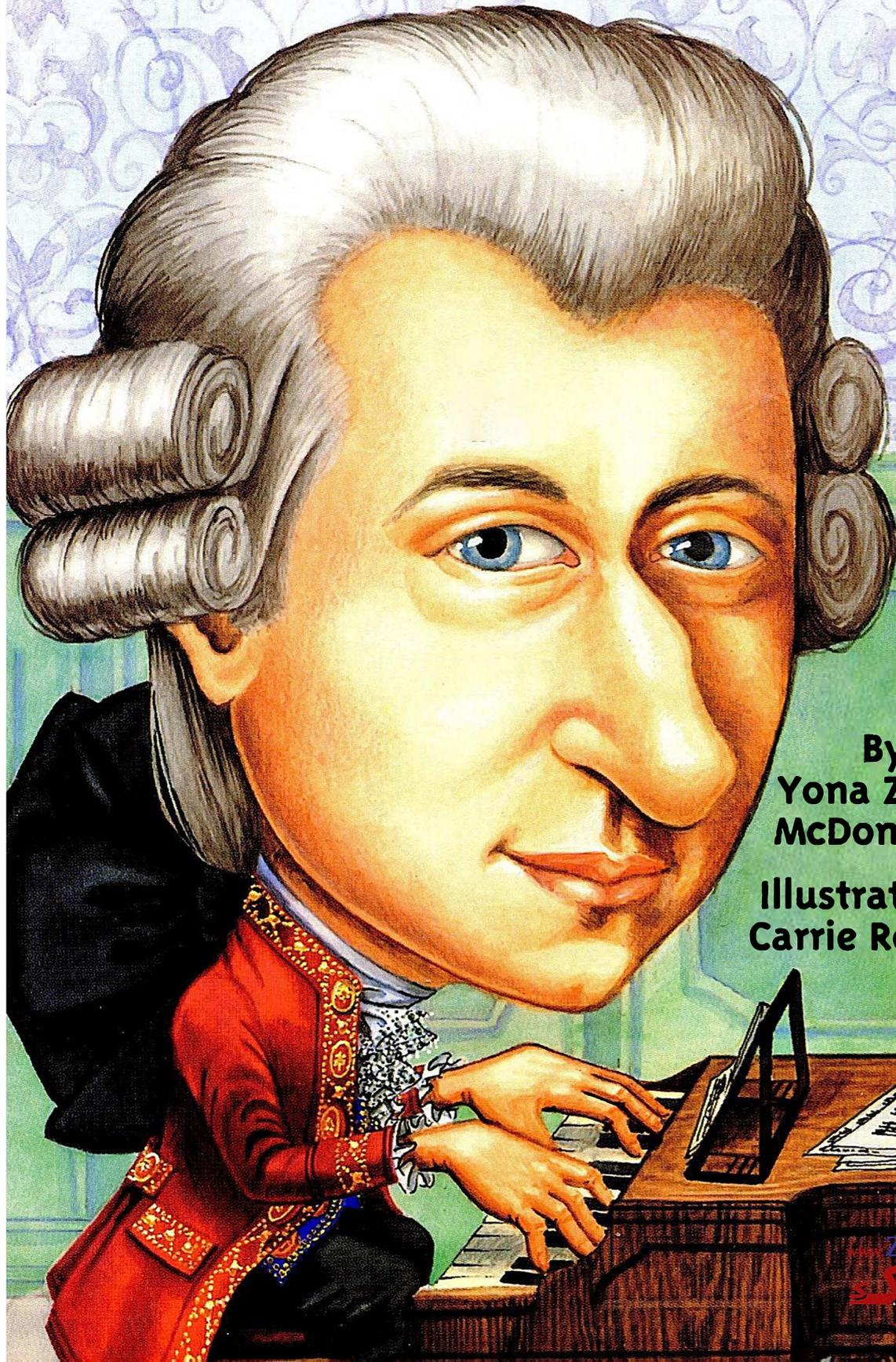


Who Was
Wolfgang Amadeus
Mozart?



By
Yona Zeldis
McDonough
Illustrated by
Carrie Robbins

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Who Was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart?



More than 200 years ago, there was a little boy who learned to play a musical instrument at the age of three. It was called a clavichord, which was an old-fashioned stringed instrument that also had a keyboard. By the time he was five, he was

composing beautiful music—all by himself. At eight, he had learned to play two more instruments, the violin and the organ. Now he could play three instruments.



