

📖 Topic Page: [Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus \(1756 - 1791\)](#)

Definition: **Mozart** from *Collins English Dictionary*

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1 Wolfgang Amadeus (ˈvɔlfɡaŋ amaˈdeːʊs). 1756–91, Austrian composer. A child prodigy and prolific genius, his works include operas, such as *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), and *The Magic Flute* (1791), symphonies, concertos for piano, violin, clarinet, and French horn, string quartets and quintets, sonatas, songs, and Masses, such as the unfinished *Requiem* (1791)

› Moˈzartean or Moˈzartian *adj*

Summary Article: **Mozart, (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus (1756–1791)**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Austrian composer and performer who was a child prodigy and an adult virtuoso. He was trained by his father, **Leopold Mozart** (1719–1787). From an early age he composed prolifically, and his works include 27 piano concertos, 23 string quartets, 35 violin sonatas, and 41 symphonies including the E \flat K543, G minor K550, and C major K551 (‘Jupiter’) symphonies, all three being composed in 1788. His operas include *Idomeneo* (1780), *Entführung aus dem Serail/The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782), *Le nozze di Figaro/The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), *Così fan tutte/Thus Do All Women* (1790), and *Die Zauberflöte/The Magic Flute* (1791). Together with the work of Joseph Haydn, Mozart's music marks the height of the classical age in its purity of melody and form.

Mozart's career began when, with his sister, Maria Anna, he was taken on a number of tours in 1762–79, visiting Munich, Vienna, the Rhineland, Holland, Paris, London, and Italy. He had already begun to compose. In 1772 he was appointed master of the archbishop of Salzburg's court band, but did not like the post and in 1781 was suddenly dismissed. He married Constanze Weber in 1782, settled in Vienna, and started a punishing freelance career as a concert pianist, composer, and teacher that brought lasting fame but only irregular financial security. His *Requiem*, unfinished at his death, was completed by a pupil.

His works were catalogued chronologically in 1862 by the musicologist Ludwig von Köchel (1800–1877) whose system of numbering – giving each work a ‘Köchel number’ – for example, K354 – remains in use in modified form.

Mozart showed early signs of talent, learnt the harpsichord from the age of three or four, and began to compose under his father's supervision when he was five. With his sister (then aged 11) he was taken to Munich in 1762, then to Vienna, where they played at court. Encouraged by their success, Leopold Mozart set out with the children the following year on a longer tour, which took them first through southern Germany, on to Brussels, and to Paris, where they arrived in November 1763. They appeared at court at Versailles, and four sonatas for violin and harpsichord by Mozart were published in Paris. Moving on to London in April 1764, they played before the royal family and made a sensation in public concerts.

In London Mozart was befriended by Johann Christian Bach, three of whose sonatas he arranged as piano concertos, and who also influenced the symphonies and other pieces he wrote at the time. They

left for Holland in July 1765, and after several stops on the journey through France and Switzerland returned to Salzburg in November 1766. The next months were spent in study and composition, but in September 1767 the whole family went to Vienna. There Mozart composed his first Mass (C minor, K139) and produced the *Singspiel, Bastien und Bastienne*. Returning to Salzburg in January 1769, Mozart had barely a year at home before setting out with his father on an extended tour of Italy; in Rome he wrote down Gregorio Allegri's *Miserere* from memory, in Bologna he took lessons from Padre Martini and gained election to the Philharmonic Society with a contrapuntal exercise, and in Milan he produced the opera *Mitridate* with great success in December 1770.

Two further visits to Italy followed, both to Milan, for the performance of the serenata *Ascanio in Alba* in October 1771, and the opera *Lucio Silla* in December 1772. At the performance of *Ascanio*, Johann Hasse is alleged to have said 'This boy will cause us all to be forgotten'. Apart from short visits to Vienna, in 1773, and Munich, in 1775 for the production of *La finta giardiniera* (1775), most of the next five years was spent in Salzburg, his longest period at home since infancy. In September 1777, in company with his mother, he embarked on a lengthy journey that took them via Mannheim to Paris, where his mother died in July 1778. The main object of this trip was to find suitable employment, but being unsuccessful, Mozart returned in January 1779 to the post of court organist at Salzburg, which he did not enjoy. One of his finest instrumental works, the *Sinfonia concertante* (K364), was written later that year.

