



UNIVERSITY OF
THE THIRD AGE

Benalla & District Inc.



Programme Notes 22nd February, 2019



The artwork pictured is from the cover of the Brochure for the Mozart Week Festival at Salzburg in 2020. The Festival's Artistic Director, Rolando Villazón, has these words of introduction and welcome:

Welcome back – all aboard our ship!

Take a look at its bassoon and clarinet masts, its flute yardarm and its sails of scores, already filled by the wind. There are divertimenti in the air! Music is not only the wind surrounding us and driving us forward, it is also the treasure trove on the bed of the ocean.

Welcome to the 2020 Mozart Week. This year, we will explore the music which Mozart composed for wind and brass and, consequently, take a closer look at the friendships which gave life to these masterpieces.

So, all aboard, join us on our ship. Mozart is the Harlequin helmsman donning his chequered suit of light and shade, the reckless captain who explores deep, uncharted territories, and the courageous sailor propelling our ship out of the currents and into the purest, most joyful light. Listen closely, and you can already hear the sailors of the infinite and sublime announce the beating of their oars; the wind begins to blow and the irresistible melodies are waking in the deep.

All aboard! Here we go!

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Biographical Timeline

Years Age 1-12



Portrait of the child Mozart,
painted in 1763

1756 Born in Salzburg, Austria on Jan. 27
Full name Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Gottlieb Mozart;
Baptized as Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart.
Mozart is named after his grandfather on his mother's side and after the Saint on his date of birth, Johannes Chrysostomus.

Parents: *Leopold Mozart* - composer and violinist, concertmaster at the archiepiscopal court, and in 1763, vice-kapellmeister at Salzburg court; and *Anna Maria Pertl*, daughter of Wolfgang Nikolaus Pertl, an official from Sankt Gilje

Sibling: *Maria Anna* (Nannerl) Mozart.

1759 Age 3: started to play the keyboard

1761 Age 5: started composing minuets

1763-1766 Toured Europe with his father and sister played for Louis XV at Versailles and George III in London

1764 Wrote his first three symphonies; also met Johann Christian Bach.
By his teenage years, he mastered the piano, violin, and harpsichord.



The Mozart family on tour
ca 1763

Teenage Years

1768 Completed first opera, "*La finta semplice*" (The Simple Pretence)

1769-1773 Made three trips to Italy.



Portrait of Mozart wearing
the Order of the Golden Spur

In Rome, there was a myth that Mozart attended the performance of Allegri's *Misere*. He wanted the score but when no one agreed he wrote down the music from memory.

1770 *Mitridate, re di Ponte* (*Mithridates, King of Pontus*) performed in Milan was Mozart's first major opera.

1772 Appointed concertmaster in the orchestra of Archbishop of Salzburg. During this period, he wrote many sacred works.

Years Age 20 – 30

1777 Toured with his mother hoping to find a court position.

Travelled to Mannheim where he met and fell in and out of love with Aloysia Weber

1778 July. His mother Anna Maria Mozart died.

1779 Unable to find a court position, Mozart went back to Salzburg.

Appointed as court organist to the Archbishop of Salzburg

1781 Resigned from his position due to increasing tension and disagreements

between Mozart and the Archbishop. Mozart stayed in Vienna instead of returning to Salzburg.

Mozart's resignation and his move to Vienna put a strain in his relationship with his father.



Constanze Weber 1782

1782 Married Aloysia Weber's sister Constanze in Vienna's St. Stephen's Cathedral.

After Mozart's death, Constanze married Danish diplomat Georg Nikolaus von Nissen.

In Vienna, Mozart supported his family by performing in public and private, teaching, and composing.

His first opera written after his residency in Vienna, *Abduction from Seraglio*, became a success.

1786 *The Marriage of Figaro*, the first of three operas Mozart collaborated with librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte, premiered at the Burg Theatre.

Years Age 31 -35

1787 Became composer of Imperial and Royal Chamber with an annual salary of 800fl.

His father, Leopold, died on May 28, 1787.

Don Giovanni premiered in Prague at the National Theatre.

1790 *Così fan tutte* premiered at Burg Theatre.

Mozart declined an opportunity to compose in London.

1791 Composed dance music for the Vienna Court.

Publishers began to pay fees for the rights to publish his works

Appointed assistant to the Cathedral Kapellmeister at St. Stephens with no pay.

