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# A Chronology of Mozart and His Times

*Hans-Wilhelm Kelling*

**1756** Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is born on January 17 in a flat located at what is now Getreidegasse 9 in Salzburg, Austria.

Leopold Mozart, the father of Wolfgang, publishes his *Violin Method*.

This year sees the commencement of the Seven Year War. When it ends in 1763, Prussia has defeated Austria, France, and Russia and has become the strongest military power in Europe.

**1757** Domenico Scarlatti, the well-known Baroque Italian composer, dies in Madrid.

**1759** Georg Friedrich Händel, composer of *Messiah*, dies in London on April 14. Mozart, who admired Händel's compositions, performs several of them at the age of eight for King George III of England in 1764.

Friedrich Schiller, Germany's foremost dramatist (*Don Carlos*, *Wallenstein*, *Maria Stuart*, *Wilhelm Tell*), who lectures and writes on history at the University of Jena (*History of the Revolt of the Netherlands*, *History of the Thirty Years' War*), is born. He publishes *On the*



*Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, a key philosophical text, in 1795.

Adam Smith publishes *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

- 1760** King George II of England dies, and his grandson, George III, assumes the throne. During George III's reign, the American Revolutionary War leads to the independence of the United States in 1783.

Oliver Goldsmith publishes *Citizen of the World*.

Laurence Sterne publishes parts of *Tristram Shandy*.

In London, the Botanical Gardens in Kew are opened.

Josiah Wedgwood founds his pottery works in Staffordshire, England.

- 1761** Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809), the “father of the symphony” who composes over 100 symphonies and 83 string quartets in his lifetime, is appointed Kapellmeister to Prince Esterhazy in Eisenstadt near Vienna. About 1790 he moves to Vienna. Mozart acknowledges Haydn's formative influence. Haydn calls Mozart the greatest composer known to him.

- 1762** In January, Leopold Mozart takes his son and daughter (Nannerl, 1751–1829) to perform before the Bavarian Elector in Munich.

In October, the children perform at the Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna before Empress Maria Theresa (1717–1780). Six-year-old Wolfgang jumps on her lap and kisses her. She receives Mozart several more times but does not promote his career.

The Sorbonne Library opens in Paris.

Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* is published.

Christoph Willibald Gluck's opera *Orfeo and Euridice* premieres.

- 1763** The Mozart family travels and performs in Frankfurt, Munich, Brussels, Paris, and London.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), Germany's foremost author and thinker, attends a concert given by the children in Frankfurt. Toward the end of his life he still remembers the little Mozart “with his wig and sword.” Goethe admires Mozart, and under Goethe's direction 280 performances of Mozart's operas are performed in Weimar. Mozart's most famous song, *Das Veilchen*, is based on Goethe's text.

The Seven Year War ends in Europe, and France relinquishes its colonial claims in North America to Great Britain, which now claims Canada and all territory east of the Mississippi.



**Approximation of Europe during the 1780s.** The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation was a conglomeration of kingdoms and principalities (which at times changed) in central Europe that existed from medieval times until 1806. For hundreds of years, it was ruled by the elected Hapsburg emperors in Vienna and functioned as a kind of confederation. The powerful archbishops of Salzburg were also princes in the Empire.

*Treatise on Tolerance*, by Voltaire (1694–1778), a key figure in Enlightenment thinking, is published.

- 1764** In April the Mozart children perform for King George III; their performance includes compositions by Händel. During these early journeys, Mozart meets many composers, musicians, and singers at the various courts and attends concerts, operas, and performances of religious music. For example, in 1764 Mozart meets Johann Christian Bach (1735–1782), son of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Cesare Beccaria publishes *On Crimes and Punishments*.

J. J. Winckelmann publishes *History of Ancient Art*.

Brown University is founded in the American colonies.



Salzburg, birthplace of Mozart, shown from the Kapuzinerberg, Austro-Hungarian Empire, photograph ca. 1890–1900. Salzburg has always been the gateway to the Alps. In the venerable city center, on the right, are the magnificent Baroque cathedral (one of the largest north of the Alps), the Palace of the Prince Archbishop, and the University of Salzburg.

- 1765 The Mozart family leaves London for the Netherlands, where the children become seriously ill.

Joseph II (1741–1790), son of Maria Theresa, is crowned Holy Roman Emperor and becomes co-regent with his mother. He appoints Mozart Court Composer in 1787.

- 1766 Jean-Honoré Fragonard paints *The Swing*.

Adam Ferguson publishes *Essay on the History of Civil Society*.

- 1767 Christoph Willibald Gluck's opera *Alceste* premieres.

- 1769 Mozart travels to Italy, where he is celebrated everywhere. On October 27, he is appointed Konzertmeister at the Salzburg court on an honorary basis.

Napoleon is born on August 15 in Corsica. He crowns himself Emperor of France and defeats Austria in 1806. He is defeated at Waterloo in 1815 and dies in exile in 1821.

William Robertson's *History of Charles V* is published; *History of America* will be published in 1771.

