

# DON GIOVANNI

A Dramma Giocoso in Two Acts  
Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

## STUDY GUIDE



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# Welcome to Pacific Opera Victoria!

This Study Guide has been created primarily to assist teachers in preparing students for their visit to the opera. It is our hope that teachers will be able to add this to the existing curriculum in order to expand students' understanding of opera, literature, history, and the fine arts.

Materials in the Study Guide may be copied and distributed to students. Some students may wish to go over the information at home if there is not enough time to discuss in class. The opera experience can be made more meaningful and enjoyable when students have the opportunity to learn about the opera before they attend the performance.

For more information about the history of opera, including a glossary of opera terms, please see other Study Guides on the Pacific Opera Victoria web site at [http://www.pov.bc.ca/involve\\_education.html](http://www.pov.bc.ca/involve_education.html).

**Teachers:** Your comments and suggestions would be greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes to fill out the questionnaire at the end of this study guide.

*Please Note: The Dress Rehearsal is the last opportunity the singers will have on stage to work with the orchestra before Opening Night. Since vocal demands are so great on opera singers, some singers choose not to sing in full voice during the Dress Rehearsal in order to preserve their voice for opening night.*

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## Audience Etiquette

The following list of *Dos* and *Do Nots* will help you (and those around you) enjoy the experience of a night at the opera:

- **Do** dress in whatever you find comfortable. However, going to the opera is a great opportunity to dress up in fancy or formal clothes.
- **Do** be on time. Latecomers will be seated only at suitable breaks – often not until **intermission**.
- **Do** find your seat with the help of your teacher or an usher. It is also customary to remove your hat in respect to the artists and to the person sitting behind you.
- **Do** turn off cell phones, pagers, digital watch alarms and all electronic devices.
- **Do Not** take photos. The flash can be very disturbing to the artists.
- **Do Not** talk, eat, drink, or chew gum. Let the action on stage surround you. As an audience member, you are a very important part of the process taking place. Without you there is no show.
- **Do** get settled and comfortable before the performance begins. Read your programme before the performance; rustling through the programme during the show can disrupt everyone.
- **Do** clap as the lights are dimmed and the **conductor** appears and bows to the audience. Watch as the **conductor** then turns to the **orchestra** and takes up his or her **baton** to signal the beginning of the opera.
- **Do** listen to the **prelude** or **overture** before the curtain rises. This is part of the performance and an opportunity to identify common musical themes that may reoccur during the opera.
- **Do** sit still; whisper only when it is absolutely necessary, as a whisper is heard all over the theatre, and **NEVER** (except in an emergency) stand during the performance.
- **Do** applaud (or shout **Bravo!**) at the end of an **aria** or **chorus** piece to signify your enjoyment. The end of a piece can be identified by a pause in the music.
- **Do** laugh when something is funny.
- **Do** read the English **surtitles** projected above the stage to understand the story.
- **Do** listen for subtleties in the music. The **tempo**, volume and complexity of the music and singing often depict the feelings of a character or give a sense of the action. Notice repeated words or phrases; they are usually significant.

**Finally, have fun and enjoy the show!**

PACIFIC *Opera* VICTORIA

presents

# DON GIOVANNI

April 19, 21, 24, 26, 28, 2007, 8 pm  
Royal Theatre, Victoria, BC

A *Dramma Giocoso* in Two Acts, K.527

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

Original Title: *Il dissoluto punito, ossia il Don Giovanni*  
(*The Rake Punished, or Don Giovanni*)

First Performance October 29, 1787, in Prague  
Sung in Italian with English surtitles

The performance is approximately three hours, with one intermission.

## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Cast in order of vocal appearance

Leporello	Terry Hodges
Donna Anna	Monica Huisman
Don Giovanni	Gregory Dahl
The Commendatore	Gary Relyea
Don Ottavio	Benjamin Butterfield
Donna Elvira	Frédérique Vézina
Zerlina	Michèle Bogdanowicz
Masetto	Phillip Addis
Conductor	Timothy Vernon
Director	Glynis Leyshon
Set and Costume Designer	John Ferguson
Lighting Designer	Gerald King
Choreographer	David Rolland
Fight Director	Nick Harrison
Resident Stage Manager	Jackie Adamthwaite
Assistant Stage Managers	Steve Barker Connie Hosie
Chorus Master and Répétiteur	Robert Holliston

With the Victoria Symphony and the Pacific Opera Victoria Chorus

## Synopsis of *Don Giovanni*

The Pacific Opera Victoria production is set in 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain, during the Spanish Inquisition.

Leporello keeps watch outside the house of the Commendatore (Commander) while his master Don Giovanni is inside with the Commendatore's daughter Donna Anna. Leporello grumbles that he is overworked and underpaid while his master has all the fun. Giovanni runs out, pursued by Donna Anna, who cries for help as she tries to discover who the masked intruder is. Her father appears and challenges Giovanni to a duel. Giovanni kills the Commendatore and escapes. Donna Anna and her fiancé Don Ottavio swear revenge on the killer.

Giovanni and Leporello hear a woman lamenting that her lover has abandoned her. As Giovanni starts to console ~ and seduce ~ her, he recognizes her as Donna Elvira, whom he has already loved and left. He slips away, leaving Leporello to deal with the now furious Elvira. Leporello tries to cheer her up by assuring her she is not alone. He tells her he keeps a catalogue of his master's conquests ~ 640 lovers in Italy, 231 in Germany, 100 in France, 91 in Turkey, and 1,003 in Spain. The list includes women of every rank, age, shape, and size. Elvira is appalled and determines to hound Giovanni until she has her revenge.

Peasants arrive, celebrating the betrothal of Zerlina and Masetto. Giovanni orders Leporello to take everyone back to his palace for a feast – and in particular to take care of Masetto. Although Masetto objects strenuously, Giovanni insists. Once they leave, Giovanni begins to seduce Zerlina, telling her she is wasted on a yokel like Masetto. As Zerlina is about to succumb, Elvira shows up, just in time to *rescue this innocent young maiden* from Giovanni's barbarous clutches. She warns Zerlina of the Don's heartlessness and leads her away.

Donna Anna and Don Ottavio arrive and approach Giovanni to ask him to help them find the masked villain who murdered the Commendatore. As Giovanni commiserates suavely with them, Donna Elvira returns and accuses Giovanni of betrayal. Giovanni assures Anna and Ottavio that Elvira is quite mad.

After he leaves, Anna tells Ottavio in great distress that she recognizes Giovanni's voice as that of her attacker and her father's killer. She recounts to him how someone slipped into her room, how she thought at first it might be Ottavio, how the stranger grabbed her, trying to embrace her and to keep her from screaming. After she finally wrested herself away, she pursued him, trying to find out who he was. Recalling how the stranger murdered her father, she urges Ottavio to help her avenge her father's death. Ottavio is shocked at the thought that a nobleman could commit such a cold-blooded murder. He says he must be sure of the truth in order either to prove Anna wrong or to help her seek retribution.

Giovanni congratulates Leporello on taking care of Masetto and the guests and on getting rid of Elvira, who had shown up at Giovanni's palace with Zerlina. Giovanni calls for more wine, more girls, and plenty of dancing and looks forward to his next batch of conquests.

Zerlina pacifies the jealous Masetto, saying nothing happened between her and Giovanni. She says he can punish her if he likes, but then they will kiss and make up. As Giovanni appears, Masetto, still suspicious, hides. Giovanni resumes his attempts to seduce Zerlina until he catches sight of Masetto. He then takes both of them into his palace for the wedding feast.

