

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Recognizing a remarkable musical ability in his son, Wolfgang, Leopold Mozart started giving him music lessons when the boy was 4 years old. As soon as Wolfgang heard a musical tune, he could play it. His father also gave the boy music paper so he could write down the music that was always playing in his head. He was able to write notes before he could read and write words.

When he was only 5 years old, he wrote a minuet for the piano. He wrote the familiar “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” at age 6. At age 8, he started to write music for other instruments as well. He had mastered songwriting, along with the ability to coordinate different instruments playing different parts. He had the ability to imagine the sounds of all the instruments and how they fit together.

In those days, playing music was major entertainment. Of course, there was no radio or television, tape recorders or CDs. Musicians were popular, and Mozart was very much in demand. Mozart's music was unusually complicated compared with the music of other composers of his time, though, and one criticism was that his music contained “too many notes.” Today, we've come to recognize his genius, and most of us, with the exception of beginning piano students, don't think there are too many notes!

Together with Franz Josef Haydn and Ludwig van Beethoven, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is considered one of the leading composers of his era. His best known works include the operas, *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Other well-known compositions are *Fur Elise* and *A Little Night Music*. Unfortunately, this extraordinarily talented man died at the age of 36. He was buried in December 1791 in Vienna, Austria.

Unit 1

- Do you think that Mozart was as clever in other areas of his life as he was in music? Why?

- Mozart's childhood probably deviated from the norm in a number of ways. What do you think were some of the differences?

- Which would you rather be: (1) extraordinary in one area of your life, such as music or sports, even if it meant you were deficient in others, or (2) average in everything? Why?