His father was a musician, too. He wanted everyone to pay attention to his talented son. But some people had a hard time believing that a small boy could be so talented. They thought his father had written the music for him. Or that the boy wasn't a child at all, but a very small adult. There had to be some kind of trick.



A man who was both a lawyer and a musician decided to find out. He tested the boy for many hours. He asked the boy to play a very difficult piece of music. The boy played it easily and well. Then he asked the boy to make up a piece of music for him, right there on the spot. Again, the boy did an excellent job.

Then, a cat came into the room. Right away, the boy stopped playing music and got up to chase it. There was no doubt in the man's mind. The boy was really just a boy, except when he played or wrote music. Then the boy was a genius.

Who was this boy? His name was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and here is his story.



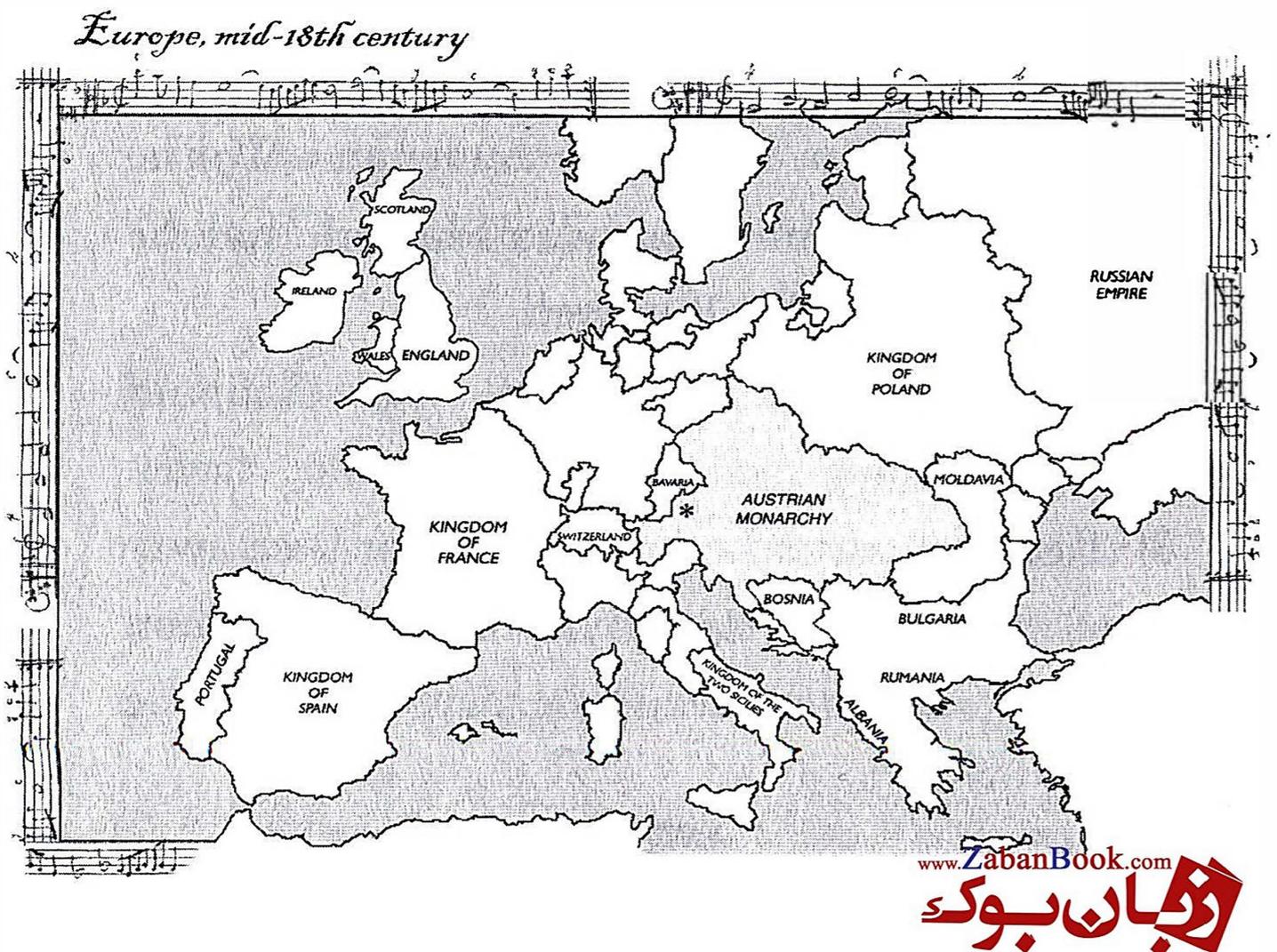
Chapter 1 Little Boy, Big Talent

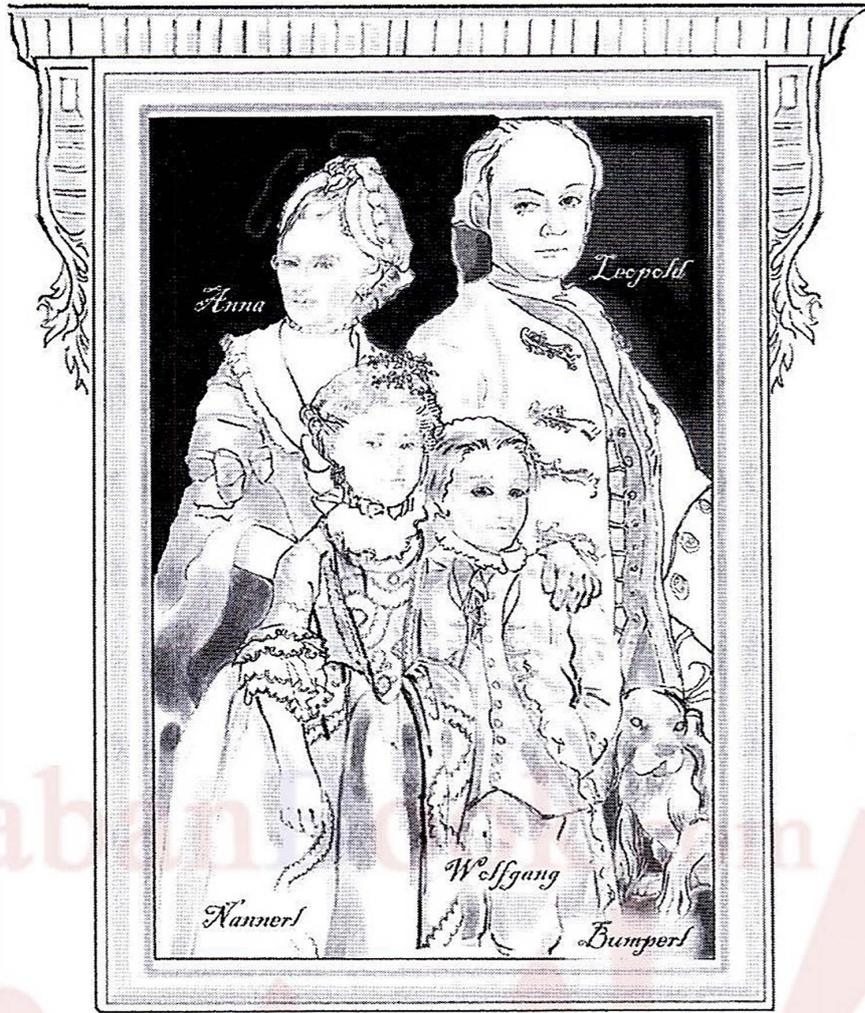


Leopold Mozart

Papa Leopold Mozart was very strict. He was a composer and violinist in Salzburg in Austria. When he was finished working for the day, Leopold came home and gave his daughter and son music lessons. Over and over they played what he taught them. They spent hours every day practicing. Both children became really good musicians. But the boy, Wolfgang, was even more talented than his sister.

Wolfgang was born on January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, Austria. (On the map, the little star inside the Austrian monarchy shows where Salzburg is.) Six children had come before him, so he was the baby of the family. But only Wolfgang and his big sister, Maria Anna, lived past their first birthdays. Back then, when babies or young children got sick, there were no medicines like there are today. So, sadly, it was common for children to die.



