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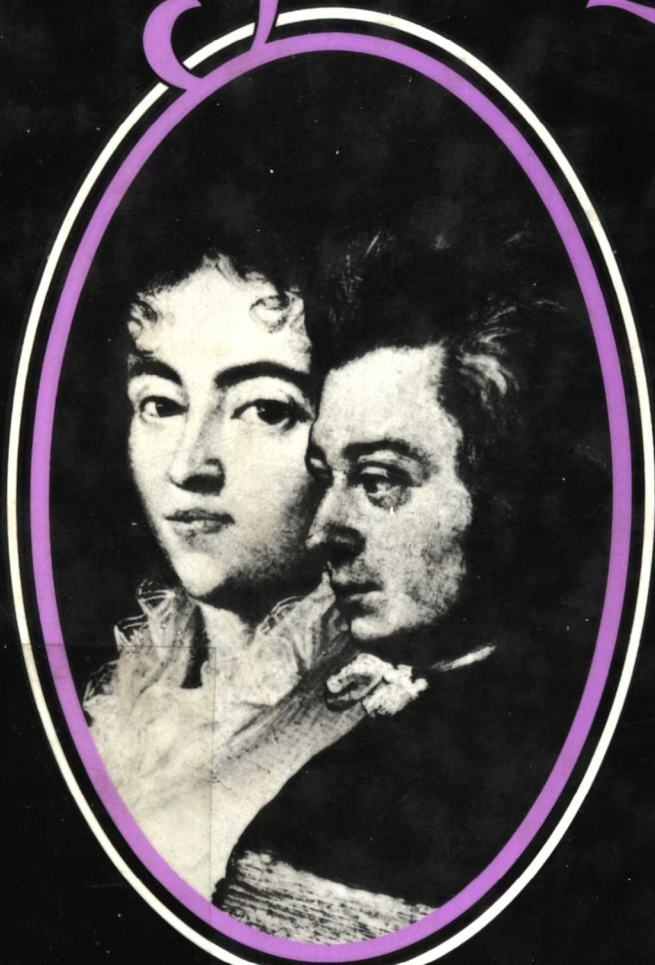
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Francis Carr

MOZART & CONSTANZE



W. A.)

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Francis Carr

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Introduction

THE WIFE of a genius is often misjudged. Mozart's wife, Constanze, is no exception. But while some of her failings have been noted, there has been little examination of her true feelings while he was alive, at the time of his death and during her long widowhood.

Little is known of her before their marriage. In contrast, Mozart had been a celebrated pianist and composer for twenty years, having played in the capitals of Europe since the age of six. Constanze was marrying a famous man, whose life can be documented in detail. He was blessed from the start with a splendid string of names: Johann Chrysostom Wolfgang Theophilus Mozart.* No other composer before or since has been charged with such intense drive, with such early and seemingly effortless mastery. Even Beethoven must have envied Mozart's sublime skill in internal composition. Mozart's rapidly written scores are masterpieces of neatness and clarity while those of Beethoven are often pock-marked with alterations, deletions and repeated revisions of particular passages. Proof of the speed of Mozart's composition lies in his immense output in the last fifteen years of his life.

Born in the beautiful town of Salzburg on January 27th 1756, his life, from the start, was based upon a Court, that of the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg, a state enjoying its last decades of independence. Leopold Mozart, Wolfgang's father, was the Court violin-master, the author of a treatise on violin-playing, which soon became a standard work on the subject in the German-speaking world, and a composer. His mother, Anna

* Instead of Theophilus, his father translated the word into the German Gottlieb and in Latin, Amadeus, the name by which he came to be known.

Maria Pertl, was the daughter of another Court official. When he was only three, Mozart would sit beside his talented elder sister, Maria Anna, and watch her playing the clavier. A minuet and trio 'were learned by Wolfgangerl,' his father tells us, 'in half an hour, at half-past nine at night, on January 26th 1761, one day before his fifth birthday.'

In the following year, Leopold determined to travel with his two talented children, taking them first to Munich then to Vienna. News of their success in Munich and Linz preceded them to Vienna and as soon as the Empress Maria Theresa knew of their arrival in the capital, 'the command came for us to go to court'. At the Imperial summer palace of Schönbrunn, just outside the town, 'Their Majesties [the Empress and her husband Francis I] received us with extraordinary graciousness. Wolferl jumped up on the Empress's lap, put his arms round her neck and kissed her heartily. We were there from three to six o'clock.' Maria Theresa's daughter, Marie-Antoinette the future Queen of France, was there, aged seven. Mozart was greatly taken with her; when he tumbled on the polished floor, Marie-Antoinette picked him up. Mozart thanked her and said, 'You are good. I will marry you.'

