Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was the most sensational Wunderkind (a German word meaning “wonderchild” or child prodigy) in the history of music. He started playing the keyboard at the age of three, composed little piano pieces at age five, symphonies at nine, and complete operas at twelve. Unbelievable, isn’t it? Let’s find out more about this phenomenal genius called Mozart! He was born in Salzburg, Austria in 1756. His father, Leopold, was also a composer, but he was best known as a violin teacher. Mozart never went to school. His father tutored him in languages (English, French, Latin, and Italian in addition to his native German), geography, science, history, math - Mozart particularly liked math - and, of course, music!

Mozart came from a warm and loving family. He delighted in playing duets at the keyboard with his older sister, Nannerl, and even wrote a concerto for two pianos for them to play together. He was always very close to his mother, and wrote her endless letters. His father guided him through every aspect of life – teaching him how to manage money, how to deal with people, and how to behave in society. As a child, Mozart was obedient to his father, playful, and full of humour. As a man he was small and rather thin, his head was quite large for his body, and he had a lot of hair, which he was very proud of and took care to powder every day. (Using powder was a fashionable thing to do in those days, just as men and women use gel and hairspray today.) He was always full of energy, often restless, and extremely hardworking.
MOZART’S LIFE

In Mozart’s day, a musician was considered just another form of servant - you served your aristocratic master who hired you to write and play music at his court or palace; your job was on a par with the cooks, butlers, maids, and cleaning staff. From the age of about twelve until he was twenty-five, Mozart was in the service of Count Colloredo, Archbishop of Salzburg.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Slowly Mozart came to hate life in little Salzburg, where he was poorly paid and sadly underestimated. In 1781, he left and moved to Vienna. Here he also gave piano lessons, conducted his own compositions, starred in his piano concertos as soloist, and became the talk of the town.

During his years in Vienna, Mozart was what we today would call a freelance musician – one who picks up jobs here and there rather than receiving a regular salary from a single source.

MOZART’S HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

Mozart loved games of all sorts. He knew many card tricks and his other interests included billiards, bowling, charades, fencing, and horseback riding. He liked to keep dogs, cats, and birds as pets. He once owned a starling that could sing the main tune from the last movement of his own Piano Concerto No. 17.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Other famous composers who died young include GEORGE GERSHWIN and FELIX MENDELSSOHN (both at age 38), GEORGES BIZET (at 36), VINCENZO BELLINI (at 33), FRANZ SCHUBERT (at 31).

Research the life of one of these composers and report back to your class.

Mozart died on December 5, 1791, at the young age of thirty-five. His health had never been good. All his years travelling and performing as a boy took their toll. In addition, he had an intense lifestyle and was always overworked. His death cannot be attributed to a single cause, but during the last few weeks of his life we know he suffered from kidney failure and possibly rheumatic fever, which put a further strain on his feeble body.

Go to the Great Composers section of www.ArtsAlive.ca (Music) and learn more about how Mozart earned a living!
LET’S GO MOZART!

MOZART’S TIMES

The late eighteenth century, the period in which Mozart lived, was relatively peaceful. There were no major wars in Europe, though across the ocean the American War of Independence raged from 1775-1783. Yet there was much discontent in Europe. People were getting fed up with a two-class social structure, in which a tiny group of rich people at the top held power over a vast number of poor people at the bottom. Power was slowly changing hands, however, from the aristocracy to the growing middle class. This middle class came about partly through the Industrial Revolution, which brought a sudden, massive increase in the number of jobs available in mines, factories, and on the railroads.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

A philosophical movement known as the Enlightenment took hold during this period. The rights of the individual, freedom of thought, relaxation of censorship, and the gradual abolition of child labour were just some of the changes that resulted from this movement.

MOZART’S CONTEMPORARIES

The only other composer of the time who even came close to matching Mozart’s genius was Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809). The two became great friends, learned much from each other, and together created the models that future composers used to write symphonies and string quartets. Then there was Antonio Salieri, an Italian who spent much of his career at the court of Vienna; Johann Christian Bach, one of the leading composers in London; and Christoph Willibald Gluck, noted for his operatic reforms.