Mozart was already feeling ill in Prague while finishing *La clemenza di Tito*.

1791 Dec. 5, a few minutes before 1 AM, Mozart died of rheumatic fever.



Mozart's Journeys

Mozart reached the age of 35 years, ten months and nine days. However, on 3720 of those days, which is a total of 10 years, two months and eight days, he was on tour. If his early childhood years are deducted, the result is that he spent one third of his life on journeys.

All journeys between 1762 and 1773 were planned and organised by his father, Leopold.

His most important journeys include the "extensive Western Europe trip" lasting 3½ years (1763 - 1766), and which included (in 1764) a trip to England where Mozart composed his first symphonies and made the acquaintance of Johann Christian Bach. He made three trips to Italy (1769 -1773) on the first of which Pope Clement XIV conferred on him the Order of the Golden Spur, making the composer "Sir Wolfgang, Signore Cavaliere Mozart". On his trip to Paris (1777 -1779), stopping in Munich, Augsburg and Mannheim, he met the Weber family of musicians. He fell in love with and subsequently married Constanze Weber. It was also on the trip to Paris that his mother fell ill and died. The Mozart family travelled to Vienna three times. Mozart did not return to Salzburg after the fourth trip. Later travels were to Salzburg with his wife, Constanze, to show her his native town (1783) Prague (1787), Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin (1789), Frankfurt (1790) and Prague again (1791).

Musical Style

Mozart always had a gift for absorbing and adapting valuable features of others' music. His travels helped in the forging of a unique compositional language. In London as a child, he met J. C. Bach and heard his music. In Paris, Mannheim, and Vienna he met with other compositional influences, as well as the avant-garde capabilities of the Mannheim orchestra. In Italy he encountered the Italian overture and opera buffa, both of which deeply affected the evolution of his own practice. In London and Italy, the galant style was in the ascendent: simple, light music with a mania for cadencing; an emphasis on tonic, dominant, and subdominant to the exclusion of other harmonies; symmetrical phrases; and clearly articulated partitions in the overall form of movements. Some of Mozart's early symphonies are Italian overtures, with three movements running into each other; many are homotonal (all three movements having the same key signature, with the slow middle movement being in the relative minor). Others mimic the works of J. C. Bach, and others show the simpler rounded binary forms turned out by Viennese composers.



A facsimile sheet of music from the Dies Irae movement of the Requiem Mass in D minor (K. 626) in Mozart's own handwriting.

Mozart was a versatile composer, and wrote in every major genre, including symphony, opera, the solo concerto, chamber music including string quartet and string quintet, and the piano sonata. These forms were not new, but Mozart advanced their technical sophistication and emotional reach. He almost single-handedly developed and popularized the Classical piano concerto.

Mozart's music, like Haydn's, stands as an archetype of the Classical style. The central traits of the Classical style are all present in Mozart's music. Clarity, balance, and transparency are the hallmarks of his work, but simplistic notions of its delicacy mask the exceptional power of his finest masterpieces, such as the Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491; the Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550; and the opera Don Giovanni.

Especially during his last decade, Mozart exploited chromatic harmony to a degree rare at the time, with remarkable assurance and to great artistic effect.

Influence

A number of composers have paid homage to Mozart by writing sets of variations on his themes. Beethoven wrote four such sets (Op. 66, WoO 28, WoO 40, WoO 46). Others include Fernando Sor's Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart (1821), Mikhail Glinka's Variations on a Theme from Mozart's Opera Die Zauberflöte (1822), Frédéric Chopin's Variations on "Là ci darem la mano" from Don Giovanni (1827), and Max Reger's Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Mozart (1914), based on the variation theme in the piano sonata K. 331;

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky wrote his Orchestral Suite No. 4 in G, "Mozartiana" (1887), as a tribute to Mozart.

Köchel catalogue

For unambiguous identification of works by Mozart, a Köchel catalogue number is used. This is a unique number assigned, in regular chronological order, to every one of his known works. A work is referenced by the abbreviation "K." or "KV" followed by its number. The first edition of the catalogue was completed in 1862 by Ludwig von Köchel. It has since been repeatedly updated, as scholarly research improves knowledge of the dates and authenticity of individual works.