Bent on exposing Giovanni and bringing him to justice, Elvira, Anna and Ottavio arrive wearing masks. They are invited to the feast by Leporello and Giovanni. Inside, as the guests dance, Don Giovanni drags Zerlina away, while Leporello distracts Masetto. When Zerlina's screams interrupt the festivities, Giovanni tries to pin the blame on Leporello, saying he deserves to die for his crime, but he fools no one. Elvira, Anna and Ottavio unmask and confront Giovanni, vowing to expose his crimes.

## Act II

Outside Elvira's house, Leporello, fed up with Giovanni's treatment of him, tells Giovanni he's quitting his service. Giovanni gives him money and persuades him to stick around a little longer. Leporello agrees to forgive him just this one last time. Leporello suggests Giovanni should give up women, to which Giovanni replies that he needs women as much as food or drink or the air he breathes. As for breaking their hearts, Giovanni says if he were faithful to one woman, that would be unfair to all the others. He must spread his love as far as possible, but women just don't understand, and so they call him faithless!

Giovanni then tells Leporello to exchange cloaks with him so that Giovanni can seduce Elvira's maid while Leporello romances Elvira. Masetto and his friends arrive, hunting Giovanni. The disguised Giovanni gives the posse false directions and then beats up Masetto. Zerlina arrives and comforts Masetto.

Anna, Ottavio, Zerlina and Masetto come upon Elvira with Leporello, who is still disguised as Giovanni. They confront and threaten Leporello, until he reveals his identity; he explains that he had nothing to do with beating up Masetto, begs Elvira to forgive him, and escapes.

Ottavio is now convinced Giovanni is indeed Elvira's attacker and the killer of the Commendatore. He vows to avenge the murder.

Leporello and Giovanni meet in a graveyard. As Giovanni is telling Leporello of his latest dalliance - with Leporello's girlfriend - a voice from the statue of the Commendatore foretells Giovanni's doom. Giovanni forces the terrified Leporello to read the inscription on the tomb: "I await vengeance on my murderer." Giovanni mockingly invites the statue to have dinner with him. The statue accepts.

In her house Donna Anna tells Ottavio it is too soon after her father's death for them to marry.

In his chambers Giovanni feasts while musicians play. Elvira arrives and begs him to repent. He mocks her, and she leaves. Giovanni and Leporello hear a scream from Elvira, followed by a knock at the door. Giovanni answers, shows in the statue of the Commendatore, and invites him to eat. The statue declines but demands that Giovanni repent. Giovanni refuses and is taken to the flames of hell.

The others arrive looking for Giovanni. The horrified Leporello recounts what happened. Anna and Ottavio agree to marry in a year, Zerlina and Masetto to do so immediately; Elvira announces she will enter a convent, and Leporello determines to seek a new master and a new life. All agree that Giovanni met the end he deserved.

## Selected Music of *Don Giovanni*

Translations from the Italian vary widely. The English lyrics below may differ from the wording used in the surtitles for Pacific Opera Victoria's production of *Don Giovanni*.

### The Overture

Mozart billed *Don Giovanni* as a *dramma giocoso* – a comic drama. Indeed there are many wonderful comic touches in the opera (some tending toward cynical or black humour). But the opera is also intensely dramatic: the action includes attempted rape, murder, violence, deceit, and heartbreak, and at the end, the hero is condemned to hell. The overture prepares us for this dichotomy between comedy and drama with its dramatic, ominous opening notes.

It wasn't until the night before the premiere that Mozart wrote down the overture. (Chances are he already had the music in his head. For Mozart there was a vast difference between composing and actually putting the notes to paper.) Mozart's wife, Constanze, stayed up with him and plied him with punch and small talk to keep him awake. The orchestra parts were copied out just in time for the performance; despite having no chance to rehearse, the musicians did well; Mozart commented afterward, *Some of the notes fell under the stands, but the Overture went capitally on the whole.*

### *Notte e giorno faticar (I work night and day).* Leporello

As the opera opens, Leporello, Don Giovanni's increasingly disgruntled servant, is cooling his heels outside the Commendatore's house. His master has slipped inside to violate the Commendatore's daughter.

As he waits, Leporello grumbles about his working conditions. He's overworked, underpaid, treated badly – and would much rather be a nobleman.

*Night and day I slave away,  
Bad conditions, lousy pay;  
Hungry, thirsty, short of sleep,  
What a way to earn my keep!  
No, I'd rather be the master,  
Not a servant any more.*

### *Ah, chi mi dice mai (Where can I find the traitor).* Donna Elvira

Donna Elvira laments her betrayal by the man she loved and declares that she will confront him and have her revenge.

*Where can I find the traitor  
Who took my love in vain?  
I gave him my devotion,  
He gave me back disdain.  
When I at last confront him,  
If he insists we part,  
I'll see him die in torment,  
Then I'll tear out his heart.*

Her feelings are a mercurial mix of grief and anger, of lingering love and a fierce desire for retribution. This aria is majestic, furious, and plaintive, with beautiful leaps of melody and a driving rhythm that express the determined love and fury of this woman who will pursue her faithless lover through the opera, turning up like a bad penny when he least wants to see her.

Meanwhile Giovanni admires the poor girl and offers to console her (as he has consoled many others, dryly remarks Leporello). When Giovanni and Elvira recognize one another, their dismay is mutual. Elvira launches into a litany of furious accusations, and Giovanni tries to slip away as quickly as possible, leaving Leporello to deal with the fallout.

We will see more of Elvira's mixed feelings throughout the opera, as she stalks Giovanni, thwarts his attempts to seduce Zerlina, accuses him of infidelity, and yet begs him to repent and seems ready to forgive and to love again.

### **Madamina, il catalogo è questo (The catalogue aria). Leporello**

One of the great comic or buffo arias of the opera, this fast-paced song is Leporello's attempt to calm Elvira by telling her she is but one of hundreds of Don Giovanni's discarded women. He is saying, in essence, *It's not you, dear, it's him! Don't take it personally!*

Leporello keeps a little list of his master's conquests and goes over it in painful detail with the appalled Elvira. According to Leporello's catalogue his master has seduced 2065 women so far: 640 in Italy, 231 in Germany, 100 in France, 91 in Turkey, and 1,003 in Spain.

Whether they are country girls or city girls, baronesses, countesses, marchionesses, princesses, Giovanni wants them. Every age, every shape and every size is fine — as long as she's a woman, Don Giovanni is not fussy.

Not surprisingly, Leporello's list doesn't have quite the planned effect. Elvira is furious and spends the rest of the opera stalking Don Giovanni, torn between her love for him and her desire for revenge.

Meanwhile through the course of the opera, Giovanni puts considerable effort into adding more names to the list.

### ***Là ci darem la mano (Your hand in mine, my dearest). Don Giovanni, Zerlina.***

This charming duet goes a long way to explaining Don Giovanni's magnetic effect on women.

Once Giovanni has managed to get rid of Masetto, he turns his suave attentions to Zerlina, flattering her profusely, telling her she's much too beautiful and alluring for a peasant like Masetto. Zerlina protests that she's been warned about people like him, but Giovanni assures her she can trust him and promises her marriage, riches, and love.

In a beautiful, sublimely seductive duet, he sings that he will take her hand and make her dreams come true. She dithers, sparing a moment to worry about Masetto; as her resistance crumbles, the music picks up a sense of hurry and excitement as it changes from 2/4 to 6/8 time.