In other fields, we find philosophers and writers like Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in France, Friedrich von Schiller and E.T.A Hoffmann in Germany, Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott in Scotland, and Jane Austen in England. Antonio Canaletto and his nephew Bernardo were famous Italian landscape painters, while Jean-Honoré Fragonard and Thomas Gainsborough were their contemporaries in France and England, and across the ocean John Singleton Copley painted portraits of famous Americans.

TIME LINE

1756: French drive British from Great Lakes region of North America.

1759: British acquire Quebec from French in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham.

1763: Britain provides government for Quebec, Florida, and Grenada.

1765: Joseph II is Emperor of Holy Roman Empire.

1769: Napoleon Bonaparte born.

1771: Encyclopedia Britannica published.

1774: Roman Catholicism established in Canada to guarantee loyalty to Great Britain.

1775: American Revolution begins.

1776: American Declaration of Independence signed July 4th.

1780: Fountain pen invented.


1785: Royal Academy of San Carlos (Arts and Culture) founded in Mexico City. Carbonated soda invented.

1787: Constitution signed; federal government of the US established.


1791: Canada Constitutional Act divides the country into Upper and Lower Canada. George Vancouver explores the Pacific coast of North America.

TWO CATS

by Jean-Baptiste Oudry, 18th Century, (National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa).
MOZART’S TRAVELS

Does travelling all over Europe - from London to Vienna, from Rome to Amsterdam - sound exciting? Well, maybe for a vacation, but not if you have to travel as a performer. It’s a very difficult lifestyle, even today, but just think of what Mozart had to endure back in the eighteenth century! There were no airplanes, nor trains, nor even buses - only horse-drawn carriages that were unheated in winter (and much too hot in summer), which travelled along bumpy dirt roads. They offered little protection from rain and snow, and often broke down in the middle of nowhere! There were only dirty, uncomfortable inns to stay at, which served food that often made you sick. Thieves were everywhere. Yet young Mozart, accompanied by his father and sometimes other members of his family, spent most of his childhood on the road – about 3,700 days, which adds up to more than ten years!

Think of the people Mozart met on these tours! On his first tour, at the age of six, he played the harpsichord (an early form of the piano) at the Imperial Palace in Vienna for the emperor. When Mozart slipped on the polished floor, a little girl helped him back on his feet. This was Marie-Antoinette, who later became Queen of France. Little Wolfgang played for royalty all over Europe, met famous people, and earned great praise (and money!) everywhere he went. Along with his sister, Nannerl, who was also extremely talented, the Mozarts became a kind of travelling circus.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Imagine you are Mozart, visiting a great city for the first time. Write to someone you know well and tell him or her about your experience in detail.

ANSWERS

ACROSS

2 Symphony

4 Haydn

10 Math

11 Enlightenment

8 Colloredo

DOWN

2 Smallpox

3 Cello

9 Violin

7 Vienna

6 Salzburg

Note -zarts!

Without telephones, fax machines, e-mail, mobile phones or telegraph, the only way people could communicate across long distances in Mozart’s day was through notes and letters.

Since Mozart was very close to his family, he, his mother, father, sister, and wife Constanze, wrote a total of about two thousand letters to each other.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART:
LETTER TO CONSTANZE IN BADEN BY VIENNA
Dated July 3, 1791, Vienna.
(Salzburg, Library of Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum)
ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD

All this travel was an education in itself. Mozart was exposed to a tremendous range of ideas, thoughts, customs, and lifestyles as he travelled about. He saw plays and read newspapers in several languages, learned how composers in other cities and countries wrote their music, and acquired a vast knowledge of the world that others couldn’t even imagine.

Travel was good for business too. As Mozart’s reputation grew all over Europe, any music published with his name on it was almost guaranteed to sell well (some dishonest publishers put Mozart’s name on inferior music by other composers to boost sales).

ACTIVITY IDEA

Go to the Orchestra on Tour section of www.ArtsAlive.ca (Music) to read first-hand accounts from NAC Orchestra Musicians about life on the road!