Acknowledgement: Mozart: Biography courses.

https://courses.lumenlearning.com/musicapp_historical/chapter/w-a-mozart/

Mozart's Best Music *(or some of it!)*



Concerto No. 9 for Piano and Orch in E flat major k271 (age 21)

Only fifty-five years after Bach wrote his Cöthen concertos, Mozart wrote his seminal Piano Concerto No. 9, K. 271. One of his first truly mature works, the concerto dates to January of 1777, when Mozart was just turning 21, and was a major turning point in his writing.

Often incorrectly nicknamed "Jeunehomme" (young man) the E \flat major was written for a young woman – a French pianist by name of Victoire Jenamy. It was written in Salzburg in 1777, when Mozart was 21 years old. It is claimed be Mozart's first great composition, "his Eroica" as Alfred Einstein put it, "which he later would match, but never surpass."

Despite its relatively traditional orchestra of strings, horns, and oboes, Mozart uses the instruments in novel ways that create dramatic dialogue between the piano and orchestra – by this point he was emerging as a compositional voice to be reckoned with, no longer simply a child prodigy. It was his first concerto with any movement in a minor key (the 'andantino' movement is in the key of C minor).

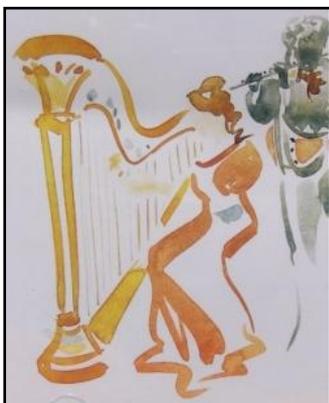
Written with three movements: 1. Allegro; 2. Andantino; 3. Rondeau: Presto; we listen to the first movement which opens, unusually for the time, with interventions by the soloist, anticipating Beethoven's Fourth and Fifth Concertos. Its departures from convention do not end with this early solo entrance, but continue in the style of dialogue between piano and orchestra in the rest of the movement. Mozart wrote two cadenzas for this movement: after the first cadenza that is usually the stopping point for the soloist, Mozart doesn't give up, but rather has the piano come in once more with the same trill he used for the piano's 'proper' entry at the beginning.

The soloist is Portuguese born Maria Joao Pires with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by John Eliot Gardiner. (10 mins 30'')

The youtube link for the complete concerto is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oic6uIFWwwM>

Concerto for Flute, Harp, and Orchestra in C major K 299



It is one of only two true double concertos that Mozart wrote, as well as the only piece of music that Mozart wrote that contains the harp. It was commissioned by Adrien-Louis de Bonnières, duc de Guînes, for his use and for that of his older daughter – a Mozart pupil. At the time, the harp was still in development, and was not considered a standard instrument, and Mozart's opinion of it was at best dubious, as he never again composed for it.

The combination of flute and harp, moreover, is a difficult one; "as a duo" notes writer Ethan Mordden, "they sound like a nymph going bonkers in a plashing spring". In spite of all this, however, the work is often played and is a perennial crowd-pleaser. Orchestras have few other opportunities to put their harpists on display in a concerto.

Like almost everything else that happened on his trip with his mother to Paris, this concerto caused Mozart trouble; the Duke failed to pay the composer for it and Mozart came to despise him.

The piece is essentially in the form of a Sinfonia Concertante, which was extremely popular in Paris at the time, and it became one of the most popular such concerti in the repertoire. The writing for each soloist is carefully crafted – it's something of a showpiece for harpists who can get their fingers round the difficult passages.

We listen to the first movement In line with the standard concerto form, the two soloists wait for the orchestra to present the opening material of the first movement, then take it up in unison. The movement as a whole is most charming in the dialogue-like writing for the flute and harp and in its overflowing lyricism.

The soloists are: Emmanuel Pahud (flute) and Marie-Pierre Langlamet (harp). The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra is under the direction of Claudio Abbado. (10 Mins).

The youtube link to this performance is:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIUHkfwMZE4



Oboe Concerto in C major K 314

Giuseppe Ferlendis, the most celebrated member of a large Italian family filled with musicians, most of them oboists, joined the archbishop's orchestra in Salzburg in April 1777. At the time, local composer Wolfgang Mozart, twenty-one years old, had just started writing the first of the many concertos — both for himself and his friends — that would count among his greatest achievements.