Such was the success of this tour that Leopold was encouraged to embark on a more extended progress – to Mannheim, Frankfurt, Brussels, Paris and London. In Brussels, at the age of seven and a half, Wolfgang composed his first sonata. This, together with three more sonatas, was published in Paris when the Mozart family arrived in the capital. King Louis XV and his queen now received Wolfgang, his parents and his sister at Versailles. A special reception or *grand couvert* was held there on New Year's Eve and Madame de Pompadour was present.

In a long letter to a friend in Salzburg (dated February 1st 1764), Leopold Mozart described this great occasion:

It is not the custom here to kiss the hand of royal persons, or to disturb them with a petition, or even to speak to them *au passage* ... Hence you can well imagine how impressed and amazed these French people must have been when the King's

daughters in the public gallery stopped when they saw my children, came up to them and not only allowed them to kiss their hands, but kissed them innumerable times. And the same thing happened with Madame la Dauphine [Maria Josepha, the mother of Louis XVI]. At the banquet on the evening of New Year's Day, not only was it necessary to make room for us all to go up to the royal table, but my Wolfgang was graciously privileged to stand beside the Queen the whole time, to talk constantly to her, entertain her and kiss her hands, besides partaking of the dishes which she handed him from the table.

You must know that the King never dines in public, except on Sunday evenings when the whole Royal Family dine together. But not everyone is allowed to be present. When there is a great festival, such as New Year's Day or Easter, the *grand couvert* is held, to which all persons of distinction are admitted. There is not, however, very much room and consequently the hall soon gets filled up. We arrived late. So the Swiss Guards had to make way for us and we were led through the hall into the room close to the royal table, through which the royal family enter. As the King and Queen passed us, they spoke to our Wolfgang, and we then followed them to the table.

The Queen [Maria Leczinska, daughter of the exiled King of Poland] speaks as good German as we do, and, as the King knows none, she interpreted to him everything that our gallant Wolfgang said. I stood beside him, and on the other side of the King stood my wife and daughter.

After five months in Paris they moved to London where Leopold and his children were initially even more successful. They stayed there for more than a year, from April 1764 to September the following year. Five days after their arrival, they were received at Court. Leopold has provided a lively picture of their welcome at Buckingham House (May 28th 1764).

The graciousness with which both his Majesty the King [George III] and Her Majesty the Queen received us cannot be described. In short, their easy manner and friendly ways made us forget that they were the King and Queen of England. At all courts up to the present we have been received with

extraordinary courtesy. But the welcome which we have been given here exceeds all others. A week later we were walking in St James's Park. The King came along driving with the Queen and, although we all had on different clothes, they recognised us nevertheless and not only greeted us, but the King opened the window, leaned out and saluted us and especially our Master Wolfgang, nodding and waving his hand.

On May 19 we were again with the King and Queen, from six until ten in the evening, when the only other people present were the two princes, who are the King's brothers, and another, the brother of the Queen. The King placed before Wolfgang the works of J. C. Bach, Abel and Handel. He played so splendidly on the King's organ that they all value his organ-playing more highly than his clavier-playing. Then he accompanied the Queen in an aria which she sang, and also a flautist who played a solo. Finally he took the bass part of some airs of Handel (which happened to be lying there) and played the most beautiful melody on it and in such a manner that everybody was amazed. In short, what he knew when we left Salzburg is a mere shadow compared with what he knows now. It exceeds all that one can imagine.

In the *Public Advertiser*, on June 5th 1764, there appeared this announcement:

At the Great Room in Spring Garden, near St. James's Park, this day, at 12 o'clock, will be performed a Grand Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music, for the benefit of Miss Mozart of eleven, and Master Mozart of eight years of age, Prodigies of Nature. Tickets, at half a guinea, to be had of Mr. Mozart, at Mr. Couzin's, Hair Cutter, in Cecil Court, St. Martin's Lane.

The Mozart family were staying at the address given. In August Leopold suffered a severe inflammation of the throat, and he was advised to move outside London to Chelsea, then a village, where, as he wrote, he 'could get some appetite and fresh strength from the good air. It has one of the most beautiful views in the world. Wherever I turn my eyes, I only see gardens and in the distance fine castles. The house in which

I live has a lovely garden.' This house still stands, no. 180/182 Ebury Street. Here the Mozarts stayed for seven weeks. Wolfgang was asked not to play the piano when they arrived, so as not to disturb his father. So he quietly composed. He wrote forty-three short pieces for the piano in a little music book his father had given him and these clearly show his genius emerging. For a long time nothing was known of this note book; in 1898 it was discovered in a private collection of manuscripts and presented to the Royal Library in Berlin. In addition to these compositions, he wrote, while in England, six sonatas for violin, one aria, a short choral composition, a piano duet and his first symphony, for strings, two oboes and four horns.

