

Operas

Mozart's Compositions

16 operas

Operas to remember

- Idomeneo
- *The Abduction from the Seraglio*
- *The Marriage of Figaro*
- *Don Giovanni*
- *Così fan tutti*
- *The Magic Flute*

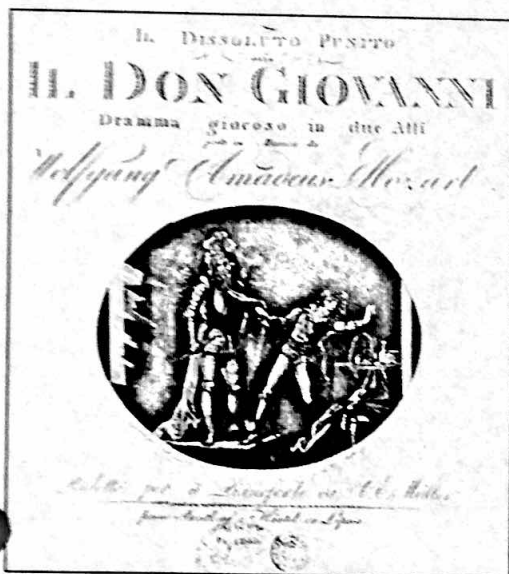


Title page from the score of *The Marriage of Figaro*

Mozart's opera music is his greatest achievement. He was a master of all the kinds of opera that were common in his day: *opera seria*, or serious Italian opera, *opera buffa*, or the lighter, comic Italian opera, and *Singspiel*, comic opera written in German with spoken dialogue. He used his music to express character and humanity better than any other composer before him and, some would say, since. The people in his operas really come to life as human beings. He accomplished this not just with the vocal music but the orchestral accompaniment as well.

The Marriage of Figaro is based on a French play about a clever valet, Figaro, who wants to marry a maid named Susanna, but has to outwit the Count, their master, who wants Susanna for himself. The music sung by the Count and his wife has a very different tone from that sung by his servant Figaro and the maid Susanna, illustrating the difference in their social class. It shows the Count's anger and jealousy when he thinks about Figaro getting Susanna when he will not, and Figaro's distrust for women when he thinks Susanna

has betrayed him. The music sung by Cherubino, the teen-age page boy, brings out all his youth and desire.



Title page from the score of *Don Giovanni*

Don Giovanni is a retelling of the story of Don Juan, the infamous seducer of women, who ends up in Hell when he refuses to make amends for his misdeeds. The story has serious aspects that make it a less obvious choice for a comic opera. Some authorities have suggested that it could be called "heroicomic." Audiences have always responded to the excitement of the supernatural in the scene where the statue of a man Giovanni has murdered comes to life and drags him down to Hell for what Giovanni did to his daughter.

Operas

The Magic Flute tells the story of Prince Tamino's rescue of Pamina, the daughter of the Queen of the Night. It seems almost like a fairy tale, with characters like Prince Tamino and Princess Pamina, Sarastro the wicked magician, Papageno the comic bird-catcher, and Pamina's mother, the Queen of the Night. However, Mozart wove serious elements into the opera, as well as ritual aspects of Freemasonry that clearly relate to the philosophical ideals of the Enlightenment. The Masonic symbols have caused much controversy over the years—Mozart was accused of betraying the organization's secrets. Some historians have suggested, however, that he was using them to illustrate his idea of the perfect society. *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute* are Mozart's most popular operas with modern audiences.

Sacred vocal music

In addition to his operatic vocal writing, Mozart wrote a great deal of sacred music. Best known are the *Mass in C minor* and the *Requiem*, but he wrote 13 other masses and a number of other shorter sacred works

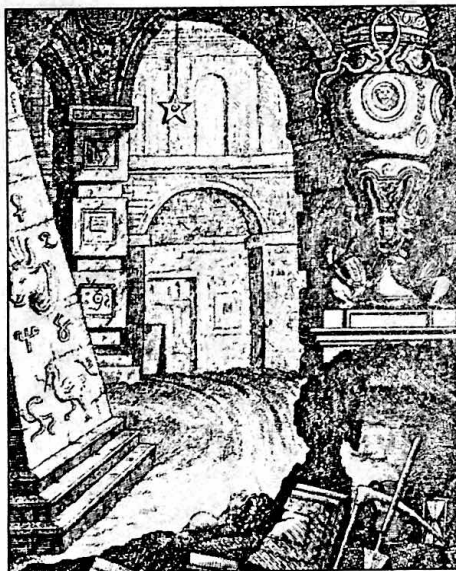
Freemasonry was a secret organization that existed all over Europe and England. The members, many of whom were rich and powerful men, believed in the ideals of the Enlightenment, like equality and the brotherhood of Man.

Sacred Compositions

16 masses

Works to remember

- *Mass in C minor*
- *Requiem* (unfinished)



Title page from the libretto of *The Magic Flute*



Papageno the bird-catcher from *The Magic Flute*

Orchestral works

Mozart's Compositions

Symphonies: 41

Concertos:

5 violin

27 piano

other instruments

Divertimentos, serenades,
marches and dances

Works to remember:

Symphonies:

- *Haffner*, no. 35, K.385
- *Linz*, no. 36, K. 425
- *Prague*, no. 38, K.543
- *Jupiter*, no. 41, K.551

Serenades

- *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*

Mozart wrote over 40 symphonies. Most important are the six that he wrote in the last ten years of his life, ending with the "Jupiter", No. 41 in C major, K. 551. They are noted for the richness of their orchestration and the emotion that they are able to communicate.

