



SIMPLY MOZART

"I pay no attention whatever to anybody's praise or blame. I simply follow my own feelings."
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

10 THINGS ABOUT MOZART

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10 Things You Didn't Know About Mozart

by Liza Lentini




1. Born in 1756, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was actually christened Johann Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart. Until 1769 he signed his name Gottlieb (the German version of Theophilus). From thereon out he used "Amadeo" (or, Amadeus). Incidentally Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is an anagram for "A famous German waltz god."
2. There's nothing remotely childlike about an 8-year-old composing his first symphony (Symphony No. 1). But when Master Mozart was asked to perform at the palace in Vienna, onlookers were horrified that he climbed onto Empress Maria Teresa's lap and gave her a kiss upon meeting her. The Empress, who had children of her own, forgave young Mozart's impulsive waiving of royal protocol.
3. In 1768, when he was twelve, rumors were circulating that young Mozart was a fraud and his father Leopold was actually writing his compositions - giving a whole new meaning to "crying Wolf". To prove his prodigiousness, Wolferl (as his family called him) whipped up a spontaneous comic opera called "La Finta Semplice" to satisfy naysayers, and to restore commission payments from the Archbishop of Salzburg.
4. That's not to say that many of Mozart's masterpieces over the years have not proven to be written by someone else! It's thought that Mozart composed 33 symphonies between the ages of 8 and 19, over half of the symphonies he would compose in his life. Both Mozart and Schubert composed about six hundred pieces in their lifetime but since Schubert died at the age of thirty-one, year for year, hour for hour, Schubert wins the award for a more prolific composer.
5. Mozart's duet "Table Music for Two" was written for the second part to be read upside down. Thus, the sheet could be laid on a table between two players and read from both sides.
6. Mozart trained his pet starling to sing one of his concertos. Theory has it that he wrote "Musical Joke" in honor of the bird's death. Another theory is that, for fun, Mozart wanted to try his hand at writing bad music.
7. Mozart said that his best musical ideas came when he was "traveling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal or during the night when I cannot sleep." Those sleepless nights were often spent playing billiards, composing at the same time. There must have been a lot of pool playing the night before "Don Giovanni" premiered in Prague in 1787 -- in that one night he wrote the entire overture.
8. Mozart died before "Requiem" (his final composition, which, some say, stressed him to his death at the age of 35) was finished. At the request of his wife Constanze, "Requiem" was completed by Mozart's then student, Franz Sussmayer.
9. The longest span of time between a composition by a major composer and its debut performance is Mozart's "Organ

Piece for a Clock", which was written in 1791, but didn't premiere until 191 years later in 1982.

10. It was Franz Josef Haydn who once told Leopold Mozart of his son, "Before God and as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me." Mozart dedicated six string quartets to Haydn, who carried his admiration all the way to his death. Mozart's "Requiem" was performed at Haydn's funeral in 1809. Beethoven (1827) and Chopin (1849) also had Mozart's famed dark last composition played at their respective funerals. Ironic, as Mozart himself was too poor to have a funeral of his own, and his remains-never to be located-were dumped in an unmarked grave.

Liza Lentini is a playwright, essayist, and frequent contributor to Discover magazine's popular "20 Things You Didn't Know About..." column.

Translator  

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