

LEVELED BOOK • R

# Mozart



Written by Bertha E. Bush  
Illustrated by Stephen Marchesi

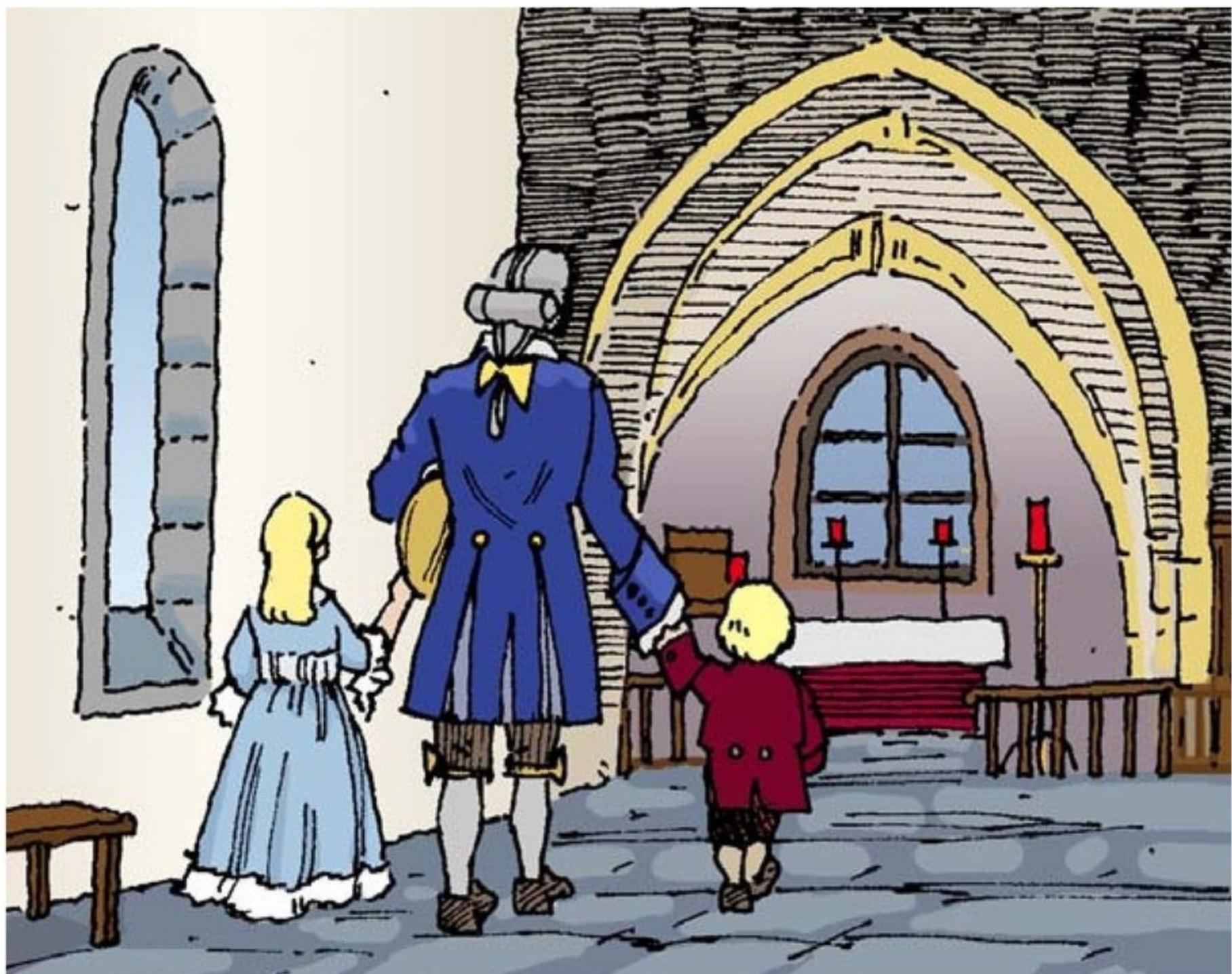
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## *Table of Contents*

The Toddler Pianist.....	4
The Child Wonder.....	8
The Poor Young Man.....	15
The Requiem.....	17
The Greatest Musician Who Ever Lived ....	20
Glossary .....	22