Giovanni's lies are transparent, but Mozart's music makes them irresistible.

### ***Or sai chi l'onore (You know who tried to steal my honour). Donna Anna***

Having recognized Giovanni's voice as that of her attacker and her father's murderer, Anna calls on Ottavio to avenge her honour in a declamatory, passionate, persuasive aria:

*My honour he threatened*

*My father he slaughtered.*

*If you truly love me*

*Your heart must seek revenge.*



***Dalla sua pace (On her Peace). Don Ottavio***

Don Ottavio wants to join Anna in her quest for retribution; he sees it as his duty as a lover and a friend of Donna Anna. He is, however, shocked that a nobleman would do such a thing and wants to be sure of the truth. Don Ottavio expresses tenderness and devotion to Anna in this tuneful song:

*On her peace my peace depends  
What pleases her gives me life.  
What displeases her brings me death.*

This aria was not in the original Prague premiere of *Don Giovanni*. Mozart added it for the Vienna production because the tenor in Vienna found Ottavio's Act II aria *Il mio tesoro* too difficult.

***Fin ch'han dal vino (The Champagne Aria). Don Giovanni***

Despite its famous nickname, *The Champagne Aria*, there is no champagne involved (a German translation of the libretto mentions champagne, although the original Italian refers only to vino – wine). In this rousing, exuberant song, Giovanni is looking forward to the feast he is hosting in celebration of Zerlina and Masetto's wedding. He is essentially saying, *It's party time! Lay on the wine, round up the girls and let's start dancing and making love. By tomorrow morning I'll have added a bunch of new names to my list of conquests.*

***Batti, batti, o bel Masetto (Beat me, beat me, my dear Masetto). Zerlina***

Outside the palace, Zerlina tries to make up with the jealous Masetto. She protests that nothing happened between her and Giovanni. (She doesn't mention that Elvira interrupted them before anything actually could happen!) She tells Masetto to punish her, do whatever he likes ... but then they must kiss and make up. This aria is as charming, ingratiating, and seductive as Don Giovanni's best material. In fact, in an echo of *Là ci darem la mano*, her duet with Don Giovanni, the music again seems to speed up as it changes from 2/4 to 6/8 time as Zerlina sees that Masetto is relenting and promises they'll stay together night and day.

***Protegga, il giusto cielo (Just Heaven, now defend us). Donna Elvira, Donna Anna, and Don Ottavio***

In the dramatic finale to the first act of *Don Giovanni*, Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, and Don Ottavio have resolved to hunt down the murderer of the Commander and bring him to justice. Although they are afraid, they are as implacable as the three fates. They gather their courage to enter Giovanni's palace where the wedding feast is underway. In what is called the Mask Trio, they sing a sublime and haunting prayer asking God to protect and avenge them.

**Act II**

***Ah taci, ingiusto core (Be still, my unjust heart). Donna Elvira, Leporello, Giovanni.***

Giovanni and Leporello have exchanged outfits so Giovanni can pursue Elvira's maid while Leporello romances Elvira. At her window, Elvira sings of her conflicting feelings for Giovanni. She knows he's heartless; she knows he's a deceiver, she knows she's a fool for still wanting him, but she cannot stop loving him. Hiding behind the disguised Leporello, Giovanni tells Elvira he adores her and begs her to forgive him. Leporello is overcome with admiration, horror, and laughter as he watches Giovanni skilfully play on Elvira's affections. When Giovanni's smooth talk has worn down her resistance, Elvira comes down, and Giovanni leaves Leporello to carry on the charade with Elvira – while Giovanni moves on to the maid's window.

***Deh, vieni alla finestra (Throw open wide your window). Don Giovanni***

In this irresistible, lilting serenade with a charming mandolin accompaniment, Don Giovanni, disguised as Leporello, pleads with Elvira's maid to show herself (and she does). Yes, he's a cad, but he is the archetype of the charming bad boy that women find irresistible – and with music as seductive as this, it's easy to understand why a woman would succumb.

*Throw open wide your window, for I adore you:  
Come down here to console my lonely sighing.  
In hope of some relief I stand before you,  
Or else before your eyes you'll see me dying.*

***Vedrai, carino (Come, dear one). Zerlina***

After Don Giovanni sends Masetto's posse on a wild goose chase and beats up Masetto, Zerlina comes in and begins to comfort Masetto. She offers to heal his pain with the magical balm of love. Again, we see how skilled Zerlina is at being seductive – and quite possibly how tenderly she really loves Masetto.

*There is a remedy I can supply.  
It is quite painless. You'll find it soothing.  
It's an elixir money can't buy...  
Feel my heart beating here, soon you'll know why.*

***Il mio tesoro (Comfort my treasure). Don Ottavio***

After Anna, Ottavio, Zerlina and Masetto come upon Elvira and Leporello (disguised as Giovanni), they mistake servant for master, and threaten Leporello. He quickly caves, tells them who he is, insists he was just following orders, and slips away. Ottavio is now convinced that Giovanni is Elvira's attacker and the killer of the Commendatore. He vows to avenge the murder and tells the others to take care of his beloved Anna while he reports the facts to the authorities.

*Comfort my treasure till I return...  
I shall avenge her father.  
The murderer shall be punished;*

This aria is itself a treasure. While there might be an argument that Don Ottavio has been a tad indecisive up till now in joining Anna in her call for vengeance, this tender and beautiful aria shows a strength he has not previously demonstrated. After the delectable but insincere love songs sung by Giovanni, we hear from a gentle, loving, steadfast man.

***Mi tradi quell'alma ingrata (The ungrateful soul betrayed me). Elvira***

Elvira sees that retribution is fast bearing down on Giovanni and that he fully deserves it. But, as we've seen before, her feelings for him are very mixed. A glorious, heartbreakingly passionate melody, this aria expresses Elvira's desolation and love and what might be seen as her foolish weakness – or a noble capacity for forgiveness.

*The ungrateful soul betrayed me  
He makes me so unhappy, Oh God!  
Though betrayed and abandoned  
I still feel pity for him  
When I feel my torment  
My heart speaks of vengeance  
But if I see him in danger  
My heart is aflutter*

## Don Giovanni's dinner music

Unaware that his doom is approaching, Don Giovanni revels in the luxury of a lavish meal and musical entertainment provided by his own private orchestra. The musical selections played by the orchestra are all recent operatic hits, which are commented on by Leporello, and which would have been recognized by the audiences at the premiere of *Don Giovanni*. However, the humour and significance of this choice of music is easily missed by a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience.

Mozart set *Don Giovanni* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but the music being played is from Mozart's own time – the late 18th century. It's as if a movie set in Victorian times used Nelly Furtado's latest release as background music. This amusing use of anachronism would have delighted the audience in Prague.

Here are the three charming, tuneful little operatic snippets that Giovanni's orchestra quotes:

1. "O quanto un si bel giubilo" from Vicente Martin y Soler's *Una Cosa Rara* (*A Rare Thing*).

Lorenzo Da Ponte had written the libretto for this opera, which had been heard in Prague only a few weeks before the premiere of *Don Giovanni*. *Una Cosa Rara* was an international hit at the time; in Vienna it had been more popular than Mozart and Da Ponte's other collaboration, *The Marriage of Figaro*. At the time *Don Giovanni* premiered in Prague, *Una cosa rara* was being given at the great La Scala opera house in Milan.

