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Mozart

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Mozart

HIS CHARACTER HIS WORK

ALFRED EINSTEIN

TRANSLATED BY

Arthur Mendel and Nathan Broder



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MOZART


HIS CHARACTER, HIS WORK



FACSIMILE OF FRONTISPIECE TO *Mozarts Leben*

TO MY 'THREE LADIES'
HERTHA, EVA, BERTHA

Preface

ÖREN KIERKEGAARD wrote concerning Don Juan: 'What I can offer has a meaning only for those who have heard, and who keep on hearing. To such I may be able to give a suggestion here and there for renewed hearing.' The present volume is not an introduction to Mozart's life and music. It addresses itself to readers who already know and love at least some of his works.

Over a long period I have occupied myself with Mozart intensively, most recently in the work, lasting many years, on the Third Edition (1937) of Köchel's *Chronological-Thematic Catalogue*—the book that has given Mozart's works the numbers by which they are customarily identified. In the course of this work I had to investigate not only the externals of every Mozart manuscript and edition, but also the bearing and style of every work. It was inevitable that in doing this I should arrive at new results, and it is perhaps understandable that in the end I have felt impelled to present these results not only in the dry form of a catalogue, but also in a more connected and more personal one.

I have made no effort to retell in all its details the story of Mozart's life, for which new sources of information have flowed but sparsely in the last few decades. What I have sought to do is to draw as sharply defined a picture as I could of his character and of the personalities and events that exercised a decisive influence upon it. The works that are mentioned are not described, but characterized from the point of view of their time and—so far as possible—of our relation to them. This seems to me the only possible approach to the task of portraying a great musician.

From the large field of Mozart literature, I am deeply indebted to many works, both to those with which I agree and to those with which I do not. I should like to acknowledge a special debt to three fairly recent works. Most of all I owe to the four volumes of Théodore de Wyzewa and Georges de Saint-Foix, *Wolfgang Amédée Mozart* (Paris,

1912, 1936, 1939, Desclée de Brouwer & Cie)—the first two volumes being the product of both men, and the second two by Monsieur de Saint-Foix alone. May he, despite everything that has taken place, be able to publish the fifth and concluding volume! Then there is the penetrating monograph, *Mozart et ses concertos pour piano*, by C. M. Girdlestone (Paris, 1939, Librairie Fischbacher); and finally the masterful little popular book *Mozart* by Eric Blom, in the Master Musicians Series (London, 1935, J. M. Dent & Sons; New York, 1935, E. P. Dutton & Co.). My special thanks go to the publishers of Miss Emily Anderson's complete translation of the *Letters of Mozart and His Family* (London, 1938-9, Macmillan & Co.), for permission to quote it extensively. The only separately published article that has been taken over into this book is the one on Mozart's Choice of Keys, which originally appeared in the October 1941 issue of *The Musical Quarterly*, published by G. Schirmer, Inc., to whom I am indebted for their friendly permission to reprint it.

Where a question of fact was involved in the translation (as, for example, in the rendering of the word *clavier* usually by *piano*) I was consulted and the decisions are mine.

ALFRED EINSTEIN

Northampton, Massachusetts

1 July 1944

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I. THE MAN

1. *The Traveler*

 HERE is a strange kind of human being in whom there is an eternal struggle between body and soul, animal and god, for dominance. In all great men this mixture is striking, and in none more so than in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

As an artist, as a musician, Mozart was not a man of this world. To a certain part of the nineteenth century his work seemed to possess so pure, so formally rounded, so 'godlike' a perfection that Richard Wagner, the most violent spokesman of the Romantic Period, could call him 'music's genius of light and love'; and this without contradiction, for in such a view Wagner was in full agreement even with the opponents of his own art—with Robert Schumann, who called Mozart's G minor Symphony a work 'of Grecian lightness and grace' (*Griechisch schwebender Grazie*), or with Otto Jahn, Mozart's biographer, who partly unconsciously and partly intentionally overlooked all the darker dissonances in his life and work. We know that intention entered into Jahn's attitude because, unlike Wagner and Schumann, he knew most of Mozart's letters; and these letters reveal Mozart so completely 'a man of this world,' in all his warm, childlike, childish, human personality, that at least in Germany no one has ever dared to publish them without omissions, and either his widow or other well-meaning persons made certain passages, even in the letters of his last years, forever illegible.

Thanks to these letters—the liveliest, least dressed-up, most genuine letters ever written by a musician—we really know Mozart the man. There are several intervals in his short life, such as the Salzburg years 1775-6, or the time between his return from Paris and *Idomeneo*, or the year 1789 in Vienna, that are shrouded in darkness. But to make up for this we have more exact and intimate information about other days, months, and years of his life than about those of any other great musician of the eighteenth or even the nineteenth or twentieth century. Our information is so exact that sometimes the picture that emerges of

the man seems no longer to agree with our conception of the musician. In reality, however, there is a glorious unity. The young man who wrote the high-spirited letters to his sister and the obscene 'Bäse' letters, and who found pleasure in canons on texts completely unsuited to the drawing-room, was also the author of the G minor Symphony. In the *Musikalischer Spass* we find his love of horse-play expressed in music itself; but the horse-play has a background of deep theoretical knowledge, to which Mozart at one time wished to give literary form. And the unity of the man and the creative musician becomes clearest when we contemplate its two aspects in Mozart the uncannily sharp, pitiless, and incorruptible judge of human nature, and in Mozart the great dramatist. His music speaks of secrets of the heart that both the man and the artist well understood.