## *The Toddler Pianist*

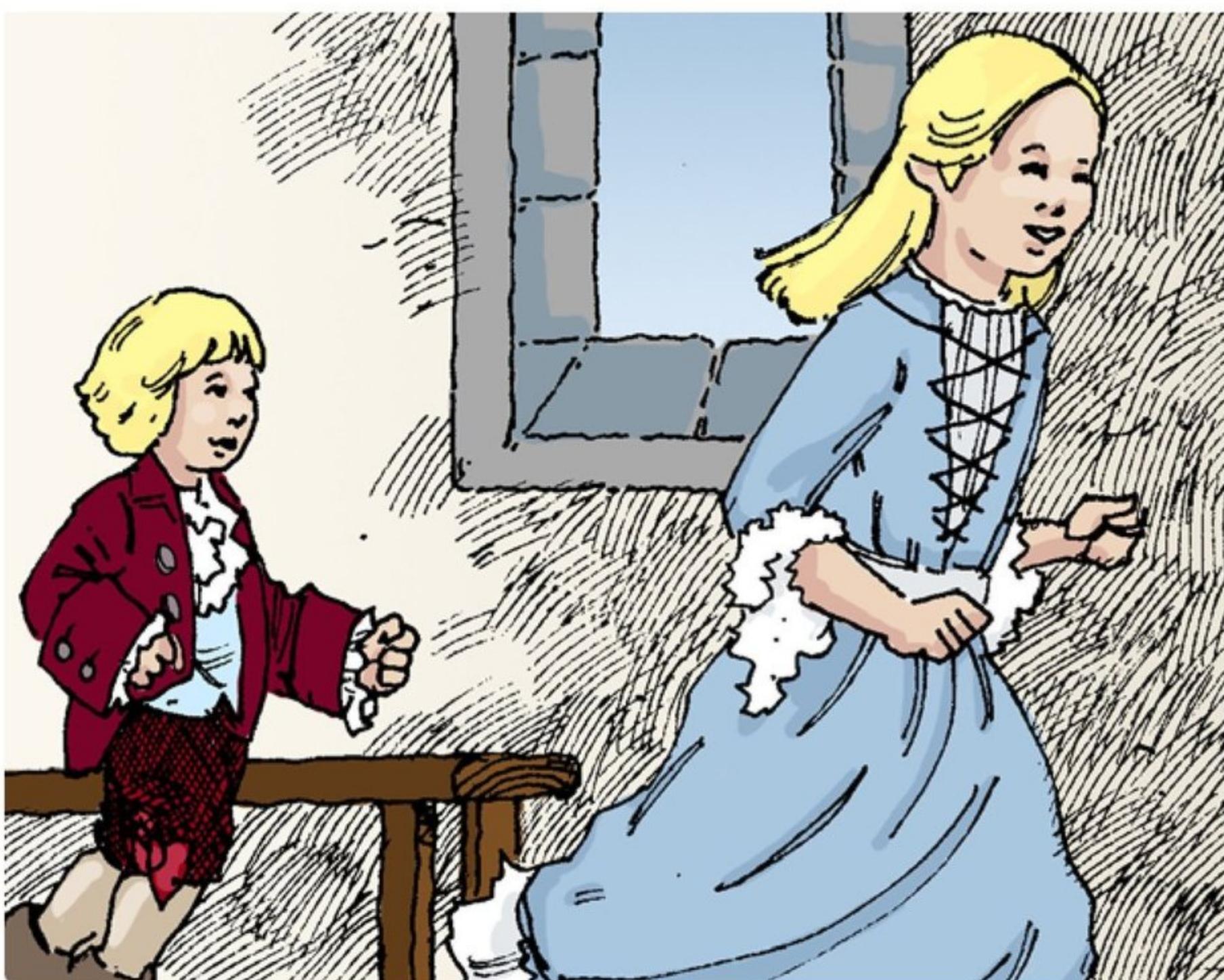
Leopold Mozart walked into the chapel in Salzburg, Austria, followed by his two small children.

“I’d like to sign my daughter Nannerl up for music lessons. She is eight years old, and I already believe she has quite a talent for music,” he said to the **organist**. The organist, Anton, smirked a bit, for he knew how Leopold could boast about his children. “So, when will you be signing up the little boy?” Anton asked.

Leopold laughed at the joke, for little Wolfgang was only three years old. “Not for at least five years—I think eight is certainly young enough. Little Wolfgang’s fingers would barely be able to stretch over the keys.”

The organist promised to sign Nannerl up. Before Leopold left, the organist called Nannerl over to the church piano. “Come, I will give you a beginner lesson,” he said. Nannerl ran over to her father, and Wolfgang toddled happily after her.

