannerl, were the only two surviving children.

Mozart grew up in a happy atmosphere of parental affection and a sincere attachment to his religion. His father died May 28, 1787 when Mozart was thirty-one. His mother had died earlier on July 3, 1778, in Paris

during one of her son's tours

Mozart was born on January 27, 1756, in Salzburg. He is reputed to have played the piano at the tender age of three, composed a concerto at five and made his first concert tour at six. His first violin sonata was published at age eight, his first symphony played in London when he was nine, and by age fourteen he had composed two comic operas.

If all that was not an exaggeration Mozart was showing exceptional talent at a very early age. His father planned tours throughout Europe to show off the musical skill of his son and in the hope of obtaining the support of a wealthy patron. These tours must have been rigorous and exhausting because of traveling by horse and carriage over rough roads and perhaps sometimes by boat along the many waterways of Europe. The shortest tour lasted a year, the longest nearly three and a half years. This was a rigorous itinerary for a young man.

At a time when Mozart was still a teenager, Leopold and his family lived for eighteen months in England. Although little is known of Mozart's private life from the end of 1788 to his death in 1791, he did give concerts in Dresden, Berlin and Prague.

Mozart was Court Musician to Archbishop Schrattenbach of Salzburg when he was just thirteen years of age. Although he resigned the post in 1772, he became Court Organist one year later. By the age of twenty-one he could hold his own in competence on the clavier, the organ and the violin.

Mozart married Constanza Weber on August 4, 1782 in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. At the time he was twenty-six and she was nineteen. They enjoyed their life together. Two children survived Mozart, one, Franz Xaver, a pianist and composer, was born four months before his father died and the older child, Karl Thomas, had a successful career as a civil servant. During the last six months of Mozart's life, which were spent in poverty and illness, he composed the Magic Flute and began the Requiem Mass, though the latter unfortunately remained unfinished. His personal life was disorganized during his last years. He was constantly burdened by the debilitating illness that finally killed him. The disease was of the kidneys and probably caused him immense pain and misery.

He frequently changed his living quarters and the new surroundings seemed to stimulate him to compose more beautiful music. Mozart had been earning a reasonable return on his compositions and tuition but, in the last three years of his life, the effects of illness probably diminished his efforts to obtain payment for his work. He was, therefore, in straitened financial circumstances but, though too proud to admit the fact, he did borrow funds from Masonic friends. During this period Mozart became depressed partly by his financial woes and partly because he felt that Viennese society was not as supportive of his work as it might have been. Throughout the period of his illness Mozart composed some of the music that a great many admirers considered to be the most wonderful of his large output. He did not seem unduly upset by the thought of death.

In fact, in a letter to his father in April 1787, he wrote that he never went to bed at night without remembering that he might not see the dawn. His health deteriorated during the last two years and he died on December 5, 1791 at age thirty-five.

Mozart was initiated on December 14, 1784 into Lodge Zur Wohltatigkeit, (Benevolence) in Vienna. Lodge Zur Neugekronten Hoffnung or Crowned Hope was the oldest lodge in that city. Joseph II issued an edict in 1785 requiring the eight lodges in Vienna to be amalgamated into two called Truth and New Crowned Hope. The lodge Benevolence, which Mozart and his father had joined was merged into New Crowned Hope.

He found great enjoyment in cheerful conversation with members and this must have enriched his life. The lodge membership mainly consisted of cultured and educated men. Mozart would enjoy this atmosphere, because of his need for friendship with intelligent men. Mozart considered the teachings of Masonry to be an extension of and quite compatible with his religion. He was also thrilled by the principles and mysteries of Masonry and this, together with a general enjoyment of the lodge, led him to compose much Masonic music. He was in fact the only musician of his time who composed music especially for Masonry.

The ideas of charity and the equality of members exercised a tremendous influence upon Mozart. Die Zauberflöte or the Magic Flute is perhaps the most well known opera among Masons. The librettist for the Magic Flute was Emanuel Schikaneder, who was also a Mason. It has been described and analyzed and its many allusions to Masonry have been commented upon. The opera is supposed to represent the political climate in which Masonry existed at that period. It was first performed on September 30, 1791 and Mozart

was able to attend the first few performances.

During the last six months of his life he worked upon the Requiem Mass, which Anton Leitgeb, the son of the Mayor of Vienna, had ordered. Mozart never finished it even though he worked on it until the day before he died.

Mozart's first opera, Idomeneo, was performed in 1781 in Munich and was judged to be a great success. In his short life he completed almost a thousand works. For his father's second degree Mozart composed a song "Gesellenreise" or the Fellowcraft's Journey especially for that occasion.

Among the music he composed for Masonic meetings were Mason's Joy, Odes for Opening and Closing Lodge, the Freemason Little Cantata and Masonic Funeral Music. Many other works that are widely known are "Figaro," "The Seraglio," "Don Giovanni" "Cosi fan tutte" and "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik." He left a lasting heritage of music that will never go out of style, and which not only delighted his contemporaries but also succeeding generations. Several of his musical friends spoke of him as the greatest composer the world had ever known.

Beethoven, who was born in 1770, was a pupil of Mozart's. Joseph Haydn, who had taught Mozart, said that he was the greatest of his time. This was indeed a tremendous compliment because during Mozart's life time such composers as Beethoven, Bach and Haydn himself were all creating musical works of superlative quality. The closing years of Mozart's life were full of sadness, pain and poverty. Despite all troubles he left behind a collection of magnificent music that will touch the hearts of many generations in years to come. Masonry has a right to be proud that it was a source of support and inspiration to an exceptional man and musician.