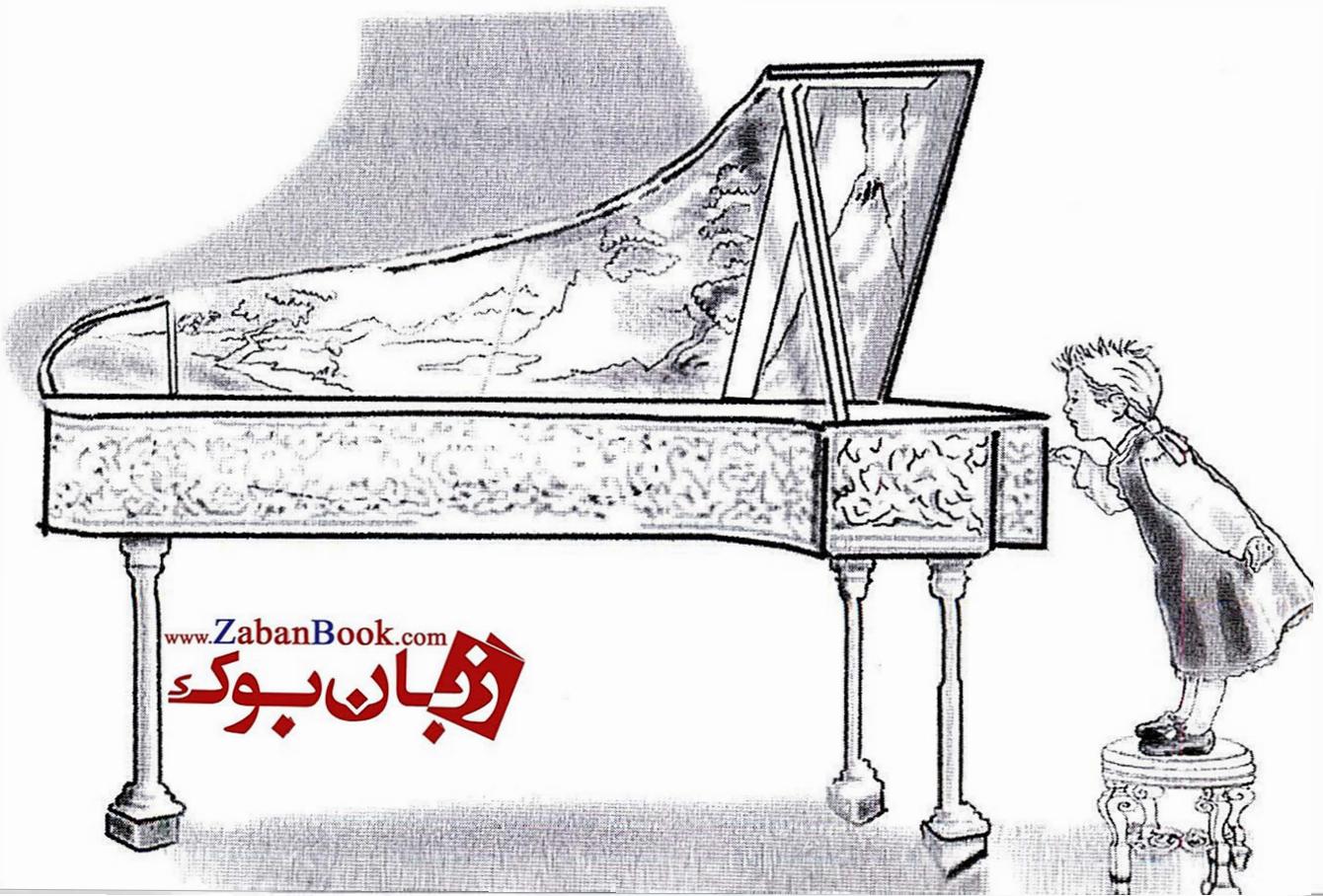


Because Wolfgang had such a long name, his family called him Wolferl, or sometimes Wolfie, for short. Maria Anna was called Nannerl. And the family dog was called Bumperl.

When Nannerl was seven, Papa Leopold started teaching her how to play the clavier. Wolfie, who was only three, could not keep away from the lessons. He would sit on the floor, listening to the music while she played. But Wolfie

was not satisfied. He wanted more: He wanted to play, too. After Nannerl's lesson was over, he went up to the clavier. He was so small that he had to stand on his toes to reach the keys. He tried one note and then another. He liked the sounds that came out of the clavier. They made him smile. But when he played two notes he didn't like, it made his ears hurt. He'd become so upset that he'd cry. Even as a tiny child, Wolfie knew which notes sounded right together and which notes did not.

Papa Leopold started giving Wolfie lessons, too. Soon Wolfie could play all the tunes in Nannerl's music notebook.