Only weeks after Ferlendis moved to town, Mozart began to compose an oboe concerto for him. It isn't clear how good a player Ferlendis actually was; Mozart's father Leopold called him a "favourite in the orchestra," which might have referred more to his personality than his musicianship, but Haydn, who heard him perform in London in 1795, said he was quite mediocre. In any event, Ferlendis inspired Mozart to write the only oboe concerto of his career.

A few months later, pressed for time to fulfil a commission in Mannheim from the flautist De Jean, Mozart adapted the concerto for flute, upping the tempo of the finale from Allegretto to Allegro and transposing the music from C to D.

In its original oboe version, the work was one of Mozart's most successful concertos in his lifetime. the concerto is deftly and gracefully written, calculated to display both the oboe's impish wit and (in the Adagio non troppo) its piercing cantabile. Textures are light and luminous, with the soloist often accompanied by violins alone. The most vivid movement, however, is surely the irrepressible rondo finale, whose chuckling refrain Mozart remembered in Blonde's triumphant aria 'Welche Wonne, welche Lust' ('What bliss, what pleasure') from "The abduction from the Seraglio".

We listen to the Rondo with French soloist Francois Leleux and Andrés Orozco-Estrada conducting the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra. (6 mins).

The youtube link to the complete concerto is:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDrVtXPpuRI



Copy of Basset clarinet made for Anton Stadler in the 1770s.

Clarinet Quintet in A major K 581

Mozart only wrote one clarinet quintet – a piece for string quartet plus clarinet. It was composed for the outstanding clarinetist Anton Stadler (1753-1812), a member of the court orchestra in Vienna and a friend of Mozart's from the time the latter first settled in Vienna in 1781.

Mozart had already composed a number of chamber works for Stadler and his brother Mathias, some of which were actually for basset horn. In addition to playing the lower pitched instrument, Anton Stadler was noted for his ability to exploit the low register of the standard clarinet; to enable his exploration of this so-called chalumeau range he devised an additional extension for the instrument.

The basset clarinet, or bass clarinet as it was also called at that time, is a clarinet similar to the usual soprano clarinet but longer and with additional keys to enable playing several additional lower notes in the key of B-flat or A which has additional keywork for the written pitches of small e-flat, d, c-sharp and c. Very few of these instruments were made and no extant copies have been found in this century.

It was for this modified instrument that Mozart composed both the Clarinet Quintet and the famous Clarinet Concerto in A, K. 622 -- one of his last works. Although playing the work on a modern clarinet requires less transposition of low notes than is the case with the Concerto, the work is still best heard on an instrument that allows the original pitch to be heard; several recordings have been made on clarinets that reconstruct Stadler's instrument.

The quintet is scored for clarinet, two violins, viola, and cello, and is cast in four movements. The opening Allegro, a discourse between all five instruments, is tinged with sadness; the exquisitely lovely Larghetto that follows brings the clarinet more into the limelight, its rapturous lines supported throughout by muted strings. The Minuetto is particularly notable for the first of its two trios.

We listen to the final movement - a set of variations based on one of those innocent, almost childish-sounding themes Mozart so often employed in his finales.

The artists are Sabine Meyer (clarinet) and the Hagen Quartet.

(8 mins).

The youtube link for this final movement is:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmcsv_h83zo

Horn Concerto No. 2 in E flat major K417



The Horn Concertos by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (there four of them) were written for his friend Joseph Leutgeb whom he had known since childhood. Leutgeb was a skilled player, as the works are very difficult to perform on the natural horn of the period, requiring lip trills, much hand-stopping, and rapid tonguing.

In these works Mozart captures the public persona of an instrument most readily associated with all things hunting, but he also brings it indoors: lyrical episodes, and especially the slow movements, show the very soul of the instrument, despite any perceived limitations of the valveless horn.

Mozart's Horn Concerto No. 2 in Eb, completed on 27 May 1783 was possibly the first of the four horn concertos to be written despite its number, and is one of two horn concerti of Mozart to omit bassoons. It is also one of Mozart's two horn concerti to have ripieno horns (horns included in the orchestra besides the soloist).