2. "Come un agnello" from Giuseppe Sarti's *Fra Due Litiganti* (*Between Two Litigants*)

Mozart had previously composed a set of piano variations on this song (K.460, published in Aug. 1784), and by quoting the air, he may have been engaging in a bit of self-promotion. It's possible that the words (*Like a lamb going to the slaughter, you will go bleating through the city*) are also a subtle warning of Don Giovanni's fate.

3. *Non piu andrai*, Figaro's aria from Mozart's own *Le nozze di Figaro* (with libretto also by Da Ponte).

This is another amusing bit of self-promotion as Mozart and Da Ponte quote their previous opera.

On stage Leporello reacts to this tune by saying *Questo poi la conosco pur troppo* (*I know this only too well*) – an in-joke that would have convulsed the audiences in both Prague and Vienna, as the singers who performed Leporello (Felice Ponziani in Prague, Francesco Benucci in Vienna) had also sung the role of Figaro and so certainly did know this particular song only too well!

The audiences would also have known the words of the aria:

*No more, you amorous butterfly,  
Will you go fluttering round by night and day,  
Disturbing the peace of every maid,  
You pocket Narcissus, you Adonis of love.*

This may be another subtle warning to Giovanni that the party is nearly over.

## The Background of *Don Giovanni*

*Don Giovanni* is based on the very old and well-known story of Don Juan, which was originally written down by the Spanish monk and playwright Tirso de Molina (1571-1641) in a play called *El Burlador de Sevilla*,

The character of Don Juan has inspired thousands of plays, stories, poems, operas, ballets, and musical works by such artists as Molière, Corneille, Baudelaire, E.T.A Hoffman, Pushkin, George Bernard Shaw, Mozart, Gluck, and Richard Strauss. Perhaps the most celebrated literary treatment is the great satiric poem by Lord Byron, who was famously called *mad, bad and dangerous to know* ~ a description that would apply equally to Don Giovanni.

Of musical treatments of the story, Mozart and Da Ponte's opera *Don Giovanni* is without doubt the most celebrated, and in turn it has inspired subsequent artists. Franz Liszt composed an operatic fantasy, *Réminiscences de Don Juan*. Tunes from Mozart's opera were used in works by Sigismond Thalberg (*Grand Fantaisie sur la serenade et le Minuet de Don Juan, Op. 42*), Ferruccio Busoni (*Deh, vieni alla finestra* appears in his *Variation-study after Mozart*). Beethoven, Franz Danzi and Frédéric Chopin each wrote a set of variations on Giovanni and Zerlina's duet *Là ci darem la mano*.

The music from *Don Giovanni* has also found its way into such movie soundtracks as *It Happened in Brooklyn*, *Parting Glances*, *Some Girls*, *Madagascar Skin*, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, *Babette's Feast*, and *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

The great 19<sup>th</sup> century opera composer Richard Wagner said this of *Don Giovanni*:

*Is it possible to find anything more perfect than every piece of his [Mozart's] Don Juan?...*

*Mozart, by reason of a nature wholly sound at core, could never speak otherwise than correctly. ...*

*Instinctively his music ennobled all the conventional stage-characters presented him, by polishing, as it were, the rough-hewn stone, by turning all its facets to the light, and finally by fixing it in that position where the light could smite it into brightest play of colour. In this way was he able to lift the characters of "Don Juan," for instance, into such a fulness of expression that a writer like Hoffmann could fall on the discovery of the deepest, most mysterious relations between them, relations of which neither poet nor musician had been ever really conscious. ...*

*From Oper und Drama (Opera and Drama)*

Charles Gounod, the composer best known for the opera *Faust* wrote a commentary on *Don Giovanni*. Calling it an *unequaled and immortal masterpiece*, he added:

*I regard it as a work without blemish, of uninterrupted perfection, and this commentary is but the humble testimony of my veneration and gratitude to the genius to whom I owe the purest and most permanent joys of my life as a musician."*

The writer and composer E.T.A. Hoffmann said simply that *Don Giovanni* was the *opera of all operas*.

## The Writing of *Don Giovanni*

As a result of the success of *Le nozze di Figaro*, Mozart received a commission for a new opera, which he worked on for most of 1787. Like *Figaro*, this new opera would use a libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte.

While they were working on *Don Giovanni*, Da Ponte and Mozart lived in apartments across the street from each other in Prague; they would communicate by shouting out the window to each other as they worked.

Da Ponte based his version of the story largely on an opera *Don Giovanni o sia Il Convitato di Pietra* [*Don Giovanni or The Stone Guest*] with music by Giuseppe Gazzaniga and libretto by Giovanni Bertati, which had premiered in Venice in February 1787. In the end, he produced a text that blended comedy and high drama and that was wonderfully enhanced by some of Mozart's finest music.

In his memoirs, Da Ponte recalled his way of working on *Don Giovanni*. At the time he was juggling three libretti at once (*Don Giovanni* for Mozart, *L'arbore di Diana* for Martin y Soler, and a translation of *Tarare* for Antonio Salieri).

*I sat down at my desk and stayed there for 12 hours at a stretch. A bottle of Tokay was at my right, the inkstand in the middle, and a box of Seville tobacco at my left. A lovely young girl of 16 (I should have preferred to love her only as a daughter, but alas ..!) would come to my room whenever I rang the bell which – truth to tell – was pretty often, especially when it seemed that my inspiration was beginning to cool. She would bring me sometimes a biscuit, sometimes a cup of coffee and sometimes nothing but her pretty face, always smiling and made to inspire poetic fancy and witty ideas.*

*On the first day ... between the Tokay, the tobacco, the coffee, the bell, and my young Muse, I wrote the first two scenes of Don Giovanni, two of the Arbore de Diana, and half of Act I of Tarare, which I renamed Azur... in 63 days the first two operas were completed, and two-thirds of the last one...'*

As usual, Mozart composed to suit the voices of his singers. In 1778 he had said in a letter to his father, *I love it when an aria is so accurately measured for a singer's voice that it fits like a well-tailored dress.*

He was already familiar with many of the singers for *Don Giovanni*, as he had conducted them in the Prague performance of *The Marriage of Figaro*. For example, the baritone who had sung Figaro would be Leporello in *Don Giovanni*.

*Il Dissoluto Punito, ossia Il Don Giovanni (The Rake Punished, or Don Giovanni)* had its first performance in Prague on October 29, 1787, conducted by the composer.

The opera was to have premiered two weeks earlier, on October 14, as part of the festivities celebrating the honeymoon visit of the archduchess Maria Theresia and Prince Anton Clemens of Saxony. Mozart explained the delays in a long letter to a friend, Baron Gottfried von Jacquin:

*Prague, 15th October, 1787*

*You're probably thinking that my opera has been performed by now – but you are a bit mistaken there; first of all, the stage personnel here is not quite as capable as at the theatre in Vienna when it comes to learning an opera like this one in so short a time. Second, I found on my arrival here that very few preparations had been made for it, and it would have been totally impossible to have the opera ready on the 14th, which was yesterday. So, they gave my Figaro instead, yesterday, in a fully illuminated theatre, and I myself was conducting...Don Giovanni is now scheduled for the 24th.*

*October 21<sup>st</sup> : Don Giovanni had been set for the 24<sup>th</sup>, but one of the singers, who was taken ill, has caused another delay. As the company is so small, the impresario has to be constantly concerned about sparing his people as much as possible so that he won't be plunged by some unexpected illness into the most critical of all critical situations: not to be able to stage a performance at all! ... [In fact, The Commendatore and Masetto were performed by the same bass at the Prague premiere.]*

October 25<sup>th</sup> : To-day is the eleventh day that I have been scribbling this letter! ... The opera is to be performed for the first time next Monday, the 29th. I shall give you an account of it the very next day.