Keyboard Instruments in the 18th Century



Harpsichord

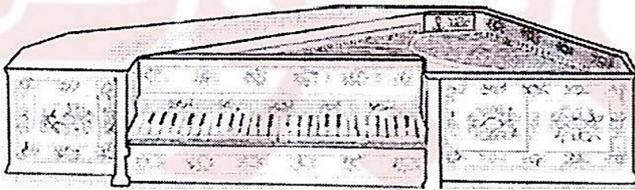
The harpsichord was the most popular of the early keyboard instruments. The strings were made of metal and plucked with quills. The metallic sound was not pleasing to musicians' ears, but Mozart figured out a way to make music sound more beautiful on the harpsichord.

Clavichord

The clavichord was basically a simpler and smaller version of harpsichord that people played at home.

Fortepiano

The name means "loud-soft." Its strings are struck by a covered hammer so the sound can be loud or soft. The fortepiano sounded much more pleasing to musicians and composers than the harpsichord. It also was the first instrument with levers that were worked by the feet. This, too, produced a richer sound.

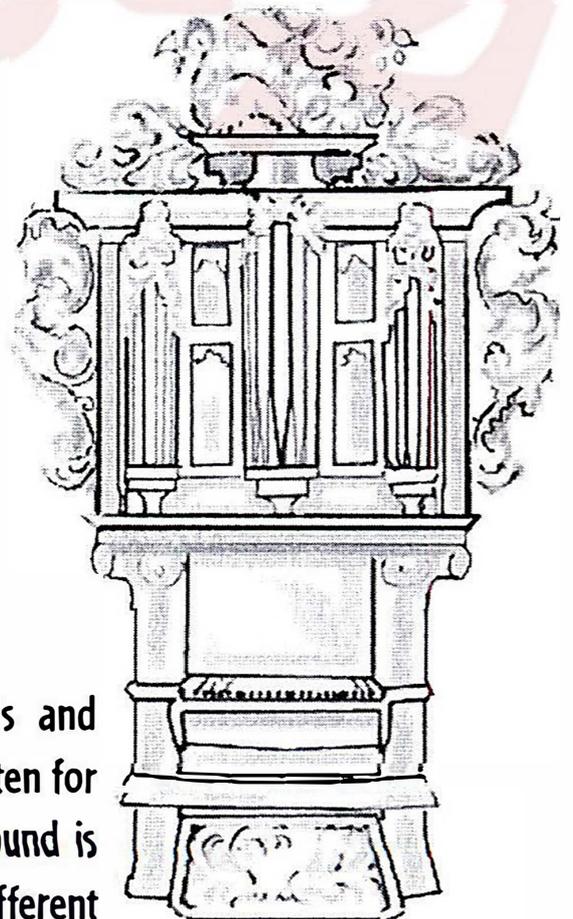


Spinet

The spinet was a tabletop version of the harpsichord with fewer octaves and the same quality of sound.

Organ

The organ usually has two keyboards and pedals which play extra notes. Most music written for the organ is for church services. The huge sound is produced by air moving through pipes of different lengths.

