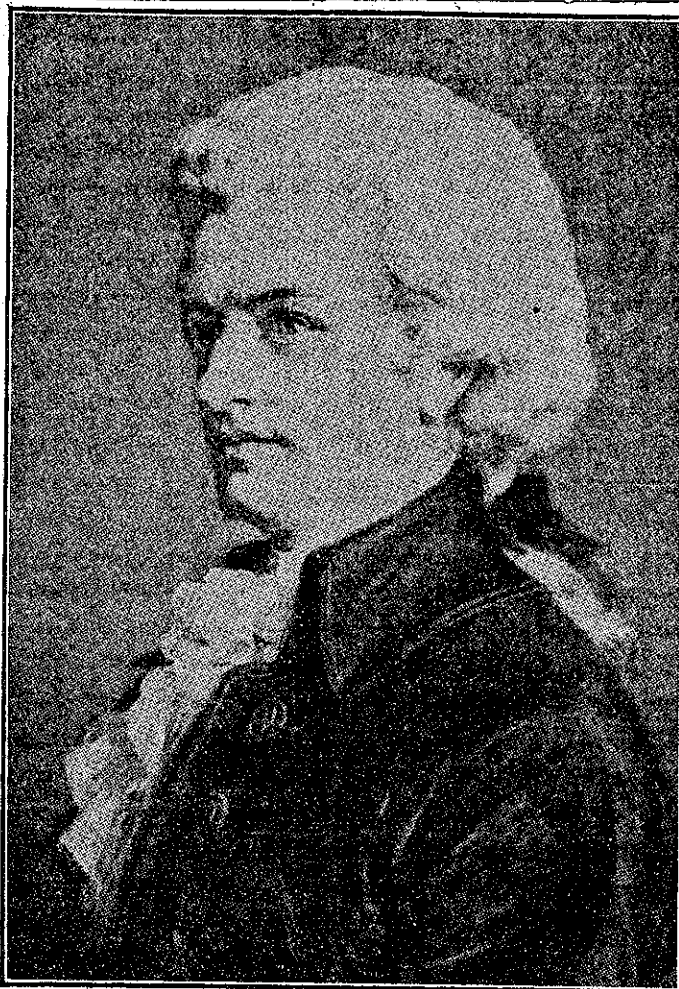


LOVERS of the works of Mozart should tune-in 4YA on Friday, November 14, when a programme consisting entirely of selected vocal and instrumental numbers by the great German composer will be broadcast. During the evening Mr. Max Scherek, president of the Otago Society of Musicians, will have something to say about the life of Mozart, which, in comparison with the lives of other noted musicians, is not particularly interesting. We do not find with him, as with Beethoven, Berlioz and Wagner, that the biography throws light on the music and enriches it. He was pure composer: he "lisped in numbers for the numbers came." Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (he had, by the way, a son of the same name who was a talented composer and lived into the eighteen-forties) was born at Salzburg in 1756. His father, Leopold, was a violinist in the service of the local archbishop. Beethoven's father also was a menial German musician; but the difference was that Beethoven's father, a drunkard, exploited his son (thereby intensifying his fierceness), whereas Mozart's father doted on his genius of a son and proudly exhibited him.

MOZART, like Pope and Cowley, is a final refutation of the easy theory that "infant prodigies" never develop; the truth being that they may very well develop if they are properly handled. He learned the harpsichord at three; he composed at four, he gave his first public performance at five. At six he toured the German courts with his father (who before long was unable to play the works that the child composed), and at Vienna won the hearts of the Emperor Francis I. and the Archduchess Marie Antoinette, later Queen of France. The boy slipped on a polished floor, and Marie Antoinette, marriage and the scaffold still below the horizon, picked him up. The little Mozart said to her, "You are very kind; when I grow up I shall marry you."

At seven he could sing, and play on the harpsichord, the organ and the violin. At eight he was living in London—first in Cecil Court, St. Martin's Lane, then in Frith Street, Soho, which was also, I believe, the home of the last ambassador from the Venetian Republic. He played before King George III. and Queen Charlotte. Whatever the King mentioned, the child played; he was petted and caressed, and wrote an anthem for four voices for the British Museum, which still possesses the manuscript. At ten he wrote an oratorio and astonished the Dutch by playing the organ at Haarlem, which was then the largest in the world. Then he returned to Vienna and wrote his first opera; at thirteen his father took him to Italy.

The programme of a concert at Mantua, January 16, 1770, exhibits Mozart's versatility at the age of 14. A symphony of his own composition; a clavichord-concerto, which will be handed to him, and which he will immediately play *prima vista*; a sonata handed him in like manner, which he will provide with variations, and afterwards



WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

An Evening of MOZART from DUNEDIN

repeat in another key; an aria, the words for which will be handed to him, and which he will immediately set to music and sing himself, accompanying himself on the clavichord; a sonata for clavichord on a subject given him by the leader of the violins; a strict fugue on a theme to be selected, which he will improvise on the clavichord (harpsichord); a trio, in which he will execute a violin part; and finally, the latest symphony composed by himself.

THE story is almost unbelievable. At Milan the boy was commissioned to write an opera; at Rome he heard Allegri's "Miserere," and, returning home, set it down note for note. This prodigious musical memory was his throughout life. "Don Giovanni" was produced at Prague on October 29, 1787; the night before not a note of the overture had been written; Mozart got his wife to read to him, to keep him awake, and wrote down in a night what was in his head.

Mozart fell in love with a first cousin of the composer Weber—and she would have nothing to do with him. He then married her sister, who was feckless and thriftless, like Mozart. When Mozart died, at thirty-five, he was buried in a pauper's grave. These two facts have led to a great deal of sentimentalism, but sentimentalism is thrown away on Mozart. It was a great pity that he should die so young; but, dying, he would hardly bother about his grave. As for his wife, she was really just the wife that suited him. He lived for music, and she was content that he should. He kept on beginning works dedicated to her, and never finished any of them; the fact throws light on both of them; but they were not unhappy. Mozart all his life was

poor. He was one of those gay spirits to whom ten pounds seems like a fortune; so long as the daily bread was forthcoming, large offers of salary meant very little to him.

Composers, in those days, could make very little unless they obtained court posts. Their works were published, but then publications were sold in very small numbers; and modern notions about copyright did not exist. There was a small salary from the Archbishop of Salzburg; there were occasional fees for producing operas to order; one way and another the wolf was kept from the door, and Mozart managed to remain in his small, dark room and compose as vast and varied an array of works as any musician of his age has ever produced.

There are all the operas—"Don Giovanni," "Il Seraglio," "Cosi Fan Tutti," "Figaro," with others; the total number is twenty-three—mostly seldom or never performed. There are twenty masses, including the great "Requiem," which was left unfinished and piously completed by a friend, and which contains what he thought the best tune he ever invented. There are forty-nine symphonies, twenty-seven pianoforte concertos; there are hundreds of songs, organ sonatas, violin sonatas, quartets, piano sonatas, and pieces composed