Wolfgang and his sister performed on many occasions at Ranelagh and Vauxhall, at the Swan and Hoop in Cornhill and at private houses. When the family returned to London in September 1765, they lived in Soho, at 21 Frith Street. In November Mozart was given 50 guineas by Queen Charlotte.

While Wolfgang was in London, he met Johann Christian Bach who, before coming to England had been organist of Milan Cathedral. He was the eighteenth child and eleventh son of Johann Sebastian and for the last twenty-five years of his life lived in London, as a composer, opera and concert director and music master of George III's family. He was known here and on the continent as 'the English Bach'. At one recital Bach and Mozart alternated as soloists in the same sonata so perfectly that no break in excellence could be detected. Mozart learnt much from Johann Christian; this friendship gave the young maestro his first contact with the elegance and refinement of the Italian style, an important element in J. C. Bach's compositions.

Three of Mozart's most important journeys were to Italy, between 1770 and 1773. Here he could absorb the music of Boccherini, Cimarosa, Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Vivaldi and Pergolese. In Rome Pope Clement XIV conferred on Wolfgang the gold cross of the Order of the Golden Spur; the fourteen-year-old composer was now Sir Wolfgang, Signor Cavaliere Mozart. Writing to his wife, Leopold Mozart

pointed out that 'it is the same order as Gluck's'. In the capital Wolfgang copied from memory Gregorio Allegri's *Miserere*, a beautiful work performed only during Holy Week, and seldom copied officially.

As in Paris and London, Wolfgang was welcomed by the highest in the land.

On 12th April [wrote his father], we were present at the ceremony of the *Functiones*. We were standing beside the Pope at the top of the table. This was all the more amazing as we had to pass through two doors guarded by Swiss guards in armour, and make our way through hundreds of people. They took Wolfgang for some German courtier, while some even thought he was a prince. Thus we made our way to the Cardinals' table.

In Italy Mozart met Charles Edward, the young Pretender, who lived in Rome as Count of Albany, Sir William Hamilton, who had been Ambassador to the Court of Naples since 1764, his wife, the first Lady Hamilton, who, Mozart wrote, 'plays the clavier with unusual feeling', and Thomas Linley, who, at the same age as Wolfgang, had already become well-known in Italy as a violinist. Dr Burney, the musicologist, wrote that he was greatly admired in Florence, where he had been studying for two years. 'The *Tommasino*, as he is called, and the little Mozart are talked of all over Italy as the most promising geniuses of this age.' When he returned to England Linley became leader and soloist at his father's concerts in Bath, and composed sacred music. He was drowned at the age of twenty-two.

Mozart continued to compose with amazing rapidity and skill. Two comic operas, *La Finta Semplice* (*The Sham Simpleton*) and *Bastien und Bastienne*, were written at the age of twelve, and were followed by his first masses, an inspired stream of serenades, divertimenti and sonatas. At the age of eighteen, his opera, *La Finta Giardiniera* (*The Sham Gardener*) was an instant success. From Munich, where it was given its first performance, Mozart wrote:

Thank God! My opera was performed yesterday [January 13th 1775] and was such a success that it is impossible for me to describe the applause.

In the first place, the whole theatre was so packed that a great many people were turned away. Then after each aria there was a terrific noise, clapping of hands and cries of 'Viva Maestro'. Her Highness the Electress and the Dowager Electress (who were sitting opposite me) also called out 'Bravo'. Afterwards I went off with Papa to the room through which the Elector and the whole court had to pass and I kissed the hands of the Elector and Electress and Their Highnesses, who were all very gracious. Early this morning His Grace the Bishop of Chiemsee [Count Ferdinand von Zeill] sent me a message, congratulating me on the extraordinary success of my opera.