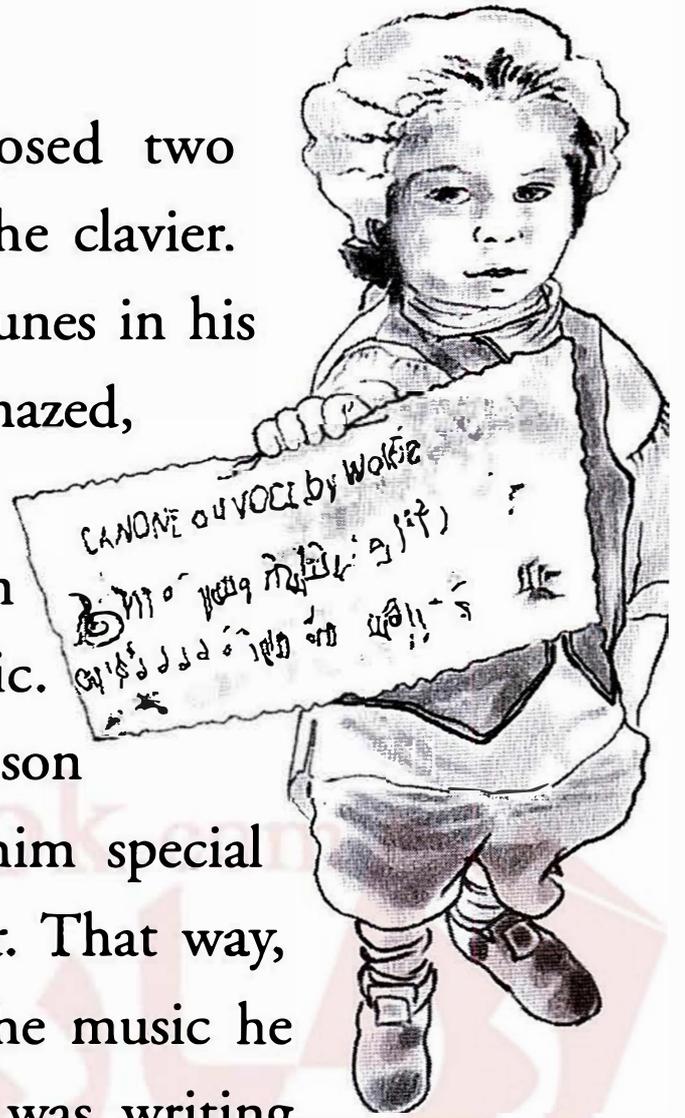


As soon as Wolfie heard a tune, he could play it right back. Papa Leopold could hardly believe it. He made notes on how quickly and easily the little boy learned music.



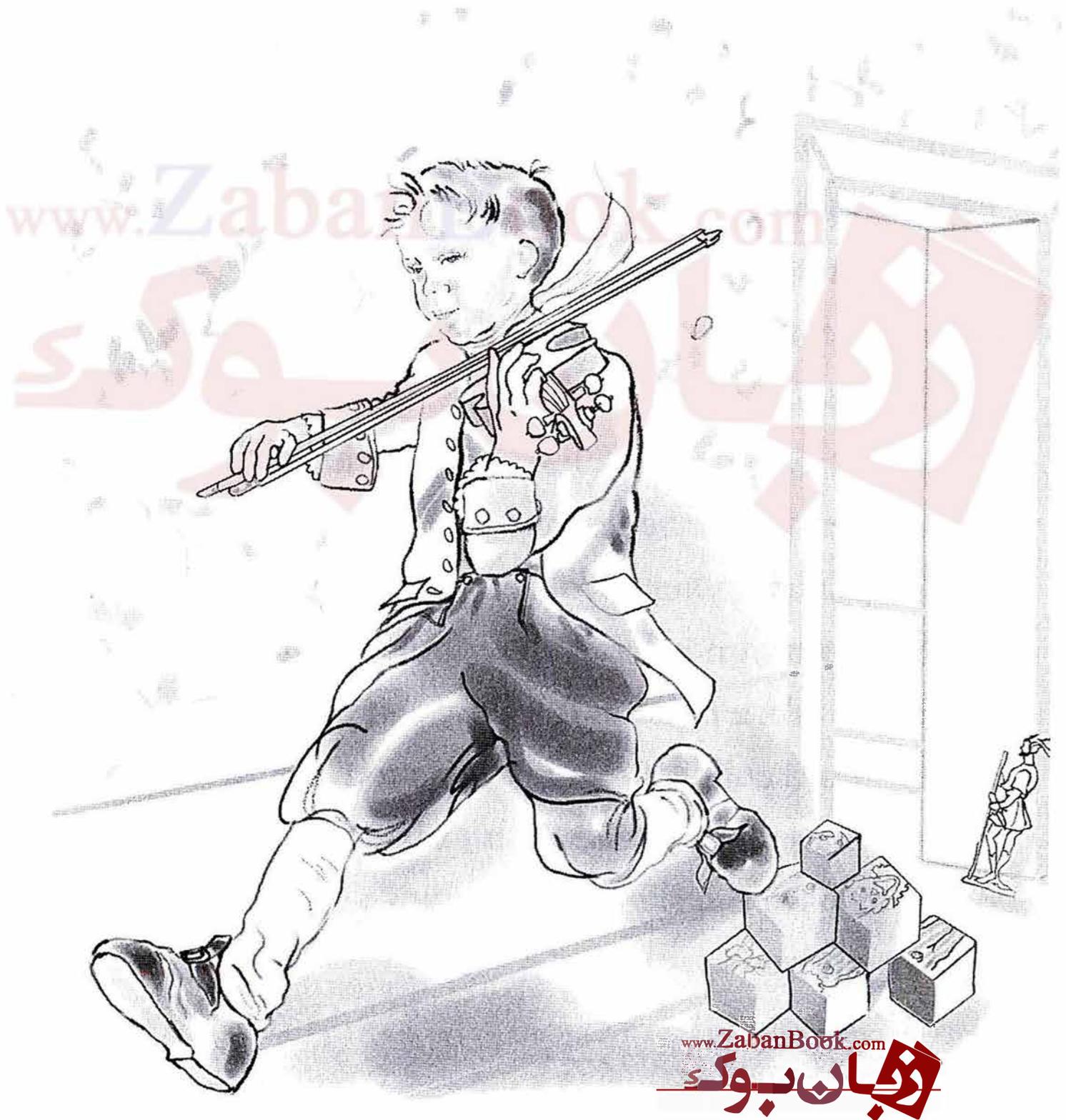
Once, when Wolfie was about four, Papa Leopold saw a sheet of “music” that the boy had been working on. At first, Papa laughed, thinking it was nonsense. But when he looked more closely, he realized that it was a musical composition. And a complicated one at that. Many of the notes were smudged and written over. He stopped laughing and asked Wolfie about it. Wolfie agreed that it was complicated. He said, “...you must practice until you can get it right...” and then he showed his father how it should be played.