And indeed, Mozart wrote again very soon to Gottfried von Jacquin

*Dearest, most beloved Friend!*

*My opera Don Giovanni was performed on October 29th, with the greatest of applause. - Yesterday it was given for the 4th time - for my own Benefit. - I think I'll be leaving here on the 12th or 13th; ... NB, just between you and me; - I so wished that my good friends, particularly Bridi and you, could be here just for one evening to share in my great happiness here!*

In a review of the opera's premiere, the *Prager Oberpostamtszeitung* commented:

*On Monday the 29th, the long awaited opera by Master Mozard [sic] Don Giovanni or the Banquet in Stone was performed by the Italian opera company. Connoisseurs and composers say that nothing like it has ever been performed in Prague. Mr. Mozard himself conducted, and when he entered the orchestra pit three cheers were raised, and repeated when he left the same. The opera, incidentally, is extremely difficult to perform, and irrespective of this, everyone admired the fine performance of the said work after such a short rehearsal period.*

*Don Giovanni* had its Vienna premiere on May 7, 1788. Mozart and Da Ponte had to make a few changes for the Vienna premiere, partly to appeal to a more conservative audience, and partly to follow Mozart's usual practice of tailoring the opera to fit the cast.

To accommodate the tenor Francesco Morella, Mozart replaced Ottavio's aria *Il mio tesoro* with a new aria, *Dalla sua pace*. The Vienna production also saw a new aria composed for the soprano Catarina Cavalieri: Donna Elvira's gorgeous *Mi tradi quell'alma ingrata*.

One addition for the Vienna production is rarely performed today; it is the 'Razor Duet,' *Per queste tue manine* between Leporello and Zerlina, in which Zerlina, after recapturing Leporello, threatens him with a razor, as he attempts to sweet-talk her out of hurting him.

The music as it is normally heard nowadays is therefore a combination of the Prague and Vienna versions of the opera.

The Vienna premiere was a failure. According to Da Ponte, the Emperor Joseph told Mozart, *The opera is divine, perhaps even more beautiful than Figaro. But it is no food for the teeth of my Viennese.* Mozart replied: *We'll give them time to chew it.*

## The Librettist, Lorenzo Da Ponte

Lorenzo Da Ponte, né Emanuele Conegliano, was a Jewish-born Catholic priest, a poet, a gambler, and a womanizer. He wrote libretti for a number of composers including Salieri and Martin y Soler. He was also a friend of the notorious adventurer and real-life counterpart of Don Giovanni, Casanova (who in fact attended the Prague premiere of *Don Giovanni* and may have inspired or possibly lent a hand with the libretto). One commentator noted that much of Da Ponte's life was *what one might call protracted field research for his future work on Don Giovanni*.

Eventually Da Ponte became bankrupt and moved to the New World, where, unable to write opera libretti (there was no opera in America), he worked as a grocer, a distiller, and a teacher. Through his friendship with Clement Clarke Moore, best known as the author of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, he became the first professor of Italian Literature at what is now Columbia University. In 1833 he helped establish New York City's first opera house.

## The Composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgang Theophilus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria, on January 27<sup>th</sup> 1756. The first part of his name was in honour of St. John Chrysostom, whose feast day was January 27<sup>th</sup>. The name *Theophilus* (Greek for *beloved of God*) was in honour of Mozart's godfather, Joannes Theophilus Pergmayr. *Wolfgang* was in honour of his maternal grandfather, Wolfgang Nikolaus Pertl. For everyday use, the child went by the name *Wolfgang* (or the nickname *Wolfgangerl*). In later years he often added *Theophilus*, but translated it into French (*Amadé*), German (*Gottlieb*), or Latin (*Amadeus*). We now know him best as *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*.

Wolfgang was the seventh and last child of Leopold Mozart and his wife Anna Maria. Only two of Leopold and Anna Maria's children lived past infancy: Wolfgang and his sister Maria Anna Walburga Ignatia (nicknamed Nannerl) who was nearly five years older.

Leopold Mozart was a composer, music teacher, and the author of a *Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, which was one of the best books of its time for training of violinists and is still used today. He was also violinist in the court orchestra of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, a position he held for 44 years under five successive Prince-Archbishops. Leopold worked his way up from fourth violinist to court composer and Vice-Kapellmeister, a position he reached in 1763 under Count Sigismund Christoph Schrattenbach.

Leopold taught music first to Nannerl and then to Wolfgang and quickly recognized that both were extremely gifted. He determined to promote their talents throughout Europe. When Wolfgang was six, Leopold, the ultimate stage parent, received permission from his boss, Schrattenbach, to take the children on a series of tours of the courts of Europe.

In January 1762 they embarked on a three-week trip to Munich, where the children performed before Maximilian III Joseph, the Elector of Bavaria.

Between September 1762 and January 1763, the family toured Austria. At Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna the children performed before Emperor Francis I and Empress Maria Theresa. Leopold wrote of this occasion: *Their Majesties received us with such extraordinary graciousness that, when I shall tell of it, people will declare that I have made it up. Suffice it to say that Wolferl jumped up on the Empress' lap, put his arms round her neck and kissed her heartily.*

From June 1763 to November 1766 the Mozarts went on a three-year grand tour of Europe. Stops along the way included Munich, Bonn, Cologne, Brussels, Paris, Versailles, London, The Hague, Geneva, and Zürich. They presented concert performances for various European princes and princesses, including, at Versailles, Queen Maria Leszczyńska and Louis XV and, in London, King George III and Queen Sophia Charlotte, to whom Wolfgang dedicated his six *Sonatas for Piano and Violin*, K. 10-15.

A second tour to Vienna took place from September 1767 to January 1769. Again, the Mozarts were received by the Imperial family, Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II, the new emperor.

At each stop, Leopold would try to finagle a concert appearance at the most influential local court, followed by a series of private concerts for lesser nobility. Payment was unpredictable: sometimes cash, sometimes trinkets. But the expenses of travel and the frequent illnesses of the children kept the family's finances in a precarious position. Leopold wrote: *We have swords, laces, mantillas, snuff-boxes, gold cases, sufficient to furnish a shop; but as for money, it is a scarce article, and I am positively poor.*

These trips were the first of many Wolfgang would take throughout his life. In fact, he spent some ten years – close to one third of his life – on the road, during which time he visited more than 200 places and cities throughout Europe. He also was plagued by ill health for most of his life. He caught rheumatic fever during the Austrian tour of 1763. Both children came down with typhoid and smallpox during their travels.

During his childhood prodigy tours, Wolfgang was doing far more than delighting the rich and important with his precocious performances. He was composing. He had begun composing at the age of five and continued to do so throughout the tours. While they were in Paris in 1764, his first four *Sonatas for Piano and Violin* (K. 6 – 9) were published by Leopold. His first symphony was written later the same year.

By the time he returned to Salzburg in 1769, the 13-year-old Wolfgang had composed the first 65 pieces in the Köchel catalogue. The Köchel catalogue is the definitive system for identifying Mozart's works; each piece is designated by either "K", for Köchel or "KV", for Köchel-Verzeichnis (German for *Köchel Catalogue*), and followed by a number between 1 and 626. The catalogue was devised by Ludwig Alois Ferdinand von Köchel, an Austrian musicologist, writer, composer, botanist and mineralogist, who published the first edition of the catalogue in 1862.