Mozart's letters give us an excellent insight into his humorous and playful character. There are surprises of one kind or another in every letter. From Bologna, when he was fourteen, he ended a letter to his sister with these words:

Addio! Farewell. My sole amusement at the moment consists in dancing English steps and in pirouetting and cutting capers. Italy is a sleepy country! I am always drowsy! Addio! Farewell. [August 4th 1770]

In another letter to his sister the following year, written when he was in Milan, he described his apartment:

Upstairs we have a violinist, downstairs another one; in the next room a singing-master who gives lessons, and in the other room opposite ours an oboist. That is good fun when you are composing! It gives you plenty of ideas. [August 24th 1771]

Mozart wrote a brief note to his sister from Vienna, when he was seventeen, which amusingly expresses his cosmopolitan mind.

Hodie nous avons begegnet per strada Dominum Edelbach, welcher uns di voi compliments ausgerichtet hat, et qui sich tibi et ta mère empfehlen lässt. Addio. [August 12th 1773]

[Today in the street we met Mister Edelbach, who was given by us your compliments, and who sends you and your mother his best wishes.]

After writing a long letter to his father dated October 3rd 1777, when he and his mother were in Munich, he brought it to a close with this masterly re-ordering of syntax, graphically conveying fatigue and contentment.

I wish you a very restful night, and I improve on this good wish by hearing to hope soon that Papa is well quite. I forgiveness your crave for my disgraceful handwriting, but ink, haste, sleep, dreams and all the rest . . . I Papa your, my hands kiss, a thousand times dearest, and my embrace, the heart, sister I with all my brute of a, and remain, now and for ever, amen,

Wolfgang, most obedient your
Amadé Mozart son

Mozart and his mother spent four months in Mannheim when he was twenty-one. He would have travelled with his father, but Archbishop Colloredo wanted Leopold to stay in Salzburg; on August 28th 1777, the Archbishop declared that 'father and son have my permission to seek their fortune elsewhere'; but a month later Leopold was informed that 'His Grace retains the petitioner in his employment and graciously commands him to endeavour to render good service both to the Church and to His Grace's person.*' Leopold described this note as a 'rigmarole of nonsense', but acquiesced. Mannheim had for many years been an important musical capital in Europe, thanks to its excellent orchestra and the encouragement of its ruler, Prince Karl Theodor.

For a fortnight Wolfgang and his mother Anna Maria stayed in Augsburg. Here he met his cousin, Maria Anna Thekla (Victoria), who made a great impression on him. He found her 'beautiful, intelligent, charming, clever and gay. We get on extremely well, for, like myself, she is a bit of a scamp. We

* *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, arranged and translated by Emily Anderson. (Macmillan, 1938) Vol. 1, pp. 389, 408.

both laugh at everyone and have great fun.' They were fond of exchanging jokes, puns and general verbal tomfoolery and some of his most amusing letters were later written to her.

One of these letters, written from Mannheim on November 13th 1777, begins exultantly,

Ma très chère niece! cousine! fille! mère, soeur, et épouse!

Bless my soul, a thousand curses, Croations, damnations, devils, witches, sorcerers, hell's battalions to all eternity, by all the elements, air, water, earth, and fire, Europe, Asia, Africa and America, Jesuits, Augustinians, Benedictines, Capuchins, Minorites, Franciscans, Dominicans, Carthusians and Brothers of the Holy Cross, Canons regular and irregular, all slackers, knaves, cowards, sluggards and toadies higgledy-piggledy, asses, buffaloes, oxen, fools, nit-wits and dunces! Such a parcel to get, but no portrait! . . . Do go on loving me, as I love you . . .

Je vous baise vos mains, votre visage, vos genoux, et votre —, enfin, tout ce que vous me permettez de baiser.

In another long letter (February 28th 1778), Mozart asked his cousin whether she was well.

Now I have the honour to enquire how you are and whether you perspire? Whether your stomach is still in good order? Whether indeed you have no disorder? Whether you still can like me at all? Whether with chalk you often scrawl? Whether now and then you have me in mind? Whether to hang yourself you sometimes feel inclined? Whether you have been wild? With this poor foolish child? Whether to make peace with me you'll be so kind? Ah, you're laughing! Victoria! Our arses shall be the symbol of our peacemaking! Why, of course, I'm sure of success, even if to-day I should make a mess, though to Paris I go in a fortnight or less.

Treating the language as freely as a composer handles a melody, a sequence of notes which can easily be played in reverse order, Mozart concluded another letter, dated November 5th 1777, to his sister in this manner:

Well, farewell. I kiss you 1000 times and remain, as always,
your little old piggy wiggy

Wolfgang Amadé Rosy Posy

A thousand compliments from us two travellers to my aunt
and uncle. My greetings bleatings to all my good friends sends.
Addio, booby looby.

333 to the grave, if my life I save
Miehnnam, Rebotco cht 5,7771.