“Me too, Papa, me too!” he cried.



"No, no, Wolfgang, you are too small," said his father. "Pianos are not meant for little folks to touch, so please go outside and play."

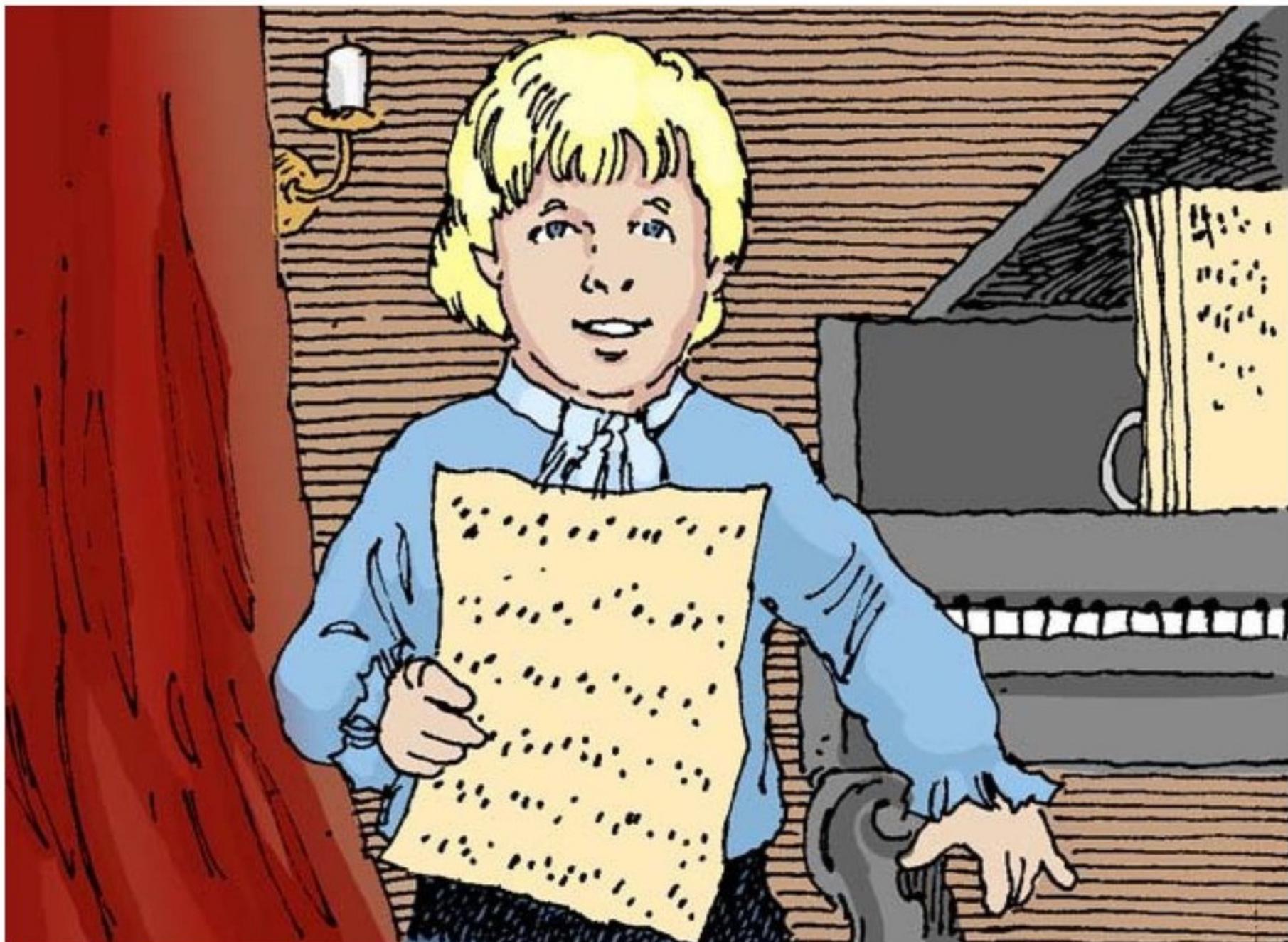
Wolfgang turned around obediently. If his father had seen the disappointed look on little Wolfgang's face, it would have broken his heart. Wolfgang went outside and played near the door of the church, but his every thought was on the piano.

After Nannerl had finished, Wolfgang and Leopold went to speak with the organist again. Wolfgang crept up to the piano and put his little hands on the keyboard. He began to play the simple **scales** he had heard his big sister practicing.