Mozart's 65 early works included three masses and assorted concertos, sonatas, and symphonies. They also included his first four operatic works:

*Die Schuldigkeit des ersten Gebots*, part 1 of a 3-part sacred drama; the other two parts were composed by Johann Michael Haydn, brother of the much more famous composer, Franz Joseph Haydn, and Anton Cajetan Adlgasser;

*Apollo et Hyacinthus*, widely considered his first real opera; this was a commission by the grammar school attached to Salzburg University, with text by Father Rufinus Widl;

*Bastien und Bastienne*. a one-act Singspiel (a musical drama with spoken dialogue between the musical numbers);

*La finta semplice* (*The Fake Simpleton*) a 3-act opera with libretto by Marco Coltellini.

Mozart and his father embarked on two trips to Italy in 1771. When they arrived in Rome just before Easter, they attended a liturgical celebration in the Sistine Chapel, where the *Miserere* by Gregorio Allegri was performed. This work was considered so sacred that no one was allowed to have copies of the score. However, after the service Wolfgang transcribed the piece from memory. A few weeks later Mozart received from the Pope the Order of the Golden Spur, an honour similar to a knighthood, conferred by the Pope on people who have contributed to the glory of the Church. Mozart treasured this honour, which had previously been given to the composer Christoph Willibald Gluck (and, oddly enough, to Giacomo Casanova).

After the easy-going Schrattenbach died in 1771, the new Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymus Colloredo, did not give Leopold a much hoped-for promotion to Kapellmeister and took a dim view of Leopold's leaving town to tour with his son. Leopold and Wolfgang did manage another Italian trip in late 1772 and a trip to Vienna in 1773, by which time Wolfgang had been given a position as concertmaster at the Prince Archbishop's court. Both Leopold and Wolfgang were unhappy working for Colloredo and hoped not only to promote Wolfgang's career but to find secure jobs for both of them away from Salzburg. By 1777 Colloredo refused to give Leopold permission to leave town for what would have amounted to a job-hunting trip. Therefore, in September of that year Wolfgang left on his first journey without his father. His mother went with him, and he was under strict instructions from Leopold to find employment or make money. The trip would be fateful in many ways and would cause years of conflict between father and son.

First of all, when Mozart and his mother arrived in Mannheim, Wolfgang met the Weber family, with four daughters, all talented musicians. Three of them, Aloysia, Josepha, and Sophie, would become professional singers. Josepha would be the first Queen of the Night in Mozart's opera *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*). Mozart soon fell in love with Aloysia, for whom he would write a number of arias. The fourth sister, Constanze, would one day become Mozart's wife.

Mozart dawdled in Mannheim, composing and enjoying Aloysia's company as Leopold became increasingly frustrated, pressuring him to make something of himself: *find a steady and good appointment, or, if that should fail, go to a place where good money can be made*. Early in 1778 Wolfgang hatched plans to travel with Aloysia



and her father and a sister to Italy to find her some singing gigs and tried to persuade his father to approve this scheme. But Leopold lay down the law (and showed his skill at inflicting guilt trips) in a furious letter to his son:

*I have read your letter of February 4 with amazement and horror... I have not slept all night and I am so weak that I have to write very slowly, word by word ... Your proposal to travel about with Herr Weber and, Nota Bene, 2 of his daughters has almost driven me to insanity ... Off with you to Paris!*

In March 1778 Mozart and his mother finally left Mannheim for Paris, where Mozart taught, composed, and saw some of his works performed. However, the elusive secure employment did not materialize.

Then tragedy struck. Mozart's mother died suddenly of typhus in July, devastating both Wolfgang and Leopold. Wolfgang did not rush home immediately to Salzburg as his father wanted, but rather stayed in Paris until September. He dreaded returning to Salzburg to work again for the Prince-Archbishop. He made his way to Mannheim in the hope of finding Aloysia, who had moved to Munich. Leopold was furious and now seemed to blame Wolfgang for his mother's death, writing:

*I really don't know what to say anymore – I will either lose my mind or die of exhaustion... Your whole intent is to ruin me so you can build your castles in the air ... I hope that, after your mother had to die in Paris already, you will not also burden your conscience by expediting the death of your father.*

Wolfgang tried to find work in Mannheim with no luck, and then traveled to Munich where Aloysia rejected him. Devastated, he finally returned to Salzburg, a city he now hated. He wrote to his father, *I'm looking forward to seeing you but not Salzburg ... I can't stand Salzburg and its inhabitants ... I find their language – their manners quite insufferable.*

He petitioned the Prince-Archbishop for a job and in February 1779 was appointed court organist with responsibilities for composing new works. Over the next year he performed in the cathedral and composed sacred works, symphonies, concertos, serenades and dramatic music. Late in 1780 he was offered a commission for an opera for Munich. He traveled to Munich to work on what now is considered his finest early opera, *Idomeneo, rè di Creta* (K. 366). During this time he kept in touch with his father, discussing many details of the music and stagecraft of the new opera and sending messages through Leopold to the librettist, Gianbattista Varesco, a priest at the court chapel in Salzburg. The opera premiered successfully in January 1781.

The relationship of father and son, at least on a professional level, seemed close, as they discussed the creation of this new work. But some of the hurt remained, despite efforts on both sides to maintain a rapport. When Wolfgang was ill with a cold, Leopold advised him on remedies and offered to take care of him should he become worse, but added a spiteful little dig, *If I had been with your Mother, I would like to believe, she would still be alive.*

Wolfgang was still chafing at working for the autocratic Colloredo, Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, and he was still anxious to get out of Salzburg. Early in 1787 Colloredo traveled to Vienna to visit his own father and ordered Wolfgang to join him. Colloredo saw musicians as mere servants and treated Mozart with a disdain that the young man finally could no longer tolerate. In May, Wolfgang had had enough and quit. Leopold was appalled, not only because Wolfgang was now without a secure job, but because it meant his son would not return to Salzburg with the Prince-Archbishop.

Indeed, Wolfgang stayed in Vienna, doing freelance work: teaching, publishing his music, performing, composing, and working on whatever commissions came his way. He managed to make a good living, although his poor spending habits meant the money went out as quickly as it came in.

The rift between father and son deepened when in 1782 Mozart announced he was marrying Constanze Weber, Aloysia's sister. Leopold did eventually give his consent to the marriage (his letter agreeing to the marriage arrived just after the wedding), but he was still disappointed in his son's choice.

Over the next nine years, Wolfgang and Constanze had six children, four of whom died in infancy. Only two sons, Carl Thomas (1784 - 1858) and Franz Xavier Wolfgang (1791 - 1844) would survive into adulthood.

Mozart continued to work away in Vienna, composing dozens of new works. His opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*, K. 384) had premiered in 1782 and was a huge success – in fact this was Mozart's most popular theatrical piece during his lifetime. It is also the piece of which the Emperor Joseph II is reported to have criticized for having *too many notes, my dear Mozart*.