Since Mozart wrote it for his friend to play on a natural horn, a predecessor to the modern French horn, we listen to movements two and three (Andante and Rondo –Allegro) today played on such an instrument by French horn player Javier Bonet with Spanish chamber group “El Concierto Español” (“The Spanish Concert”). (7mins 30”)

The youtube link for their performance is:

1st movement: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGjhdKfKmWM

2nd movement: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsB_Tgn3X78

3rd movement: www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIsoLi0g7zQ

Sinfonia Concertante for Viola, Violin & Orchestra in E Flat major K364

The magnificent Sinfonia concertante for violin, viola, and orchestra in E flat major, K. 364, is Mozart's only surviving complete work of this type, a genre that incorporates elements of both the symphony and concerto. Generally scored for two or more solo instruments and orchestra, the sinfonia concertante was particularly popular in Paris in the eighteenth century, as it allowed two or more soloists to share centre stage and attempt to outdo each other in terms of virtuosity. Mozart's most famous essay in the genre was written in 1779 and contains two unusual features.



Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zuckerman

First, the viola section is divided in two, giving the orchestra a richer sonority. Second, the solo viola player is instructed to tune his instrument up a half step, making the sound brighter and more similar to the violin. Mozart’s intention in so doing was undoubtedly to give the instrument a brighter sound to avoid being overshadowed by its more penetrating violin companion. Pinchas Zuckerman, whose primary instrument is the violin, takes up the challenge of the viola and creates a perfect blend with Itzhak Perlman--at their first entrance the listener can hardly tell that both instruments are playing.

The sinfonia is in three movements: 1. Allegro maestoso 2. Andante and 3. Presto

We listen to the first movement. The recording is by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Zubin Mehta – a 1982 recording featuring Zuckerman and Perlman as soloists. (14 mins.)

The UK “gramophone” review of this performance stated:

“Under Zubin Mehta the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra sounds stodgy and inflated, with unalluring string tone. On their own terms, the soloists give a compelling, highly sophisticated performance, seeking out the darker side at every opportunity in the first movement, unleashing a virtuoso brilliance in the finale (as a born show-off, Mozart might well have relished their pitch-perfect spiccato) and combining a frank emotionalism with an understanding of the longer line in the Andante”.

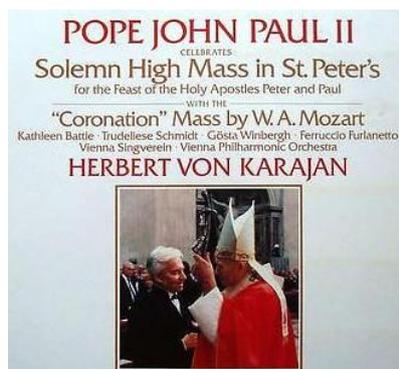
Of the Andante movement one listener to this performance suggested: *“Listen carefully to the second movement. Mozart wrote this in Paris just after his mother died. You can hear him weeping”.*

The Youtube link to this performance is in two parts:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=szMu8si_YYQ for movements one and two, and

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFTVZ0AVgM8 for the third movement.

Mass No. 15 in C major ('Coronation') K317



This is a much lighter version of Mozart's Mass settings, one where he wasn't fearful of his own death. Regal and grand, the 'Coronation' mass shows classical choral writing at its best, and the flowing soprano solo in the 'Agnus Dei' may have inspired the 'Dove Sono' aria from *The Marriage of Figaro*, written seven years later.

The work was completed on March 23, 1779 in Salzburg. Mozart had just returned to the city after 18 months of fruitless job hunting in Paris and Mannheim, and his father Leopold promptly got him a job as court organist and composer at Salzburg Cathedral. The Mass was almost certainly premiered there on Easter Sunday April 4, 1779. Contrary to a popular misconception, it was not intended for the church of Maria Plain near Salzburg.

The KV 317 Mass appears to have acquired the nickname "Coronation" at the Imperial court in Vienna in the early nineteenth century, after becoming the preferred music for royal and imperial coronations as well as services of Thanksgiving. Whether it was performed at the coronations of Leopold II in 1790 and Francis II in 1792, as some sources assume, is unlikely.

We listen to the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) from a celebration of the Mass on St Peter's Day - 29th June, 1985, at St Peter's Basilica, Rome.

Herbert von Karajan conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the Wiener Singverein.

The soprano soloist is Kathleen Battle. Other soloists in this recording are: Trudelieste Schmidt, mezzo-soprano; Gosta Winbergh, tenor; and Ferruccio Furlanetto, bass.

The text of the *Agnus Dei* is:

Agnus Dei, peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, peccata mundi,
donna nobis pacem.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.