The map below traces Mozart’s famous travels. After completing the activity, you will find Vienna to the right of the map, a city which actually lies in the heart of Europe, on the banks of the great river Danube. The city was a natural centre for the distribution of goods of all kinds throughout Europe.

Wolfgang, Nannerl and Leopold Mozart are setting off on their travels. But little Wolfgang has been playing word games again and has mixed up the letters in the names of the cities on the map. Can you figure out what each city name should be? (ANSWERS BELOW)

Trouble on the Road

One of the hazards of travel in those days was the risk of catching a disease. When Mozart was eleven, he caught one of the most dreaded diseases of the time: smallpox. He came very close to losing his eyesight. He was in bed for two weeks with a fever, sore eyes, and even delirium at times.

Mozart wrote a tremendous amount of music in his short lifetime - more than many composers who lived to be twice his age. His compositions number well over six hundred, amounting to about two hundred hours of music. Some pieces last less than a minute, others can take more than three hours to perform. Mozart wrote just about every kind of music there was in his time: symphonies, operas, concertos, sonatas, serenades, divertimentos, masses, and much more. Perhaps you have heard of The Magic Flute, Don Giovanni or The Marriage of Figaro, some of his greatest operas, or of the serenade Eine kleine Nachtmusik, or the incredibly beautiful Clarinet Concerto.

Mozart is often referred to as the most universal composer. This means that people everywhere, of all ages, can enjoy his music. It has that magical combination of lightness, joy, elegance and rhythmic motion. Mozart seems to be in touch with each one of us, making our hearts and minds feel things in ways words or pictures cannot. The magical effect that Mozart’s music has on us, more than two centuries after his death, has not diminished.

How many days would it take you to listen to all of Mozart’s music if you played it non-stop (keep in mind he wrote over 200 hours of music)?

Answer: ____________________________________

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART: MINUET IN G AND TRIO IN C FOR PIANO (K. 1)
Composed at the age of five in 1761. (Salzburg, Museum Carolino Augusteum.)

MOZART Math Quiz

How many days would it take you to listen to all of Mozart’s music if you played it non-stop (keep in mind he wrote over 200 hours of music)?

Answer: ________________________________
MOZART LISTENING GUIDE!

What do you listen for when a piece of music is playing? Here are some ideas to help you. Let’s use the theme from Mozart’s Sonata in A on page 8 as an example:

MELODY

This is the part of the music you can hum, whistle, or sing to yourself. You might call it a tune. Some melodies bounce all over the place, which may make them difficult to sing, but easy to play on an instrument like the violin or piano. Sing or play on your recorder the beautiful melody found in Mozart’s Sonata in A.

METER

This is the part of the music you can tap your foot to. You will usually find that the main pulses fit into groups of twos, threes, or fours. A march is “in two” (ONE-two ONE-two) while a waltz is “in three.” Count a moderate “ONE-two-three” to Sonata in A, emphasizing the first pulse. If you emphasize pulse “three”, the melody will sound quite odd! Try it and compare.

TEMPO

This is the speed of the music. The speed may vary from very slow to very fast. Most composers use Italian words to describe the tempo: adagio, for example, means very slow; andante, moderate; allegro, lively and presto, very fast. Sonata in A is to be played Andante grazioso – moderately graceful. Try humming the melody presto and listen to how tempo affects the mood of a piece. Which do you prefer?

DYNAMICS

Dynamics refer to how loudly or softly the music should be played. Sometimes the dynamics change abruptly, sometimes gradually. The dynamics to Sonata in A are mp - mezzo piano (moderately soft). In bars 7-8 and 13-16 there are crescendo and decrescendo markings that refer to changes in the dynamic levels. Sing the piece while paying attention to the dynamic markings.

TIMBRE

The specific kind of sound each instrument makes is its timbre. A flute sounds different from a violin, even if it’s playing exactly the same note. You can mix timbres, just as you can mix colours in painting. If you mix red and yellow, you get orange. If you mix a flute and a violin, you get a particular mixture of timbres. Pair up with a fellow student. One of you can hum the melody of Sonata in A, the other can play the melody on an instrument such as a recorder or violin. Play and sing the melody together and listen to the different timbres you produce.

