

Thursday, January 22, 2009



We are now less than a week away from the birth of one of music's most extraordinary talents.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born on January 27, 1756 at 8:00pm in Salzburg. I sometimes wonder whether his five-year-old sister, Nannerl, was allowed to hold her new

brother on that first night. Little could she have known that he would be her performing partner for the next twelve years.

Math Quizzical How old would Mozart be if he was alive now?

Schoenbrunn When Mozart was just 5, he and Nannerl went to Vienna to play for Empress Maria Theresa at Schoenbrunn. The picture above shows only one wing of the palace, so you can imagine how many rooms it contains! Tiny Wolfgang became known as "the little magician" because he played like an adult who already knew so much about music. When he skidded on the long polished floors, Princess Marie Antoinette picked him up. Mozart affectionately declared he'd marry her someday. He didn't of course. She married the King of France, and was beheaded in the French Revolution.

The Grand Tour Later, the children were taken on a three-year concert trip around the courts of Europe. Imagine being away from your house for that long! In Holland, Mozart became so sick with typhoid that they thought he would die! The [Teacher's Notes](#) include letters home written by his father, Leopold, that give us the real flavor of the trip. He was Mozart's teacher on both violin and piano.



Listen to the [Mozart's Magnificent Voyage](#) CD, which describes Mozart's life from the point of view of his 7-year old son, Karl. Play more of his music from either [The Best of Classical Kids](#) or Don Campbell's [The Mozart Effect](#).

Write a letter to one of your friends as if you're Mozart or Nannerl traveling around Europe. As described in the Teacher's Notes, write about the long bumpy coach rides, flea-ridden hostels, or long 4-hour dinners at the court of Versailles.

Classical Architecture and Music When Nannerl and "Wolfie" were not traveling, they lived in Salzburg. Situated on a river with a castle far above it, the lovely Austrian town in the picture above is typically "classical" in its architecture. Looking at Schoenbrunn and Salzburg, notice the evenly spaced windows and exquisite details of the buildings. They show the beauty, balance and lyricism that shines through Mozart's music. For instance, notice the balanced repeated phrases in the bouncing Horn Concerto that opens [Mozart's Magnificent Voyage](#).



Design a castle or gardens in the classical style, based on the first two pictures.

Vienna Mozart lived most of his adult life in Vienna with Constanza and his two boys. Do you like horses? Well, Vienna is a gracious city of wide classical avenues and formal gardens, best seen from horse carriage. Or maybe you prefer chocolate? Puff chocolate pastries were a favorite of Mozart's too!

The Magic Flute In a later entry, we'll visit [Mozart's Magic Fantasy](#). Mozart is the

only composer to which I dedicated two CDs -- one about his life and the other about his last great opera. Both have great appeal to children.

The last picture (below) is a statue of Mozart who died tragically at only 36. Notice his youth and grace – exactly what we hear in his music. Let me close with a quotation for you to think about:

Mozart was born a man and died a child.

What might this mean? If you get stuck, look in the paragraph beginning with Schoenbrunn, or in the [Teacher's Notes](#).

Visit us often, but especially on the last Thursday of each month when I'll write again. Until then, keep listening!

Sue Hammond



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Next Blog: Thursday, February 26, 2009