The Youtube link for the *Agnus Dei* is:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=64ckkiz33cU

For a complete performance of the Mass the link is:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeUjMagnJ_M

Abduction from the Seraglio



The 1782 premiere of *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) represented a breakthrough, the first full length German language opera (or more accurately, singspiel) of Mozart's maturity. It was also his first opera that was a success in his time and that has stood the test of time.

Mozart was 25 years old and finally wanted to take his life into his own hands. He went to Vienna. Even when his father continued to try to exert his influence over his son, Wolfgang would not listen.

On top of this, he had fallen in love: he had rented a room from the Weber family, long-time friends of the Mozarts. Welcomed and provided for by the family he composed undisturbed. And he wanted to marry Constanze Weber – a fact he kept secret from his father Leopold.

At this time he was commissioned to compose “The Abduction from the Seraglio” by Emperor Joseph II. Anything Turkish was in style at the time, and true to the trend, Mozart sets “Abduction” in a Turkish harem and flavours the music with extra percussion, evoking the military Janissary bands of Turkey (especially in the rollicking overture).

Many critics spot parallels between the content of this Mozart opera and his private situation. After all, he was a penniless young artist and his future mother in law Cäcilie was hesitant to grant him the hand of her daughter. Evidently, he worked his own private difficulties into this Mozart opera. But maybe this is only speculation...

The Abduction from the Seraglio is the crazy story of two men rescuing their lovers from a Sultan’s harem, but the way Mozart blends high comedy with touching tragedy signals his new maturity as an opera composer. The opera tells the story of a Konstanze and her maid Blonde, who find themselves in the palace of the Turk ‘Pasha Salim’ after having been captured by pirates, then sold in a slave market and ending up being thrust into the Pasha’s harem. A nobleman, Belmonte, assisted by his servant Pedrillo, attempt to rescue the women from the confines of their Turkish harem and sinister overseer of the harem, Osmin, who is determined to keep Konstanze for his master and have Blonde for himself. Meranwhile Pasha Selim tries to win Konstanze’s love, and Osmin the love of Blonde. Neither woman will have any of it and both wait for their liberation.

Finally Pedrillo incapacitates Osmin with wine, Belmonte is reunited with Konstanze and they plan their escape. They seem to succeed at first, but are thwarted by Pasha Selim and Osmin. The Pasha decides to have all four put to death, but finally shows mercy: this brings him more satisfaction than taking lives, and the opera ends with everyone singing the praises of the Pasha and his clemency – except Osmin who is enraged and disrupts the joyful harmony of the final chorus with a furious outburst before rushing away defeated.

We listen to some very short snippets from the closing scenes of the opera. Osmin is played by

Russian bass Kurt Moll whose final piece

“O wie will ich triumphieren”

(“O how I want to triumph”)

has him sing a “Bottom D” – reputedly the lowest note for the human voice.

(3 mins 45”).



Kurt Moll as Osmin singing “O Wie will ich triumphieren” in the 1990 Covent Garden production of The Abduction from the Seraglio

The link to these is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUOTFDRobms>

There a number of individual items from this performance available on youtube. Simply type into the youtube search engine ‘Mozart Abduction from the Seraglio Kurt Moll’ and a selection should appear.

For those wishing to take in the complete opera there are some other versions on youtube. Here are three links to choose from:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vS87tOFhZfU

www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1nPVJ22xts (Part 1)

youtu.be/wSxB6bUMbLo (Part 2)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uQ0Ti9GF_U



The Glass Harmonica

The name "glass harmonica" refers today to any instrument played by rubbing glass or crystal goblets or bowls. The alternate instrument consisting of a set of wine glasses (usually tuned with water) is generally known in English as "musical glasses" or the "glass harp".

When Benjamin Franklin invented his mechanical version of the instrument in 1761, he called it the 'armonica', based on the Italian word 'armonia', which means 'harmony'. The unrelated free-reed wind instrument aeolina, today called the 'harmonica', was not invented until 1821, sixty years later.

Benjamin Franklin invented a radically new arrangement of the glasses in 1761 after seeing water-filled wine glasses played in England in May 1761. Franklin worked with a London glassblower to build one, and it had its world premiere in early 1762.