At five, Wolfie composed two more pieces of music for the clavier. This means that he heard tunes in his head and played them. Amazed, Papa Leopold wrote them down in his notebook. Soon Wolfie was reading music. Papa Leopold saw that his son had a rare gift. He gave him special ruled sheets of music paper. That way, Wolfie could write down the music he heard in his head. Wolfie was writing music even before he learned to write words.



Years later, when Wolfie had grown up, his father wrote him a letter describing what he had been like: “As a child and a boy, you were serious rather than childish, and when you sat at the clavier or were otherwise intent on music, no one dared to have the slightest jest with you . . . your expression was so solemn.”

Yet making music was also great fun for young Wolfie. He thought about it and played it all the time. Music was always part of the games that he invented. His father's friend, the musician Johann



Schachtner, came to live with the family for a while. He wrote, "If we, he and I, were carrying his toys from one room to another, the one of us who went empty-handed always had to sing or fiddle a



march as we went.” Writing music let Wolfie express all his feelings. When he was happy, he would make up a fast tune, like an *allegro*. When he felt sad, he would make up a slow tune, called an *andante*. These are Italian words that composers and musicians use to describe how music should be played. When a piece of music should be played very slowly, it is called an *adagio*. If it should be played fast, it is a *presto*. Soft tunes, played lightly, are called *piano* or *pianissimo*. Loud tunes are labeled *forte* or *fortissimo*.

Like many children in the eighteenth century, Wolfie and Nannerl did not go to school. They spent the days in their small house where Papa Leopold was their only teacher—for music and everything else.

With Papa Leopold’s help, Wolfie and Nannerl studied reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and geography. Later, when Wolfie started traveling, he learned foreign languages, like Italian and

TIMELINE OF THE WORLD

French and Indian War begins	1754
Lisbon (Portugal) Earthquake kills 30,000 people	1755
The modern sandwich is created by the Fourth Earl of Sandwich	1762
John Hargreaves invents the spinning jenny, making it possible to weave raw fibers into thread faster than ever before	1764
Mapmaker John Spilsbury creates the first jigsaw puzzle	1767
James Watts patents the steam engine	1769
Marie Antoinette marries Louis XVI of France	1770
The first edition of Encyclopedia Britannica is published	1771
The waltz becomes a fashionable dance in Vienna	1773
American Revolution begins; Daniel Boone begins clearing the Wilderness Road into Kentucky	1775
James Cook discovers Hawaii	1778
Astronomer Frederick William Herschel discovers the planet Uranus	1781
The first successful hot-air balloon flight is recorded in Paris	1783
Benjamin Franklin invents bifocal glasses	1784
The Pennsylvania Quakers emancipate their slaves	1788
The French Revolution begins; George Washington is elected president of the United States	1789

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Who Was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart?

- A six-year-old who dazzled the empress of Austria with his piano brilliance
- A composer who wrote more than 600 concertos, sonatas, symphonies, and operas in his thirty-five-year lifetime
- A serious musician who loved to tell silly jokes
- All of the above!

Find out more about the real Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in this fun and exciting illustrated biography!

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