In February 1785, Leopold finally traveled from Salzburg to Vienna to visit Wolfgang and Constanze. This was his first opportunity to witness firsthand the fact that his son was making it as a successful and extremely popular composer, conductor, and pianist. A busy round of concerts allowed Leopold to see how the audiences responded to his son's music. After one such concert, Leopold wrote proudly to Nannerl:

*Your brother played a magnificent concerto that he had composed for Mademoiselle Paradis in Paris. I was sitting in the back, only two boxes away from the beautiful Princess of Württemberg, and had the pleasure of hearing the interplay of all the instruments so clearly that tears of joy came into my eyes. When your brother left the stage, the emperor waved his hat to him and shouted Bravo Mozart.*

Leopold was also deeply moved after a chamber concert of three of Wolfgang's new string quartets, which Mozart would later dedicate, along with three others, to the great Franz Joseph Haydn, perhaps the most beloved and respected composer in Europe. These six quartets (KV 387 in G major, KV 421 in D minor, KV 428 in E flat major, KV 458 in B flat major, KV 464 in A major, and KV 465 in C major) are still known as the Haydn Quartets.

Haydn himself had been guest of honour at this concert, and afterward he told Leopold, *Before God and as an honest man I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name. He has taste and, what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition.*

In December 1786, Mozart's great comic opera *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*) was rapturously received in Prague. This was his first opera with the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte. The two of them wrote a total of three operas together – a collaboration that gave the world perhaps the finest operas in the repertoire: *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* (1787), and *Così fan tutte* (*So do they all*, 1790).

In January 1787 Mozart was invited to Prague to conduct *Le nozze di Figaro*. On his arrival Mozart wrote gleefully to his friend Emilian Gottfried von Jacquin, about the welcome the opera was receiving:

*I watched with greatest pleasure how everyone was hopping about with sheer delight to the music of my "Figaro," which had been transformed into Contredanses and German dances. Here they talk of nothing but Figaro. Nothing but Figaro is played, trumpeted, sung, whistled. No opera is seen as much as Figaro; again and again it is Figaro. It's all a great honour for me.*

As a result of the Prague success of *Le nozze di Figaro*, Mozart received a commission for a new opera, *Don Giovanni*, which would premiere in Prague in October 1787. In the intervening months, Mozart worked on his new opera as well as a number of other compositions. 1787 was an eventful and profoundly stressful year for Mozart in many ways.

During April of that year, a 16-year-old from Bonn named Ludwig van Beethoven came to Mozart for some lessons; after just two weeks Beethoven had to return to Bonn as his mother was ill. He and Mozart never met again.

That same month the Mozarts moved to a less expensive place, and Wolfgang became quite ill with kidney problems.

The year ended with the birth of Mozart and Constanze's fourth child, Theresia Constanzia Adelheid Freiderika Maria Anna, who was to die six months later. 1787 was also the year Mozart's doctor, Sigmund Barisani, a childhood friend, died at the age of 29. Mozart's pet bird also died (the composer wrote a poem about it).

Most traumatic of all, however, was the death of Mozart's father on May 28, 1787. Although Leopold had been ill, his death was sudden, and Mozart had no chance to travel from Vienna to Salzburg to see his father once more.

Mozart's last letter to his father, written April 4, reflects the affection he felt for him, despite the differences they had had over the years.

*This very moment I have received a piece of news which greatly distresses me, the more so as I gathered from your last letter that, thank God, you were very well indeed. But now I hear that you are really ill. I need hardly tell you how greatly I am longing to receive some reassuring news from yourself. And I still expect it; although I have now made a habit of being prepared in all affairs of life for the worst. As death, when we come to consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence, I have formed during the last few years such close relations with this best and truest friend of mankind, that his image is not only no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling! ... I hope and trust that while I am writing this, you are feeling better. But if, contrary to all expectation, you are not recovering, I implore you. . . not to hide it from me, but to tell me the whole truth or get someone to write it to me, so that as quickly as is humanly possible I may come to your arms. I entreat you by all that is sacred - to both of us.*

However, Mozart would never see his father again.

For the rest of his life, Mozart's home base was Vienna, although he continued to travel, visiting Prague three times and traveling to Dresden, Leipzig, Potsdam, and Berlin in 1789 in search of the elusive permanent job or at least some lucrative commissions.

Mozart's last few years were a roller-coaster ride of highs and lows. He was buoyed by his enthusiastic welcome in Prague, first when he arrived in January 1787 for performances of *Le nozze di Figaro* and later for the premieres of his operas *Don Giovanni* in October 1787 and *La clemenza di Tito* (*The Clemency of Titus*) in September 1791, just three months before his death. Also in September 1791 *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*) premiered to acclaim in Vienna.

A deep disappointment for Mozart was the attitude of the new emperor, Leopold II. The former emperor, Joseph II, had liked Mozart (despite a lack of monetary support and the infamous *too many notes* comment). However, Leopold II ignored the composer completely and did not include him among the musicians invited to his coronation in Frankfurt in 1790. Mozart went to Frankfurt anyway, possibly hoping some concerts or commissions would materialize.

Health problems plagued both Wolfgang and Constanze and added to their financial difficulties. Mozart's income was unpredictable at best, and their debts grew. Mozart continued to work feverishly through 1791, his final year of life, completing not only *Die Zauberflöte* and *La Clemenza di Tito*, but some 30 other compositions, including sets of minuets and German dances, songs, concertos, even a couple of pieces for glass harmonica. In July he began work on his great *Requiem* (*Mass for the Dead*), KV 626, which was commissioned by an anonymous patron, Count Franz Walsegg-Stuppach, whose wife had recently died. The Count, a musician himself, wanted to pass the work off as his own composition.

In November, 1791, Mozart fell ill, and on December 5, 1791, he died from what was probably complications arising from infection, a chronic kidney ailment, and rheumatic fever, (not, as is suggested in the engrossing, but fictionalized movie *Amadeus*, by poison). He left the *Requiem* unfinished, but discussed its completion with his pupil Süssmayr. After his death Constanze, in order to receive the rest of the commission money, had the work completed by Süssmayr, based on the composer's outlines and instructions.

Mozart was buried in an unmarked grave just outside Vienna.

In his brief life Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart created a dazzling body of work— over 600 compositions, including symphonies, concerti, sonatas, Masses, piano works, chamber music, and some 20 operas, the best known of which — *Idomeneo*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Die Zauberflöte* — are among the most popular ever composed.

## Mozart's Operas

This list of Mozart's Operas gives the opera name, Köchel number, and date and place of first performance.

- Apollo et Hyacinthus, K.38 (May 13, 1767, University of Salzburg) (intermezzo)
- Bastien und Bastienne, K.50 (K.46b) (October, 1768, Vienna)
- La finta semplice, K.51 (KE 46a) (May 1, 1769, Archbishop's Court, Salzburg)
- Mitridate, Rè di Ponto, K.87 (K.74a) (December 26, 1770, Teatro Regio Ducal, Milan)
- Ascanio in Alba, K.111 (October 17, 1771, Teatro Regio Ducal, Milan)
- Il sogno di Scipione, K.126 (May, 1772, Archiepiscopal Residence, Salzburg)
- Lucio Silla, K.135 (December 26, 1772 Teatro Regio Ducal, Milan)
- La finta giardiniera, K.196 (January 13, 1775 Redoutensaal, Munich)
- Il rè pastore, K.208 (April 23, 1775 Archiepiscopal Residence, Salzburg)
- Thamos, König in Ägypten, K.345 (K.336a) (1779, Salzburg) (Choruses and incidental music)
- Zaide, K.344 (K.336b) (1779; 27.1.1866, Frankfurt) (incomplete)
- Idomeneo, Rè di Creta, K.366 (January 29, 1781 Court Theatre, Munich)
- Die Entführung aus dem Serail, K.384 (July 16, 1782 Burgtheater, Vienna)
- L'oca del Cairo, K.422 (1784; 4.1860, Frankfurt) (fragment)
- Lo sposo deluso, ossia La Rivalità di tre donne per un solo amante, K.430 (K.424a) (1784) (fragment)
- Der Schauspieldirektor, K.486 (February 7, 1786 Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna)
- Le nozze di Figaro, K.492 (May 1, 1786 Burgtheater, Vienna)
- Il dissoluto punito, ossia il Don Giovanni, K.527 (October 29, 1787, Nationaltheater, Prague)
- Così fan tutte, ossia La Scuola degli Amanti, K.588 (January 26, 1790, Burgtheater, Vienna)
- La Clemenza di Tito, K.621 (September 6, 1791 Nationaltheater, Prague)
- Die Zauberflöte, K.620 (September 30, 1791, Theater auf der Wieden, Vienna)