HARMONY

Underneath the melody are clusters of notes called chords, each of which sound different. These chords can stand alone, or they can support a melody. Some chords sound gentle and pleasant; some may sound harsh or unpleasant. The composer uses these to create the kind of mood he wants at each moment. Go to Activities & Games at www.ArtsAlive.ca and play the melody of Sonata in A with a harmonic accompaniment! Listen to how the chords support the melody.

ACTIVITY IDEA

1. Listen to another piece by Mozart keeping the Listening Guide elements in mind. How is this Mozart piece different than his Sonata in A?

2. Bring in a recording of your favourite song, artist, or group to your class. Present to your classmates how the 6 musical elements in the Listening Guide relate to your selection.
PLAY ALONG ON A RECORDER, FLUTE OR ANOTHER INSTRUMENT…

The Sonata in A major is without doubt one of Mozart’s best known works. The opening movement has a beguiling charm and elegance. Its theme has been identified as a Czech folksong, known to Mozart in a German setting. The theme divides into two sections, each repeated, with the second section more or less a development of the first.

Theme from Piano Sonata in A, KV 331

for Recorder and Orchestra

W. A. Mozart
Arr. Mario Duschenes

MOZART’S MUSICAL Dice Game

Mozart loved puzzles and games of all kinds, even when it came to composing. As a party game, he would sometimes challenge his friends to help him compose a minuet using dice. You can play the same game using one of Mozart’s real melodies.

YOU WILL NEED: 2-3 players, recorders, a copy of the Mozart Sonata in A theme downloaded from the Activities and Games section at www.ArtsAlive.ca (Music), scissors and glue, one die.

HOW TO PLAY:
• Play the Mozart Sonata in A theme.
• Cut the music into eight separate boxes in two-bar sections, following the lines.
• Match up and glue in the boxes labeled ‘beginning’ and ‘end.’
• Have the first player roll the die. Whatever number turns up, find the box with the matching number and glue it in the second space.
• Have the second player roll the die, and proceed in the same manner. If the new number has already been used, the player passes his turn to the next person. Continue taking turns until all of the boxes have been used.
• Play your new composition!
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Mozart’s full name is usually written “Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart,” but that’s not what Mozart called himself. His father baptized him Johannes Chrysotomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart. He enjoyed twisting his names into words like Wolfie, Wolfgango, Gangflow (Wolfgang spelled backwards), Mozartini, Mozartus, and Mozarty.

So where did “Amadeus” come from? The answer is easy if you know ancient Greek and Latin (as Mozart did): Amadeus is Latin for the Greek word Theophilus, which means “lover of God”. Mozart used variants of the Latin word, turning it into Amadè, Amadeo, or most often Amadé.
LET’S GO MOZART!

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10
Might as well tell you right away: my name is Buzz. I’m the singer in our band, Buzz and the Bees. We practice three hours a day. Sometimes four. Our mothers often ask: “Why can’t you spend that much time on your homework?” We are in training for the Battle of the Bands.

The other day, when we got to school, we saw that it wasn’t a regular day. In the hallway the girls were clustered like a bunch of grapes. Me, Buzz, and my Bees went up to them. In the middle of this group of girls, we saw this weird-looking guy in a shiny tunic like people wore in the days of the Beatles. His face was pockmarked. The girls were all excited because he kissed their hands like in old movies. He spoke French, English, German, Italian all at the same time. The girls could understand his gobbledygook. They told us he was a musician: that he’d put on concerts in Europe. Me, Buzz, I didn’t believe his bragging. The bell rang. The great star declared: “A day without Mozart is a day without sunshine!” To the girls, that was awesome. Me and my Bees had a quiet meeting. We decided we hated this Mozart.

At the start of class, our teacher introduced the new student. He wasn’t nervous. He smiled at everybody. In his pink outfit, he looked like a butterfly.

The lesson was about the origin of the world. “How did it begin?” asked the teacher.

“I know because my father has a telescope and a microscope: it all started with music,” Mozart answered.

Huh? We looked at each other. Who’d have thought such a thing?