In Franklin's treadle-operated version, 37 bowls were mounted horizontally on an iron spindle. The whole spindle turned by means of a foot pedal. The sound was produced by touching the rims of the bowls with water-moistened fingers. Rims were painted different colours according to the pitch of the note: A (dark blue), B (purple), C (red), D (orange), E (yellow), F (green), G (blue), and accidentals were marked in white.

With the Franklin design, it is possible to play ten glasses simultaneously if desired, a technique that is very difficult if not impossible to execute using upright goblets. Franklin also advocated the use of a small amount of powdered chalk on the fingers, which under some acidic water conditions helped produce a clear tone.

Adagio and Rondo for glass harmonica, flute, oboe, viola & cello in C minor, K. 617

Mozart heard blind glass harmonica virtuoso Marianne Kirchgaessner in 1791, and for her composed a quintet for for glass harmonica, flute, oboe, viola and cello.

Written about the same time as the Adagio and Rondo in 1791, is the

Adagio for glass harmonica in C major, K. 356 (K. 617a)

This brief and beautiful piece is more of a song than an elaborately developed composition, but it is nevertheless a touching work that features the crystalline and breathy sustaining qualities of the glass harmonica. These sustaining tones exhibit a timbral range from the angelic, transparent upper tones to the chesty and breathy mid-ranges especially noticeable on the diminished-seventh chords in the middle section of this piece.

Benjamin Franklin's mechanized version of the glass harmonica was the instrument that Mozart used.

Acknowledgement: Allmusic.com

We listen first of all to an explanation and demonstration of the glass 'armonica', and then to a performance of the Adagio K356 by Christa Schönfeldinger.

The youtube links are:

Explanation and demonstration: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzJC1ENMdel

Performance: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_1ADpVj9wU

The Adagio and Rondo K 617 can be listened to (sadly I couldn't find a soloist and chamber group to watch) at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxsK3WYcQWY

A "Quartet" for strings with continuo (glass harmonica) composed by Benjamin Franklin may be watched and listened to at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2_E0PI_xw4

Some Mozart Trivia

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born to Leopold Mozart (1719–1787), a musician of the Salzburg Royal Chamber, and Anna Maria, née Pertl (1720–1778), at 9 Getreidegasse in Salzburg, Austria.

A child prodigy, Mozart began picking out chords from a harpsichord at the age of three. At four he was playing short pieces and he wrote two minuets for the harpsichord at five.

Leopold soon realized that he could earn a substantial income by showcasing his son in the courts of Europe. The child performer dazzled audiences by playing with his hands behind his back or keys covered by a cloth. After every performance the child Mozart would ask his audience "Do you love me?"

When he was 17, Mozart was employed as a court musician by the ruler of Salzburg, Prince-Archbishop Hieronymus Colloredo. Mozart was treated by Colloredo as one of his servants and he was expected to hang around each morning in case his services were required. When Mozart refused to waste his time the Archbishop yelled at him to get out. On the way to the door Mozart coolly remarked "I hope this decision is final".

Mozart composed works for the glass harmonica. The instrument's premier virtuoso in his day was Mariane Kirchgessner, a blind Austrian woman. Mozart wrote a beautiful quintet for her "The Adagio and Rondo in C, K617."

Mozart's most successful opera during his lifetime was the *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* ("The Abduction from the Seraglio"), which premiered on July 16, 1782. A knockabout nursery farce, it was popular due to its oriental setting at a time of war between Austria and Turkey. After its premiere, Emperor Joseph II anecdotally made the comment that the opera had "too many notes".

On August 4, 1782, Mozart married the fun loving, dark haired Constanze Weber who was a singer. He wrote the C Minor Mass K 427 in celebration of their wedding.

The Austrian composer loved to play billiards. A billiard table with five balls and 12 cues was among Mozart's estate when he died.

For three years, Mozart kept a pet starling. His notebook includes a tune the starling sang which he used in his 17th piano concerto, "K453 in G major." When the starling died, Mozart buried it in his garden and wrote a poem to his "little fool."

Mozart died in his home on December 5, 1791 at 1:00 am, while he was working on his final composition, the Requiem (unfinished when he passed away). His last words were "You spoke of a refreshment, Emile: Take my last notes, and let me hear once more my solace and delight."

It would take you 202 hours to listen to all the music composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. He wrote over 600 pieces, even though he only lived to 35.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is an anagram of "A Famous German Waltz God."

(Source: *The Encyclopedia of Trivia.*)