As a virtuoso pianist, Mozart naturally wrote concertos for piano and orchestra—there are more than 20 of them. Keyboard concertos were very popular and Mozart developed the form to perfection. Mozart also wrote many concertos for violin, as well as other less commonly highlighted instruments such as the French horn and the clarinet.

There are also many miscellaneous orchestral works written for social occasions, such as the divertimenti and the serenades. The Serenades in E flat major, K. 375, and C minor, K. 388, for instance, are written for groups of wind instruments. The most famous of Mozart's party music is undoubtedly the Serenade in G, K. 525, known as "Eine kleine Nachtmusik (A Little Night Music)."



Mozart's first Horn Concerto

Chamber and keyboard music

Mozart's string quartets are among the finest ever written. He wrote 30, among them the six that he dedicated to Joseph Haydn, his "most celebrated and very dear friend". He also wrote two string quintets, for two violins, two violas and cello, and the Quintet for Clarinet, K. 581. Mozart's violin sonatas are very well known and frequently performed.

In addition to the keyboard concertos discussed previously, Mozart composed a large number of works for piano alone, or for another solo instrument, as well as piano duets with string or wind instruments. His Quintet for piano and wind, K.452, is particularly interesting, in view of the difficulty of writing for the wind instruments of the time, which had trouble sustaining long notes. He wrote 40 piano sonatas, including the A minor Sonata, K. 330, which was composed in Paris when his mother died. The Fantasia in C minor, K. 475, and the Fantasia in D minor, K. 397, are familiar works to piano students.

◆ Mozart's Compositions ◆

Chamber music:

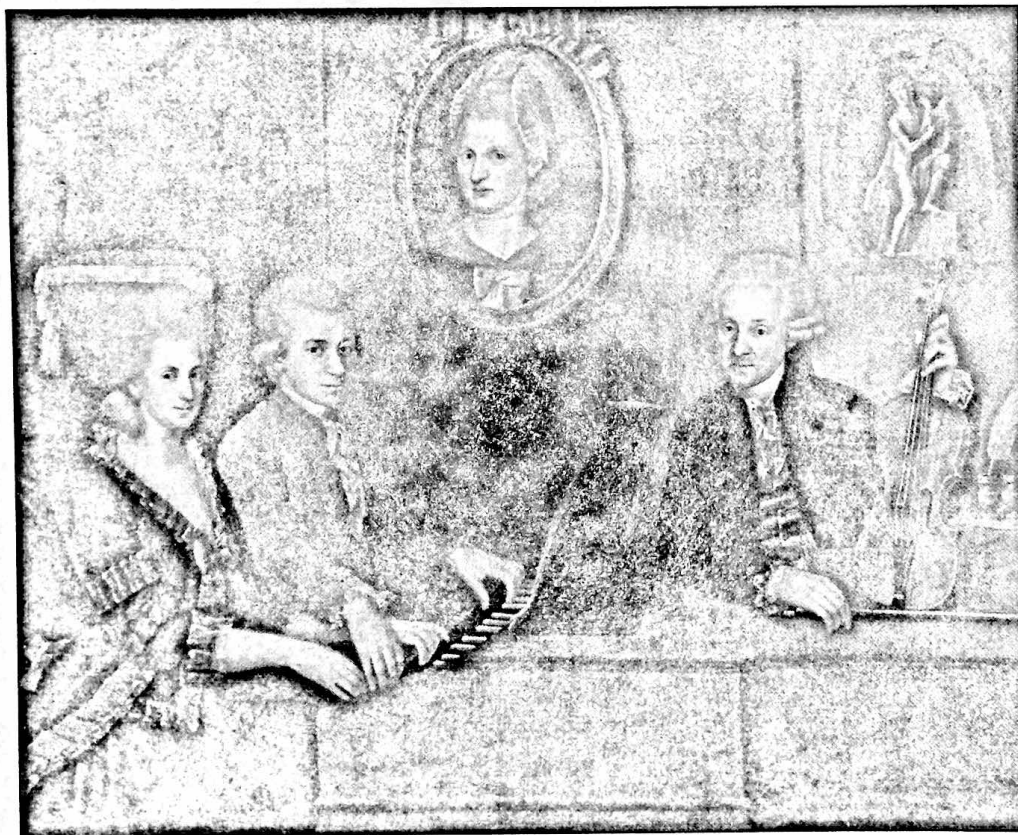
- 30 string quartets
- 2 string quintets
- 1 clarinet quintet
- 6 piano trios
- 47 violin sonatas

Keyboard music

- 40 piano sonatas, 4 lost
- 2 piano quartets
- Piano quintet with winds

Works to remember:

- Haydn quartets
- *Fantasia* in C minor, K. 475
- *Rondo* in A minor, K. 511



The Mozart family playing chamber music.

Mozart and his sister are at the piano, and his father is shown with his violin. Mozart's mother, who died two years before this picture was painted, is shown in the portrait on the wall.