Great Music Backstory

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was one of the most prolific and influential composers in the history of classical music. During his 35 years of life, he composed over 600 works, many of which have been hailed as masterpieces of Western music.

Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria. From the age of three, he was tutored in music by his father, Leopold Mozart, who was a successful composer and musician for the court in Salzburg. By the age of five, Wolfgang had exceeded his father's expertise; by six, he was performing on tour for European royalty as a child prodigy; by 13, Mozart had composed dozens of sonatas, concertos and symphonies. He continued to write music throughout his youth and early adulthood, creating hundreds of works which are now celebrated as some of the greatest pieces of choral, operatic and symphonic music ever written.

In 1781, Mozart relocated to Vienna, where he soon achieved acclaim as a composer and as the “finest keyboard player” in the city. Although he occasionally toured to other parts of Europe to promote his music, Vienna was his home for the remainder of his life. It was here he met his wife, Constanze, with whom he had six children (although only two survived past infancy). It was also here that he experienced the height of his success, as well as the lowest points of his life and career. As is the case with many artists, Mozart’s success waxed and waned, especially as the country struggled through a war with the Ottoman Empire for the latter part of the 18th century. This drastically affected the amount of time and money Austrian royalty could contribute to the arts.

While Mozart struggled financially through much of his adult life, his final year was, in fact, one of his most productive. In the months before his death, he composed some of his best known works: the motet “Ave verum corpus,” the opera “Die Zauberflöte” (“The Magic Flute”), and his unfinished “Requiem.” After battling a three-month, somewhat mysterious illness, Mozart died on December 5, 1791.

Words will never convey the majesty of Mozart’s music. His notes have lived across centuries and resonated in the hearts of millions. The masterful works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart are the very definition of the value “Great Music.”