His opera seria *Idomeneo* was produced in Munich in January 1781, but later the same year, on a visit to Vienna with the household of the archbishop of Salzburg, he gave up his post to settle in Vienna as a freelance, living by teaching and playing in concerts. His German opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail/The Abduction from the Seraglio* was produced in July 1782, and the next month he married Constanze Weber. At the height of his fame as a pianist, between 1782 and 1786, he composed many concertos for his own use, but thereafter there followed increasing financial worries, which his appointment in 1787 as court composer on the death of Christoph Willibald von Gluck did little to ease. The first of three operas using a libretto by the Italian poet Lorenzo da Ponte, *Le Nozze di Figaro/The Marriage of Figaro*, was produced in 1786, followed by *Don Giovanni* for Prague, in 1787, and *Così fan tutte/Thus Do All Women* in 1790. In these works Mozart brought opera to new heights of musical ingenuity, dramatic truth, and brilliance of expression. For almost the first time opera characters are recognizable human beings, rather than stock types.

In 1788 he wrote his last three symphonies, which are his most famous. Assimilating all he had learned from Joseph Haydn and others, he took standard forms and gave them new meaning. A visit to Berlin with Prince Lichnowsky in 1789 took him through Leipzig, where he discussed Bach's music with Doles, Bach's successor, and in 1790 he made a fruitless journey to Frankfurt, hoping to earn money as a pianist. After several lean years, 1791 was one of overwork, which must have contributed to his early death; in addition to the last piano concerto (K595), the clarinet concerto (K622), and several smaller works, he composed the operas *La Clemenza di Tito* (produced in Prague for the coronation of Emperor Leopold II), and *Die Zauberflöte/The Magic Flute* (1791, produced in Vienna). The Requiem remained unfinished at Mozart's death, and was completed later by his pupil Franz Süssmayr.

While Mozart was not a great innovator in the manner of Haydn and Beethoven, he set creative standards in a wide variety of forms to which later composers could only aspire.

WorksOpera *Idomeneo, rè di Creta* (1781), *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782), *Le nozze di Figaro*

(1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), *Così fan tutte/Thus Do All Women* (1790), *Die Zauberflöte/The Magic Flute* (1791), *La Clemenza di Tito* (1791).

Ballet *Les petits riens/Sweet Nothings* (1778).

Church music including Motet, *Exsultate, jubilate* for soprano, organ, and orchestra, (K165, 1773), *Kyrie* in D minor (K341, 1781), Mass in C, *Coronation* (K317, 1779), *Vesperae solennes de confessore* (K339, 1780), Mass in C minor, unfinished (K427, 1783), Motet, *Ave verum corpus* (K618, 1791), Requiem Mass in D minor, unfinished (K626, 1791).

Symphonies (41; nos. 1–24 composed 1764–73), no. 25 in G minor (K183, 1773), no. 29 in A (K201, 1774), no. 31 in D. *Paris* (K297, 1778), no. 34 in C (K338, 1780), no. 35 in D, *Haffner* (K385, 1782), no. 36 in C, *Linz* (K425, 1783), no. 38 in D, *Prague* (K504, 1786), no. 39 in E \flat (K543, 1788), no. 40 in G minor (K550, 1788), no. 41 in C, *Jupiter* (K551, 1788). Other music for orchestra includes: Divertimenti in D (K136, 1772), in B \flat (K137, 1772), in F (K138, 1772), in B \flat (K287, 1777), in D (K334, 1779–80); Serenades in D, *Serenata Notturna*, (K239, 1776), in D, *Haffner* (K250, 1776), in D, for four orchestras (K286, 1777), in D *Posthorn*) (K320, 1779), in B \flat for 13 wind instruments (K361, 1781), in E \flat for eight wind instruments (K375, 1781), in C minor for eight wind instruments (K388, 1782 or 83), in G for strings, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (K525, 1787); *Mauerische Trauermusik/Masonic Funeral Music* (K477, 1785).