- 1770 Pope Clement XIV confers on Mozart the Order of the Golden Spur. Mozart directs his opera *Mitridate, Re di Ponto* in Milan on December 26. It is a great success and is repeated twenty times.  
Ludwig van Beethoven is born in Bonn; he dies in Vienna in 1827.
- 1771 The first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is published.  
Benjamin West paints *The Death of Wolfe*.  
Jean-Antoine Houdon sculpts *Diderot*; in 1785 he will create a sculpture of George Washington.  
On July 12, Joseph Smith Sr. is born in Topsfield, Massachusetts.
- 1772 Mozart is formally appointed Konzertmeister in Salzburg at an annual salary of 150 gulden.  
Johann Gottfried von Herder publishes *On the Origin of Speech*; in 1791 he publishes his influential *Ideas on the Philosophy of History of Humanity*. He publishes his *Volksliedsammlung*, a collection of folk songs; many of these are set to music by German Romantic composers.



Bridge over the Salzach River, Salzburg, Austro-Hungarian Empire, photograph ca. 1890–1900.

- 1773 Mozart composes the Salzburg Symphonies.  
The Boston Tea Party leads to controversy between Great Britain and the American colonies.
- 1774 *Die Leiden des Jungen Werther*, Goethe's first novel, causes a sensation in Europe. During this time he is also working on *Faust*. As Director of the Court Theater in Weimar from 1791 to 1817, he will have *The Magic Flute* performed eighty-nine times. In 1795 he will begin to work on a *Magic Flute* sequel, which he will never complete.  
The First Continental Congress convenes on September 26 with representatives from twelve of the thirteen American colonies.
- 1775 Mozart completes five violin concertos, which are still regularly performed today.  
The American War of Independence begins at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts.  
Lucy Mack, Joseph Smith's mother, is born on July 8, 1775, in Gilsun, New Hampshire. She marries Joseph Smith Sr. on January 24, 1796.
- 1776 In July, Mozart's *Haffner Serenade* is performed in Salzburg. Mozart also composes several piano concertos.  
On July 4, representatives of the Second Continental Congress approve the Declaration of Independence, primarily authored by Thomas Jefferson.  
David Hume (born 1711), known for ideas of philosophical empiricism, skepticism, and natural religion, dies in Edinburgh, Scotland.
- 1777 Mozart completes the significant Piano Concerto in E-flat Major.



University Library of Cambridge

Mozart monument, Vienna, Austro-Hungarian Empire. This monument is today found in the center of Vienna, in the gardens of the Hofburg (Imperial Palace). Mozart is here portrayed at the height of his power, as a secular saint who stands sovereign over the musical instruments laid at his feet.

- 1778 In March, Mozart and his mother travel to Paris, where the composer unsuccessfully seeks employment. He composes his Symphony in D Major.

On July 3, Maria Anna Walburga, née Pertl, Mozart's mother, passes away. She was born in 1720.

- 1779 Mozart is appointed Cathedral Organist in Salzburg at an annual salary of 450 gulden.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), the famous German author of the Enlightenment, publishes his drama *Nathan der Weise*, a model for religious tolerance.

- 1780 In Salzburg, Mozart meets Emanuel Schikaneder (1751–1812), who later provides the libretto for *The Magic Flute*.

Empress Maria Theresa dies, and her son Joseph II becomes sole ruler of the Hapsburg possessions. He carries out major social reforms, among them the emancipation of the serfs, the abolition of feudalism, and the promotion of religious toleration.

Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813) publishes the epic poem *Oberon*.

- 1781 In January, Mozart's opera *Idomeneo* is first performed in Munich. This year is a major turning point in Mozart's life. He is outraged by the Archbishop of Salzburg's treatment of him, desires to become independent, and moves to Vienna.

Mozart enjoys composing and giving concerts in Vienna. In July the very successful premiere of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*) takes place, and the opera is repeated several times.

On August 4, Wolfgang marries Constanze Weber (1762–1842). It is a happy marriage, and Constanze bears six children, only two of whom live to adulthood.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) publishes his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, proclaiming the limitations of rational knowledge.



Courtesy: Tapani Tahvanainen

*Kant*, by Hagen Haltern. The German Enlightenment is often associated with Immanuel Kant's famous philosophical treatises. But another one of its achievements, through Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Mozart, and others, was an aesthetic synthesis of European Enlightenment principles, such as is found in *The Magic Flute*.





The grand staircase of the Vienna State Opera House, where Mozart's works are regularly performed today. Photograph ca. 1890–1900.

In Vienna, the Holy Roman Emperor of the Germanic Nation, Joseph II, grants a patent for religious toleration throughout the Hapsburg lands.