The sound entranced him, and he played the scales over and over, playing them exactly right. He forgot everything else—he did not notice his father and sister standing behind him. He didn't even hear his father shouting for the organist to come see. He was completely wrapped up in the music. He began changing the scales, even inventing simple tunes of his own. Leopold stared at his young son Wolfgang. The boy was a **musical prodigy**.



### *The Child Wonder*

Mozart played music as naturally as he breathed. When he was four years old, it took him only half an hour to learn a difficult piece of music that was written down. If he heard the piece, even if he heard it only once, he could memorize it instantly. When Wolfgang was five, Leopold and a friend came in to find him bent over a piece of paper and writing big, black notes, smearing and splattering ink everywhere.

“Wolfgang, what are you doing spoiling the nice, clean paper?” his father asked.

“Papa, I’m writing a **concerto**,” Mozart said, his little eyes shining. His father picked up the paper and laughed. But soon his amusement turned to amazement. It was a concerto, composed for several instruments. He could see that the notes were correct, despite the smears and blotches.

“But Wolfgang, this music would be too difficult for anyone to play,” he said.

“Oh, no, it would only take some practice. See, it goes like this,” said Wolfgang, and he ran to the piano. He placed his smudged paper on the music stand and began to play.

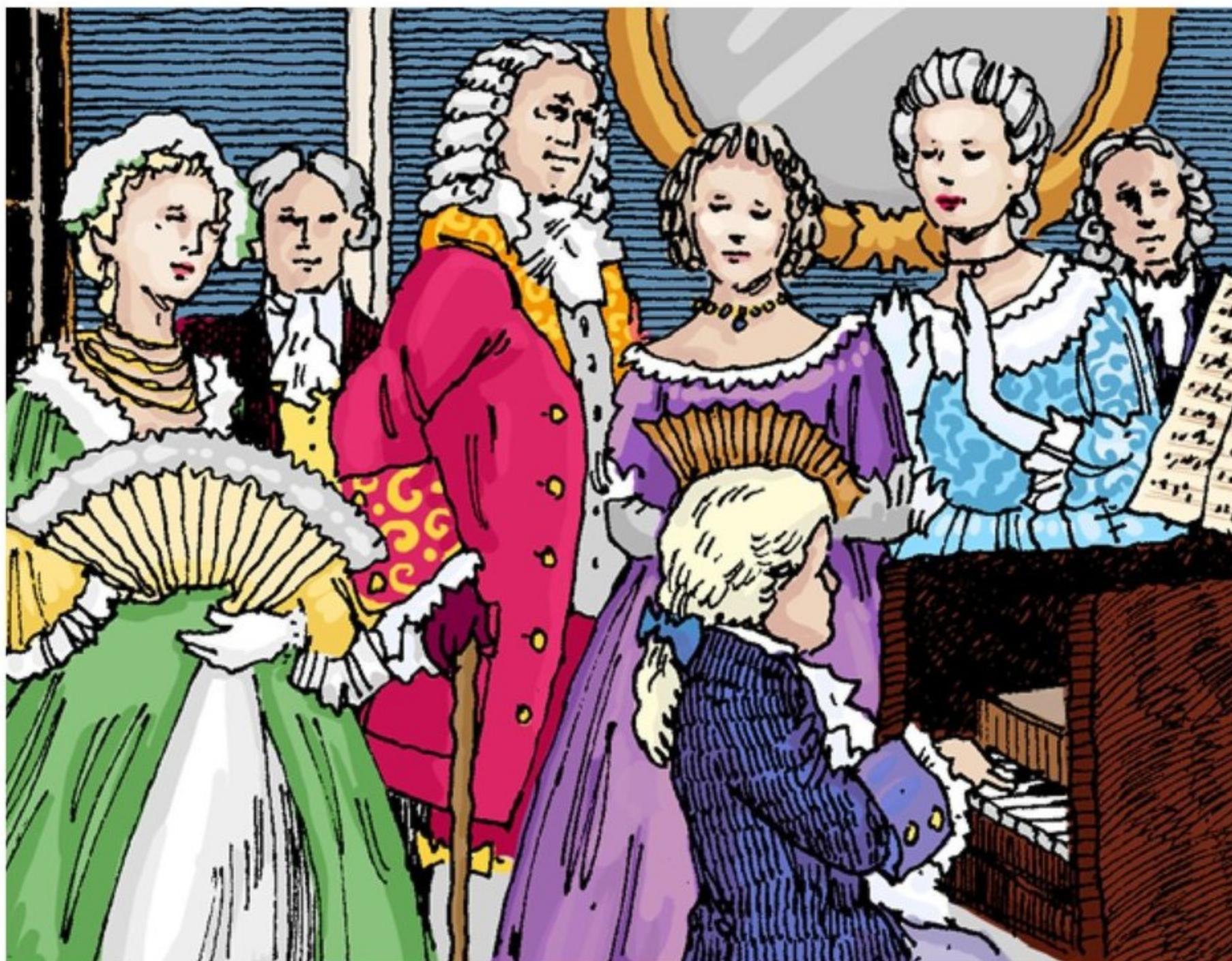


His father's friend had been laughing—he'd assumed Leopold was just playing along with Wolfgang. But now he saw that the child was a true wonder.

"You ought to travel with him," the friend suggested. "He should be playing for emperors, for kings and queens."

"Perhaps I will," said his father.





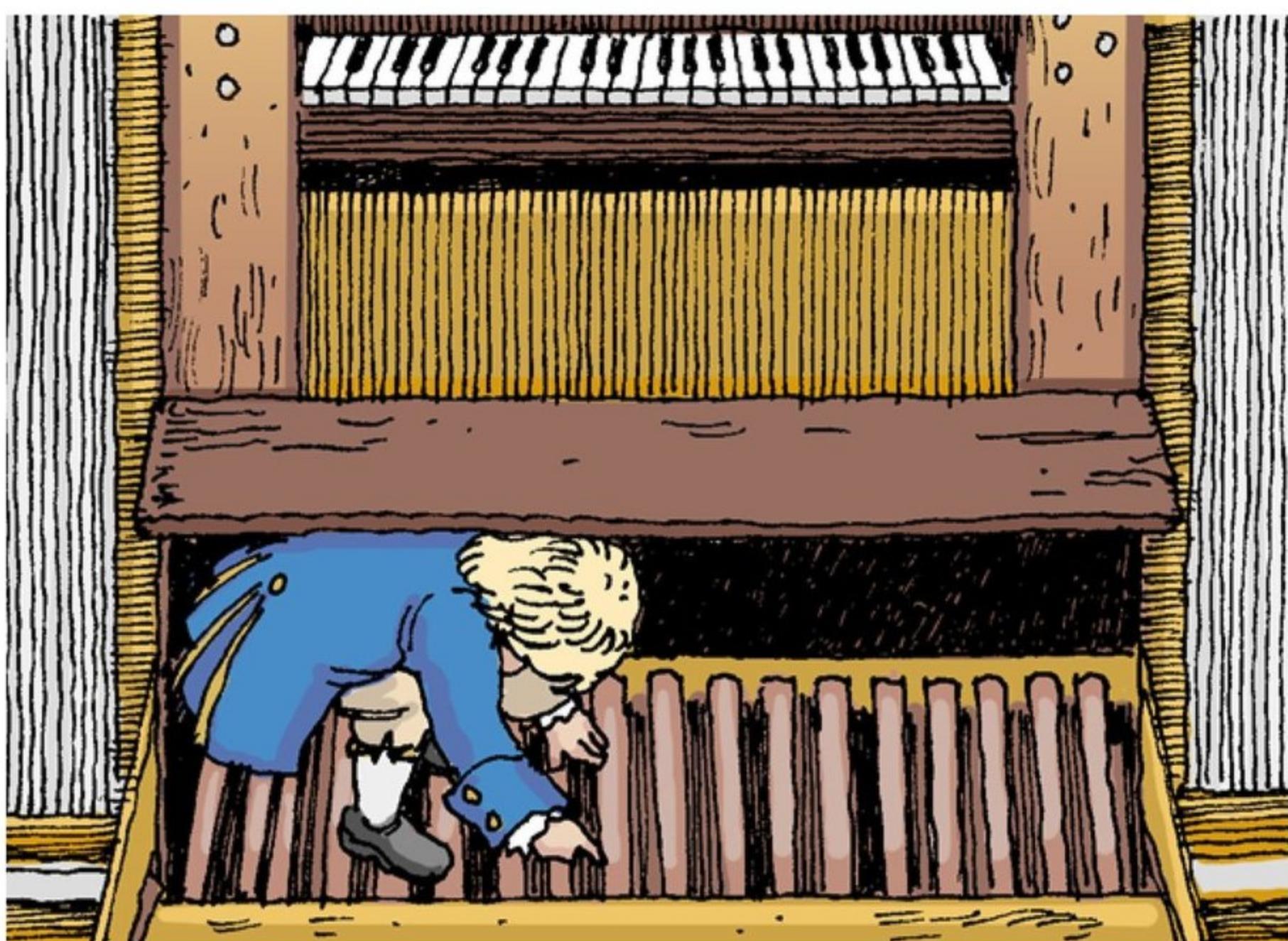
The following year, when Wolfgang was only six years old, he and Nannerl started on tour. Wherever Wolfgang went to play, people would giggle at him. He was so small compared to the big piano, and his feet couldn't even touch the floor. But when he began to play, the audiences fell silent. His playing was perfect and beautiful.