But to a certain extent it is true that Mozart was only a visitor upon this earth. Mozart as a man was nowhere truly at home: neither in Salzburg, where he was born, nor in Vienna, where he died. And between the periods of residence in Salzburg and Vienna he made journeys to all points of the compass, journeys that filled a considerable portion of his life. For Mozart never 'deliberated' over undertaking a journey, and if he returned to settled habitation in one place it was only on compulsion—or at least with reluctance.

'My heart is completely enchanted with all these pleasures, because it is so jolly on this journey, because it is so warm in the carriage, and because our coachman is a fine fellow, who when the road gives him the slightest chance, drives so fast,' he writes home on his first trip to Italy (Wörgl, 13 December 1769). How he envies Gyrowetz, who is off to Italy (1786). 'You lucky man! O, if I could only go with you, how happy I should be!' This is the year at the end of which he feels a strong urge to go to England again, and proposes that his old father should take charge of his two children—a proposal that the father 'very emphatically' rejects. He must have remembered that three years earlier Mozart's first child had died while in the care of a wet-nurse with whom he had been put out to board in Vienna while the parents were visiting in Salzburg. Leopold Mozart had ample grounds for suspecting that these two other children would probably have remained in his care longer than he desired. For what do children mean to Wolfgang Amadeus when traveling is in prospect? They are forgotten: it is his work that matters. And travel does not interrupt Mozart's creative activity; it rather stimulates it. When long journeys are out of the question, as for

example during the last ten years in Vienna, he is constantly changing his residence—never really a home—from one apartment to another, from the town out into the suburbs, and from the suburbs back again into town. Not even Beethoven changed his living quarters so often, and Beethoven usually moved for very substantial reasons. But Mozart is animated by an inner urge to gain stimulation from a new environment. He accepts the discomforts of moving: they merely take the place of the discomforts of the stagecoach.

Mozart began to travel early in life. On 12 January 1762, Leopold took the boy, not quite six years old, to the Electoral Court at Munich, and until 1773 Wolfgang was completely under the direction of his father. Because of this fact, and also because the personality of Mozart must be viewed not only in itself but as the fruit of the Mozart family tree, we must leave the main path of our discussion for a moment to discover something about the father.

Leopold Mozart is remembered by posterity as the father of his son. If he had not been connected with Wolfgang Amadeus, his name would be no more significant than that of any one of the hundred other honest musicians of the eighteenth century, pursuing their goals at the many little ecclesiastical and secular courts of South Germany; and his name would not even have been the first within his own narrow circle, since he never even became first Kapellmeister.

But he was the father of his son, and as the father of such a genius, he understood his mission. Without the influence of the father, reflected both in the son's submission and resistance to it, Wolfgang would never have achieved the character and the greatness that he did. Leopold stands in the circle illuminated by his son, and without that illumination he would have remained in obscurity. But the light of his son's genius and fame does reveal him: not always a completely attractive personality, often a very questionable one, but clearly outlined as a plastic and living figure. Although his talent does not lift him far above his many contemporaries, his ambition, his will, and his energy do. He was no mere *Musikant*. The literary evidence he left—the *School of Violin-Playing*—assures him in any case of a small place in every history of instrumental music. Even without Wolfgang's fame, Leopold would always have been known as the author of this *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule*, which he was writing at about the time of the birth of his son.

During the first year of Wolfgang's life, Leopold wrote a short auto-

biography for F. W. Marpurge's *Historisch-kritische Beyträge zur Aufnahme der Musik*, which contains a 'report on the present state of the music of His Princely Grace, the Archbishop of Salzburg, in the year 1757.' In it is a sketch of the life and works of the 38-year-old musician:

Mr. Leopold Mozart of the Imperial city of Augspurg. First violinist and leader of the orchestra. He composes both sacred and secular music. He was born 14 November 1719, and, soon after finishing his studies in philosophy and law, entered the Princely service in the year 1743. He has made himself known in all forms of composition, but has not yet printed any music, although in the year 1740 he himself engraved on copper 6 sonatas à 3—mostly in order to study the art of engraving. In June 1756, he published his *School of Violin-Playing*.

Of the manuscript works of Mr. Mozart which have become known, the ones principally to be noted are many contrapuntal and other sacred pieces; also a large number of symphonies, some only à 4, and some with all the usual instruments; further, more than 30 grand serenades, in which solos for various instruments occur. He has also written many concertos, especially for transverse flute, oboe, bassoon, horn, trumpet, etc., innumerable trios and divertimenti for various instruments; also 12 oratorios and a great number of theatrical pieces, including pantomimes; and especially occasional compositions such as: military music for trumpets, timpani, drums, and fifes in addition to the usual instruments; a Turkish music; a piece including a steel clavier [a kind of celesta]; and finally a sleigh-ride piece with 5 sleigh bells; not to speak of marches, so-called *Nachtstücke*, and many hundred minuets, opera dances, and similar pieces.

We may amplify this information somewhat. Leopold Mozart was the eldest of six sons of the Augsburg bookbinder Johann Georg Mozart, whose paternal ancestors can be traced back to the seventeenth and perhaps to the sixteenth century. The name, which has become a symbol of grace, sometimes took on rougher forms (e.g. Motzert) and rough doubtless were those who bore it—artisans and peasants. Leopold's mother, née Anna Maria Sulzer, the bookbinder's second wife, was also a native of Augsburg. She outlived her husband, who died at the age of fifty-seven on 19 February 1736, by more than thirty years. She seems to have been in comfortable circumstances, for at the time of the creation of the *School of Violin-Playing* Leopold was active in an effort not to receive less than his many brothers and sisters from the estate; each of them had already received an advance of 300 gulden.