Concertos 27 for piano, including no. 9 in E \flat (K271, 1777), no. 14 in E \flat (K449, 1784), no. 15 in B \flat (K450, 1784), no. 16 in D (K451, 1784), no. 17 in G (K453, 1784), no. 18 in B \flat (K456, 1784), no. 19 in F (K459, 1784), no. 20 in D minor (K466, 1785), no. 21 in C (K467, 1785), no. 22 in E \flat (K482, 1785), no. 23 in A (K488, 1786), no. 24 in C minor (K491, 1786), no. 25 in C (K503, 1786), no. 26 in D, *Coronation* (K537, 1788), no. 27 in B \flat (K595, 1791); five for violin, including no. 3 in G (K216, 1775), no. 4 in D (K218, 1775), no. 5 in A (K219, 1775); Sinfonia Concertante for violin, viola, and orchestra (K364, 1779); for bassoon in B \flat (K191, 1774); for flute in G (K313, 1778), for oboe in C (K314, 1778); for flute and harp in C (K299, 1778); for clarinet in A (K622, 1791), Sinfonia Concertante in E \flat for oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon (K297b, 1778, judged as spurious by some scholars); four for horn (1782–87).

Chamber music 23 string quartets, nos. 1–13 (1770–73), nos. 14–19 dedicated to Haydn (1782–85) in G (K387), in D minor (K421), in E \flat (K428), in B \flat (K458, *The Hunt*), in A (K464), in C (K465, *Dissonance*), no. 20 in D, *Hoffmeister* (K499, 1786), nos. 21–23 dedicated to King of Prussia (1789–90) in D (K575), in B \flat (K589), in F (K590); six string quintets, including no. 3 in C (K515, 1787), no. 4 in G minor (K516, 1787), no. 5 in D (K593, 1790), no. 6 in B \flat (K614, 1791); string trio in B \flat , *Divertimento* (K563, 1788); five piano trios; two piano quartets in G minor (K478, 1785), in B \flat (K493, 1786); oboe quartet (K370, 1781); horn quintet (K407, 1782); quintet for piano and wind (K452, 1784); clarinet quintet (K581, 1789); clarinet trio in E \flat (K498, 1786); 17 piano sonatas, including no. 8 in A minor (K310, 1778), no. 9 in D (K311, 1777), nos. 10–13 in C, A, and F (K330–333, 1781–84), no. 14 in C minor (K457, 1784), no. 15 in C (K545, 1788), no. 16 in B \flat (K570, 1789), no. 17 in D (K576, 1789); sonata in D for two pianos (K448, 1781); 35 sonatas for violin and piano: nos. 1–16 composed 1762–66, no. 17 and nos. 18–23 in 1778; nos. 24–35 from 1781–78. Variations for piano, Fantasia in D minor (K397, 1782 or 1786–87), Fantasia in C minor (K475, 1785), Rondo in A minor (K511, 1787).

Solo songs and lieder including 'Die Zufriedenheit' (K349), 'Oiseaux, si tous les ans' (K307), 'Der Zauberer' (K472), 'Das Veilchen' (K476), 'Als Luise' (K520), 'Abendempfindung' (K523), 'Das Traumbild' (K530), 'Sehnsucht nach dem Frühlinge/Longing for Spring' (K596).

quotations

Mozart, (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus

essays

Music Through Time: Classical Music

Variations

Ballet music

Chamber music

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

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Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus

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Mozart Museum

Mozart recital

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus

audios

Mozart, Wolfgang Cosi fan tutte

Mozart, Wolfgang Elvira Madigan

Mozart, Wolfgang Fantasia

Mozart, Wolfgang Jupiter Symphony, First Movement

Mozart, Wolfgang Piano Sonata K. 570, First Movement

Mozart, Wolfgang Rondo in A minor K. 511

Mozart, Wolfgang Symphony No. 40, First Movement

Mozart, Wolfgang The Marriage of Figaro, Overture

Mozart, Wolfgang Violin Concerto

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Chicago

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Harvard

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