“Even when there wasn’t anything, there was music. Because silence is music too. Have you ever listened to silence?”

The teacher said: “Scientists say the universe began with a huge explosion, the Big Bang!"

“Here’s what the Big Bang was like,” said Mozart, and he blew this gigantic raspberry.

The whole class roared. Mozart was proud of himself. The teacher did his best to keep a straight face. He ordered Mozart to explain his Big Bang to the principal. The new kid said: “Sorry, but that’s nature – not very polite.”

At recess me, Buzz, and my Bees went and asked Mozart: “Hey, man, are you really a musician like us?”

He said: “I could tell you guys had music in you!” I can’t say why, but we felt proud.

Mozart had never skated. I lent him my skates. He borrowed scarves and wrapped them around his hands. “So I won’t break my fingers if I fall,” he explained. Then he zipped onto the ice like someone who isn’t worried about breaking his neck. Mozart had rubber ankles, but he sang and the girls followed him.
LET’S GO MOZART!

BUZZ, MOZ AND THE BEES CONTINUED

I invited him to visit Buzz and the Bees in our garage. Mozart asked: “How come you need all those boxes and wires to create music?” He’d never picked up an electric guitar. “You don’t need lessons to play this.” His fingers picked out a few notes and he started playing softly.

Now me, Buzz, I’ve got talent. But I never got tunes out of my guitar like he did. Me, I play on three strings. Mozart sounded like he was improvising on twenty-five strings. Wow! Would he like to join Buzz and the Bees for the Battle of the Bands? Yes! The next morning posters announced: BUZZ, MOZ, AND THE BEES LAY DOWN THE LAW!

Never before in the history of the Battle of the Bands was there as much shouting as there was in our gym. We’d found an electronic piano for Mozart. He jumped up and down with excitement when he saw this toy. He took four or five notes of our music and broke them down. Here, I’ll explain. At his piano, Mozart cut the notes into little pieces of sound and flung them up in the air. The pieces whirled like birds, they did singing pirouettes, they danced and then he brought all the birds back to their cage . . . and closed the door . . . . There was just one that was chirping. Can you hear it? Then all at once Mozart opened the door again. And the feast of music started up again. Yeah! And Buzz, Moz, and the Bees won the Battle of the Bands. We’ll be on TV Wednesday night at 8:30. Don’t miss it!

A couple of days later, we were rehearsing in our garage when this black limousine as long as a bus pulled up. It was Moz.

“Get in, we’re going to the National Arts Centre.”

Me, Buzz, and my Bees got taken to seats in the first row. At least two thousand people were there, all dressed up as if they were at a wedding. When Moz came on stage the crowd jumped to their feet.

He had on this wig, Me, Buzz. I think he was making up his music while he played it. Yeah! We were so close we could see everything. Sometimes his fingers moved so fast on the keys that we couldn’t follow them. Cool! His whole body was quivering. Wow! He was watching the audience. Sometimes one hand crossed over the other one to find a note at the opposite end of the keyboard. Or else instead of using ten fingers, Moz asked just one to do all the work. He played as easily as a kid scribbles. It was, it was . . . it was amazing . . . With all his . . . inventions, his combinations, we felt . . . I don’t know how to put it. Mozart gave our ears wings . . . Yeah!

When his concert was over, Mozart said: “Ladies and Gentlemen, I’d like to introduce my musician friends, Buzz and the Bees, winners of the Battle of the Bands.” Believe it or not, he’d brought along our instruments. Even the electronic piano. I’m sorry you weren’t there. Me, Buzz, I’ve never played better.

In the same way that he’d turned up at our school, Mozart, our friend Moz, disappeared. The girls say he went to Mexico. He told us once: “You have to know your limits to surpass them.” We play now as if he was still with us. Me, Buzz, I know he’ll come back. You know what I mean?

ACTIVITY IDEA

How does Roch Carrier portray Mozart? Why were Buzz and the Bees so impressed with Mozart’s music? What living musicians fascinate you? In small groups, make a list of characteristics found in great musicians and other celebrities. Would Mozart be considered a star today? Discuss.