(list from <http://opera.stanford.edu/Mozart/>)

## Whatever Happened to Nannerl?

Remember that there were two Mozart prodigies. Mozart's sister Maria Anna Walburga Ignatia Mozart (Nannerl) was four and a half years older than her brother and a gifted keyboard player. Leopold took the brother-sister act on the road for three tours between 1762 and 1769 where they played for royalty throughout Austria and Europe.

However, once Nannerl turned 18, she was no longer included on the tours but rather was left home with her mother while Leopold devoted himself to touring with Wolfgang. There was no option for a woman like Nannerl to work as a professional musician, and so her education was cut short. She was not trained to play the violin and organ, to improvise and to compose. She did try her hand at writing music, but none of her compositions survived. Mozart thought highly of his sister's ability. He regularly sent his compositions to her, and in September 1781 he wrote to her from Vienna: ". . . believe me, you could earn a great deal of money in Vienna for example, by playing at private concerts and by giving piano lessons. You would be very much in demand - and you would be well paid."

However, Nannerl's job in life would be to marry. Music would be reserved for domestic occasions. She actually did not marry until 1784, when she was 33. Her husband, chosen by Leopold, who had previously rejected her choices of suitors, was a wealthy magistrate, Johann Baptist Franz von Berchtold zu Sonnenburg, 47 years old, already twice a widower and the father of five children. Nannerl and her husband lived in St. Gilgen and had three children, two of whom died before reaching adulthood.

Over the years, brother and sister grew more distant, partly because Wolfgang went against Leopold's wishes and married Constanze Weber. Like her father, Nannerl did not approve of the Weber family.

After her husband's death in 1801, Maria Anna returned to Salzburg and supported herself once again by giving piano lessons. She died on October 29, 1829, at the age of 78. Only her son, Leopold, survived her.

Young people may enjoy a short novel, *The Secret Wish of Nannerl Mozart*, which explores what might have happened if just a few things had worked out differently for Nannerl Mozart.

Canadian author Barbara Kathleen Nickel's engaging "what if" story about Mozart's sister is set in 1763 during the family's grand tour through Munich, and to Paris and Versailles. The story gives a vivid account of travel and family life in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century from the point of view of 12-year-old Nannerl, who dreams of learning to play the violin, to improvise and to compose in a society which does not allow women to work as professional musicians or composers. As she deals with a sometimes pesky little brother who gets the lion's share of attention and encouragement, Nannerl decides to compose a symphony.

This is a touching portrayal of a young girl for whom music was as natural and vital as food and air. It also includes a brief chronology of Nannerl's life and notes from the author explaining which parts of the story are fiction and which are real.

Barbara Kathleen Nickel. *The Secret Wish of Nannerl Mozart*. Second Story Press, Toronto, 1996.

## Recommended Resources

<http://www.mozartproject.org/index.html>

The Mozart Project: an excellent online resource, with a biography of Mozart, lists of his compositions, and more.

<http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/variations/scores/bhq9391/index.html>

Vocal Score of Don Giovanni in Italian with English translation

<http://www.opera-guide.ch/libretto.php?id=251&uilang=de&lang=en>

Libretto of Don Giovanni in English

Amanda and Anthony Holden. *Don Giovanni*. Andre Deutsch Limited, 1987.

Another English translation of the libretto, this one by Amanda and Anthony Holden for a 1985 performance by the English National Opera. The introduction includes fascinating notes about the challenges of translating the libretto from Italian into English, including a few comparisons with other popular translations of *Don Giovanni*. In this POV study guide, most quotations from the libretto are from this translation.

Robert Spaethling. *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life: Selected Letters*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.

A collection of Mozart's letters, translated by Robert Spaethling and interspersed with commentaries that put the letters into the context of Mozart's life. A chronology of Mozart's life and a superbly detailed index make this an unusually intimate and useful study of Mozart.

## Activities and Topics for Class Discussion or Writing

### 1. Creating a Character Sketch

Read the synopsis of the opera or a translation of the libretto. Create a character sketch for one of the characters. Consider the following questions: What can be assumed about this person? What is the character's relationship with the other characters? Why does the character make the choices he or she does? Include evidence from the opera to support your claims.

Include the following information:

- the Character's physical characteristics (style and physical attributes);
- Psychological Characteristics (mental aspects of character, how does he/she think?)
- Emotional Characteristics (is he/she generally cheerful, sad, snobbish, "off-balance" etc.?)
- Other interesting facts

After seeing the opera, look at your character sketch again. Does any aspect of the performance or the music you heard change your view of the character you have profiled? Why? Do the emotions conveyed through the music fit the character sketch?

### 2. Creating a journal from the point of view of a character

Write a journal for the character you chose for your character sketch, describing the events of the opera from the character's point of view, using the character profile for assistance.

Take on the persona of that character and refer to the character in the first person. Remember to express only information that your character would know.

### 3. Writing a Review of the opera

After seeing the opera, make some notes in point form, answering the following questions:

- What did you like about the opera? What did you dislike?
- What did you think about the sets, props and costumes?
- Would you have done something differently? Why?
- What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?
- What did you think of the singers' portrayal of their characters?

Discuss your reactions with your fellow students. Feel free to go beyond the questions listed above. Then begin to outline your review. Keep in mind that a review should contain the following:

- A clearly stated purpose (why are you writing this and who is your audience?)
- A brief plot synopsis (including who sang what role, etc.)
- A coherent series of paragraphs comparing and contrasting things you liked or didn't like
- A summary / closing paragraph

Your review should capture the interest of the reader. You might read a few examples of reviews for fine arts events from the newspaper. Once your outline has been completed, write your rough draft.

Exchange reviews with other students to critique and edit. Focus on effective and logical expression of ideas and correct grammar and punctuation. Edit and revise your review until you have a polished final version.

Students might submit their writing for publication such as a school newspaper. Students are also welcome to send the reviews to Pacific Opera. We would love to hear your thoughts!

# Teacher's Comments

Your comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire and return it to the address below. Thank you for your comments and suggestions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade(s) you teach: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Subjects: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you attended other arts events with your students in the past year?  Yes  No

If yes, what were they? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you able to use the Teacher's Study Guide in your classroom activities before attending the opera?  
 Yes  No

If not, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

If so, which sections of the Study Guide did you find most useful?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How appropriate was the information provided in the Study Guide? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would you add/delete?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you spend classroom time discussing the performance after your students attended the opera?  
 Yes  No

Do you have any comments about the performance itself?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive information on our future Student Dress Rehearsals?  Yes  No

How would you like to receive information?  Fax  Email  Letters  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Further comments and suggestions \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to:

**Pacific Opera, 1815 Blanshard Street, Suite 500, Victoria, BC V8T 5A4 Fax: 250.382.4944**