- 1783 Mozart's son Raimund Leopold is born in June but dies on August 19. In Linz, Mozart composes the Linz Symphony.  
Moses Mendelssohn publishes *Jerusalem*, a plea for religious toleration.  
France, England, and the United States of America sign a peace treaty ending the American Revolutionary War.
- 1784 Mozart's son Carl Thomas is born. As an adult, Carl Thomas moves to Milan and dies there in 1858.  
On December 14, Mozart is admitted as Apprentice into the Masonic Order. On January 7, 1785, he passes as Fellow Craft Mason and later is raised to Master Mason.  
Mozart becomes acquainted with Ignaz von Born, a well-known Master Mason and Imperial Counselor of Mints and Mines in Vienna. Von Born's article *Ueber die Mysterien der Aegyptier*, which was published in the Masonic periodical *Journal für Freymaurer*, is believed to be the inspiration for important aspects of *The Magic Flute*. Ignaz von Born is thought to be the model for the wise Sarastro.  
John Wesley creates the charter of Wesleyan Methodism.
- 1785 In April, Mozart's cantata *Die Maurerfreude* is performed in honor of Ignaz von Born, and in November the *Maurerische Trauermusik* is played in honor of the Masonic Order.  
Jacques Louis David paints *Oath of the Horatii*.
- 1786 On May 1, *Le Nozze di Figaro (The Marriage of Figaro)* is performed in Vienna.  
Mozart's son Thomas Leopold is born but dies in infancy.  
Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, dies on August 17.  
Joshua Reynolds paints *The Duchess of Devonshire*.
- 1787 Mozart is celebrated in Prague, where he watches performances of his *Figaro*. Mozart writes his Prague Symphony.  
Mozart composes *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*.  
On May 28, Mozart's father dies in Salzburg.  
Mozart is appointed Chamber Musician at a salary of 800 gulden annually.

On December 27, Mozart's daughter Theresia Constanzia is born. She dies six months later.

Beethoven comes to Vienna for the first time.

Wilhelm Tischbein paints *Goethe in the Roman Campagna*.

In the United States, the Constitutional Convention convenes.

**1788** The premiere of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is held on May 7 in Vienna.

During the summer, Mozart completes his last three symphonies.

Mozart's financial problems increase.

**1789** Mozart travels to Berlin and plays before the King of Prussia at the royal palace.

On November 16, Mozart's daughter Anna Maria is born but dies the same day.

With the storming of the Bastille on July 14, the French Revolution begins, ending the French monarchy and establishing a republic. Marie Antoinette (1755–1793, daughter of Austrian Empress Maria Theresa) and her husband, Louis XVI, King of France, are guillotined in 1793.

George Washington is inaugurated as the first president of the United States.

William Blake publishes *Songs of Innocence*.

**1790** Mozart's *Così fan tutte* premieres in Vienna.

Mozart attends a farewell concert for Joseph Haydn, who departs for London.

Benjamin Franklin (born 1706), perhaps the most popular American in prominent European circles of his time, dies on April 17 in Philadelphia. Franklin was also the inventor of the "glass armonica," a musical instrument popular for a time in Europe and for which Mozart composed music including his "Adagio and Rondo," composed in May 1791.

**1791** Mozart's final concert appearance occurs on March 4.

On July 26, Mozart's last son, Franz Xaver Wolfgang, is born.

Mozart receives the commission for the *Requiem* from a supposedly unnamed person who is believed, however, to have been Count Walsegg-Stuppach.

On September 30, the premiere performance of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* takes place in Vienna.



Distinguished Masons of the Revolution. George Washington and other prominent men of the American Revolution were Freemasons, as were prominent Europeans of the Enlightenment, such as Mozart, Goethe, and Lessing.

In late November, Mozart falls seriously ill. From his sickbed, together with friends, he rehearses parts of the *Requiem* and instructs the composer Franz Süssmayr to finish the work.

On December 5, Mozart dies at the age of 35. His wife, Constanze, who survives her husband by 51 years, receives a modest pension from the Austrian emperor and makes do by selling many of Mozart's manuscripts.

On December 15, the Bill of Rights becomes part of the United States Constitution.

C. G. Langhaus completes work on the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.

**1802** Brigham Young is born on June 1 in Whitingham, Vermont.

**1803** Robert Livingstone and James Monroe sign the Louisiana Purchase in Paris on April 30. Napoleon sells this tract of land—larger in area than England, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and Italy combined—for \$15 million to help fund his military campaigns.

**1805** Friedrich Schiller dies in Weimar.

Joseph Smith is born in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23.

**1809** Constanze remarries; she moves to Copenhagen and later to Salzburg.

**1842** Constanze dies. On September 4, 1842, six months after her death, a statue of Mozart is unveiled in Salzburg. Mozart's two surviving sons, Carl Thomas and Franz Xaver Wolfgang, are present. Mozart's Mass in C Major and his *Requiem* are performed in the Salzburg Cathedral.

On April 21 in Vienna, another statue of Mozart is unveiled. It now stands in the center of the city. The *Köchel Verzeichnis* of Mozart's works lists 626 compositions: 22 operas and dramatic works, 56 pieces of church music, 36 songs, 53 symphonies and instrumental works, 60 concertos, and numerous sonatas, choral and orchestral works, and many other compositions.



This statue stands in Mozartplatz, Salzburg, in honor of the city's most famous native.

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