Mozart's attempts to secure employment at the Court of Prince Karl Theodor met with no definite response, although his compositions and he himself were valued highly by the aristocracy and the other friends he made in Mannheim. 'You cannot imagine in what high favour Wolfgang is here,' wrote his mother to Leopold, 'both with the orchestra and with other people. They all say that there is no one to touch him. They absolutely idolise his compositions.'

It was not only orchestral music that was beautifully played by the Prince's musicians. The first operas in German were here being planned and performed. In 1777 *Gunther von Schwarzburg* was produced in Mannheim; the composer was Ignaz Holzbauer, the *Kapellmeister*. The stage was set in the German-speaking world for a national opera. This could be the opportunity for Mozart to establish himself as the court composer.

I

The Abduction

1778–81

I'm an English woman, born to liberty. I will defy anyone who tries to force me to do anything! Such an ugly old creature should not dare to give orders to a girl like me, young, beautiful and free, as if I were a kitchen maid. I am the mistress here!

Blonde to Osmin, in BELMONTE UND CONSTANZE or THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO. 1781/82

You know that I am an out-and-out Englishman.

Mozart to his father, October 19th 1782

Archbishop Colloredo particularly came into Mozart's thoughts when the singer of Osmin was chosen . . . In Osmin revenge is palpably taken . . . Mozart is more likely to have identified himself with his heroine (in her attitude of defiance) than thought of his fiancée.

Michael Levey, THE LIFE AND DEATH OF MOZART (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971)

I

IN JANUARY 1778 Leopold Mozart received a letter from his son, Wolfgang, now just twenty-two, giving him news of a visit to Caroline, Princess of Orange, at Kirchheim, in southern Germany, and also of his introduction to Aloysia Weber, a pretty girl of seventeen with a beautiful voice.

Mannheim. January 17th 1778

Next Wednesday I am going for a few days to Kirchheim-Bolanden to visit the Princess of Orange. People here have said such nice things to me about her that I have at last decided to go. A Dutch officer, a good friend of mine, got a terrible scolding from her for not bringing me with him when he went to offer her his New Year wishes. I shall get eight louis d'or at least, for, as she is passionately fond of singing, I have had four arias copied for her. As she has a nice little orchestra and gives a concert every day, I shall also present her with a symphony.

The copying of the arias will not cost me much, for it has been done by a certain Herr Weber, who is accompanying me there. He has a daughter who sings admirably and has a lovely, pure voice; she is only fifteen [seventeen in fact]. She lacks dramatic action; were it not for that, she might be the prima donna on any stage. Her father is a thoroughly honest German, who is bringing up his children well, and for that very reason the girl is persecuted with attentions here. He has six children, five girls* and one son. He and his wife and children have been obliged to live for fourteen years on an income of 200 gulden and, because he has always attended carefully to his duties and has provided the Elector with a very talented singer, he now gets in all – 400 gulden. She sings most excellently my aria

* Only four daughters have been identified.

written for De Amicis [in *Lucio Silla*], with those horribly difficult passages, and she is to sing it at Kirchheim-Bolanden.

The first part of this letter, about the Princess, was the kind of information that Leopold wanted to hear; he told his son that 'you must now endeavour to make greater strides, to win for yourself, glory, honour and a great name.' The second part, about the Webers, was another matter. The sooner he left them the better. Leopold urged him to go back to Paris, one of the musical capitals of the world and where he would be fêted and would make money. But even there would be dangers, he told his son – dangers that Leopold must have thought about when he read of Wolfgang's admiration and love for the attractive Aloysia. Without delay he put pen to paper and wrote to his son:

Count Kühnburg, Chief Equerry, who, as is well known, lays no claim to saintliness, talked to me a few days ago and expressed extreme anxiety about Paris, which he knows thoroughly. He said that you should be on your guard against its dangers and that you should refrain from all familiarity with young Frenchmen, and even more so with the women, who are always on the look-out for strangers to keep them, who run after young people of talent in an astonishing way in order to get at their money, draw them into their net, or even to land them as husbands. God and your own good sense will preserve you. Any such calamity would be the death of me!

It is easy to understand Leopold's anxieties. Any father worries about his child's future and Wolfgang, he knew, was a genius. This had been obvious since the age of six when his mastery of the keyboard had delighted the courts of Europe. One rash liaison could well jeopardise his son's future.

But Wolfgang was delighted with his new friends, the Webers, and their four daughters, Josefa, Aloysia, Constanze and Sophie. This delight was expressed in a doggerel verse he wrote to his mother: