

“Focus” Series 2007-08 – Program I: “The Mozart Family Grand Tour: 1763-1766”:

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Leopold Mozart (1719-1787) – Sleigh Ride:

The father of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Leopold Mozart was born in Augsburg in 1719. The son of bookbinder and seller, Leopold studied philosophy at the Benedictine University in Salzburg but was expelled in 1739 for poor attendance. He shunned the wishes of his family concerning his career in a way eerily foreshadowing his own son's willful manner. Leopold was a man of wide interests and after leaving the university joined the musical establishment of the Archbishop of Salzburg, a prelate in whose service he rose to become court composer and deputy Kapellmeister. He maintained that position, without further advancement, until his death in 1787. As part of his duties, according to his son, Leopold wrote a great many “contrapuntal and other church works, oratorios and pieces for the theater, symphonies, large-scale serenatas and concertos.” In 1756, he published a textbook on violin playing, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* a book highly regarded and seen as the most valuable treatise of its kind.

It was also in 1756 that Leopold's only surviving son, Wolfgang, was born. Out of seven children born to Leopold and Anna Maria Pertl, only two survived – Wolfgang and Nannerl. Leopold called his son Wolfgang the “miracle which God let be born in Salzburg.” The child born from “divine intervention” was to change Leopold's life forever. By about 1771 he had gradually abandoned his own creative ambitions to nurse along those of his son. For the rest of his life, Leopold maintained his duties at court but devoted almost all of his time and energy to educating Wolfgang and his talented sister, Maria Anna, called Nannerl by the family. Through his son's teenage years, Leopold acted as teacher, private secretary, confidante, impresario, proofreader, editor, and copyist, carefully preserving the boy's manuscripts and compiling a catalog of his most important works.

Leopold was also responsible for arranging several tours throughout Europe. These tours were numerous and highly successful. No one knows for certain how much money was made from these travels, but some have criticized Leopold for exploiting the talents of his children. Nevertheless, there is no doubting that Wolfgang's development ultimately benefited from his knowledge of the world outside of Salzburg. One of the tours that affected Wolfgang most profoundly was the one that inspired tonight's program: “The Mozart Family Grand Tour: 1763-1766.”

Jean-Phillipe Rameau (1683-1764) – Suite from *Les Indes galantes*:

Jean-Phillipe Rameau was the most important French musical figure of the 18th century. The son of a church musician, he was born in Dijon in 1683 and was intended for a legal career before getting himself kicked out school for lack of interest. Now with the support of his father, in his late teens he went to study in Italy in 1701 and gained experience as an organist and violinist. The next twenty years saw Rameau returning to France where he served as an organist and teacher in various cities ranging from Avignon

to Clermont-Ferrand. Finally, he settled in Paris in 1722 and published his monumental *Traité de l'harmonie (Treatise of Harmony)*, a one of the great achievements of the Enlightenment and a significant treatise codifying the significant advances in music theory and harmony of the preceding decades. Its release caused such a sensation as to earn Rameau the title of the “Newton of music.” A patient and persistent man, Rameau continued to compose and perform in relative obscurity for almost the first half of his life. His breakthrough came at the ripe old age of fifty when he succeeded in having the Académie royale de Musique accept in 1733 his opera *Hippolyte et Aricie*. Progressive by nature, Rameau caused quite a stir with the Parisian public, shocking them with music that challenged with its harmonic audacities and extravagant orchestration. Audiences split into two camps: the conservative *lullistes* who remained loyal to the established style of the 17th-century founder of French opera, Jean-Baptiste Lully and the progressive *ramistes* who embraced Rameau’s innovations (they were nicknamed by their detractors *ramoneurs* or ‘chimney sweeps’). As other successful operas followed – *Les Indes galantes* (1735), *Castor et Pollux* (1737), *Dardanus* (1739) – his opposition mounted, most notably from the naturalist, Jean Jacques Rousseau, who protested that the simple style of Italian opera was superior to the elaborate French variety of the genre. All of these venomous attacks, however, only served to increase Rameau’s profile and fame. Up to his death at the age of 81 in 1764 (Mozart was 8 yrs. old at the time), he continued to compose steadily for the stage; he left all told almost thirty examples of the *tragedie lyrique* and *opera-ballet*. Rameau’s grand and elegant and highly ornamented compositions stand out as the epitome of *Rococo* style. Mozart must have been aware and impressed by this style – known also as the *Galant* and characterized by lightness, grace and refinement – because so much of his early music reflects this musical aesthetic.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) – Symphony in F major, K. 19a:

Allegro assai

Andante

Presto

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Symphony in F major, K. 19a was first performed in London in 1765 when the composer was nine years of age. It was one of several performed there during the “Grand Tour of 1763-1766” with his father, Leopold, and sister, Nannerl. Before London, their journeys had taken them all across Europe from Salzburg through Munich, Augsburg, Ludwigsburg, Schwetzingen, Mainz, Koblenz, Aachen, the Netherlands, Brussels, Paris and Versailles. Wolfgang and Nannerl played before astonished and dazzled heads of court, church, and state. Since London rewarded musicians especially well financially – and since perhaps the ever-pragmatic Leopold saw an opportunity to make some money – the Mozarts stayed there for some fifteen months. Leopold arranged concerts for February and May of 1765 intended to spotlight in festive fashion some of his son’s new orchestral works. The Symphony in F major, K. 19a, composed earlier that year (if not in London then possibly in the Hague, Netherlands), was probably first heard at one of those concerts.

The music is written in the *gallant* or *rococo* style of Johann Christian Bach, the youngest son of Johann Sebastian, who had found a home in London and who was to become one of the leading proponents of the emerging Classical style (see below). In

addition to strings, the Symphony in F major, K. 19a, is scored for pairs of oboes and horns. It is cast in three movements (fast, slow, and fast) with moods alternating from vivacious to polished to downright jolly.

Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782) – Sinfonia for double orchestra in E-flat, Op. 18, No. 1:

Born in Leipzig in 1735, Johann Christian Bach was the youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach. Even though his life span was relatively short, compared to his many talented musical brothers, J.C. Bach traveled more extensively and became more widely acclaimed than any of his siblings. His grounding in music must have been thorough in that for the first fifteen years of his life he lived with his father who supervised his musical instruction. Then followed nearly five years in Berlin under the guardianship of his immensely talented brother Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. This experience broadened J.C. Bach's musical horizons and brought him into contact with the world of opera. An ensuing seven years in Italy exposed him to numerous new cultural experiences and laid the foundations of a reputation as a fine opera composer. This made it possible for him to settle in London where he found a congenial base for his endeavors as composer, performer and teacher for most of the rest of his life. Enjoying royal patronage, he composed prolifically in all the principal instrumental genres of the time: keyboard sonatas, chamber works, overtures, symphonies, and concertos.

J.C. Bach's reputation was formidable, earned through the publication of his compositions in most of the main centers of Europe, leading to invitations to write for the Mannheim court and the Paris Opera, two of the continent's major musical institutions. Sadly, despite the composer's esteem and successes, London audiences tired of his music and he died in debt at the age of 46 after a period of poor-health. But while un lamented by the British public, his admirer and friend of nearly twenty years, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, mourned him.

In the winter of 1782, Leopold Mozart received a letter from his son, Wolfgang, sent from Vienna: "I suppose you have heard that the London Bach is dead? What a loss to the musical world!" The "London Bach" was, of course, none other than Johann Christian Bach. More than any other Bach; Johann Christian was the principal influence in the development of Wolfgang Amadeus' musical style, with the two composers forming a sort of mutual admiration society. As part of Leopold's "Grand Family Tour of 1763 to 1766," the young Mozart met elder Bach who was at the time the Queen's Music Master and the one responsible for scheduling the prodigy's appearances. Rather than reacting with jealousy, Johann Christian was charmed with the eight-year-old wunderkind and the two got on wonderfully. One account reported that Bach seated himself at the keyboard and took the boy upon his knee, with "each in turn playing a bar or so with so much precision that no one would have suspected two performers." Further delighting the audience, Johann Christian began improvising a fugue and little Wolfgang completed it. Mozart from early on took to the elegant, effortless, and *gallant* lines of the music of J.C. Bach, so much so that it served as a major foundation for his compositions. In homage to the older composer, Mozart arranged some Johann Christian's sonatas and concertos, and in later years remained loyal in acknowledging the artistic debt he owed him.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) – Piano Concerto No. 9 in E-flat, K. 271,
Jeunehomme:

Allegro

Andantino

Rondo: Presto

Before moving to Vienna in 1781, Mozart called Salzburg home for over a quarter of a century. However, it is interesting and telling that he actually spent less than half of that time in his native town. His father, Leopold, whisked the boy genius off on his first tour – “The Mozart Grand Family Tour” – when the child was all of six years old. Some nine other tours followed over the next two decades. After infancy, it is remarkable to think that Mozart’s longest stay in Salzburg lasted no more than a mere one and one-half years! That period was from March 1775, when he returned from Munich following the premiere of his opera buffa *La Finta Giardiniera*, until he left again for Mannheim and Paris in September 1777 in search of a permanent position in one of Europe’s major music capitals. With all of these frequent absences from Salzburg, it is obvious that Mozart felt not a little frustrated with living in the city of his birth. The city was just too small and provincial and provided few opportunities for musical growth, especially in the world of opera, the musical genre in which he longed to compose the most. Here was a man who through so many extensive tours had tasted what could be, and so would no longer abide the conservative and stifling prison that was for him, Salzburg.

In January of 1777, Mozart’s “Salzburg Captivity,” as he termed it, was mitigated if only for a short time by the fresh breeze provided by one Mlle. Jeunehomme, an outstanding French virtuoso who apparently concertized in various countries across the Continent. Blowing in from Paris, Mozart was inspired to write for her the first of his truly great works for piano and orchestra. Alfred Brendel called it a “wonder of the world,” pointing to its extraordinary place in the genre. Its assurance, brilliance, and emotional maturity are without precedence in Mozart’s oeuvre up until that time. The piece stands as a remarkable prototype, way out in front, pointing to the sublime piano concertos there were to come when he would finally escape to Vienna.

Perhaps Alfred Einstein sums it up most eloquently when he writes about Mozart’s E-flat Concerto: Like Beethoven’s *Eroica*, it embodies “not only a profound contrast, and accordingly a higher unity, among its three movements, but also the most intimate relation of soloist and orchestra; and the orchestra itself is treated with greater vitality and more finely wrought detail than before, in truly symphonic style.... The inner agitation [brings] about a constant succession of surprises, both in structure and in the smallest details; nothing is left, not even the cadenzas, to chance or routine.” And Einstein concludes, “It is one of his monumental works, in which he is entirely himself, seeking not to ingratiate himself with his public but rather to win them through originality and boldness. He never surpassed it.”