The first place they went to play was in Vienna, the capital of Austria. On the way, they stopped to visit a **monastery** in a little town. There was a great pipe **organ** in the chapel.

"I want to play on it," Wolfgang said.  
"Papa, explain the pedals to me." Wolfgang's father helped his son onto the high stool. He was too small to even operate the pedals, so he walked across them instead. The music poured out of the chapel, growing more and more powerful. The monks, who had been at dinner, rushed into the room.

Because Wolfgang was so small, the monks could not see him, and they thought the organ was playing itself.

"It's an angel!" they cried. "Such music must come from heaven!"





Wolfgang was also very charming. Everywhere he went, people were **smitten** with this little musician. The customs officials asked him why he came to Vienna.

"I came to play the piano," he said.

"Why, you're no bigger than a chicken. You can't be old enough to play anything but a whistle."

"I'll show you," Wolfgang said. He asked the officials to open the box containing his piano, and the little boy began to play right in the customs house. A crowd gathered around in awe. The head of customs immediately gave the order to let the Mozart family through without difficulty.

After playing in Vienna, Wolfgang was invited to spend the day with the royal children. One of the princesses was the famous Marie Antoinette, who was just a little girl about Wolfgang's age.

Wolfgang liked her very much. She took him around the palace to show him all the wonderful riches. He was not used to such smoothly polished floors, and he slipped and fell. All the children laughed except Marie. After she helped him up, Wolfgang said, "When I am a man, I will marry you."

The princess's servant gasped. Then Wolfgang put his arms around Marie and gave her a big kiss. "**Dreadful!**" cried the servant, for it was never, ever allowed for a common person to touch royalty. But Marie only laughed, took Wolfgang's hand, and gave him a kiss back.





### *The Poor Young Man*

Wolfgang, his father, and his sister toured all around Europe. Wolfgang's fame grew, and he became a very handsome young man. But unfortunately, the life of a musician did not pay well. People were less impressed with his playing as he got older. After all, a six-year-old musician was a marvel, but a twenty-year-old musician was nothing new.

For his entire adult life, Wolfgang Mozart was very poor. Once, a friend came to visit him and found Wolfgang and his young wife waltzing around their apartment. They were not dancing for joy; they were dancing to try and keep warm, because they could not afford fuel.

Wolfgang's wife, Constance, was often ill. They also had little children to take care of. Everyone agreed that his music was wonderful, but writing, selling, and playing music did not bring in much money.





### *The Requiem*

One day when Mozart was thirty-six, a tall stranger dressed in gray pounded on his door. Without saying a word, he handed Mozart an envelope. Inside was some money and an order for Mozart to write a **requiem**. Nothing in the envelope said whom it was for.

“It is for myself,” Mozart said to Constance. “I feel it in my heart.”

She laughed. He was only thirty-six, and it was silly for him to talk of dying!

The truth was that the requiem had been ordered by a count. He wanted to play the music at his wife's funeral, but he wanted to say that he had written it himself. But Mozart didn't know this.





Wolfgang began writing. He wrote feverishly, staying up all night, sometimes even forgetting to eat. The work exhausted him, and he began to grow weak. Mozart had been making a little money by teaching music students. But now he was so wrapped up in the requiem that he cancelled all of his classes.

Without money, the family couldn't afford much food. They couldn't afford candles to light their cold house at night. But still Mozart wrote, growing weaker and weaker. Finally, just before finishing the requiem, Mozart died. It truly had been his own requiem.

## *The Greatest Musician Who Ever Lived*

Mozart is still considered the greatest musician who ever lived. But when he died, his family was so poor they could not purchase a gravestone. Eventually, no one could remember where he had been buried. Today there is a great monument to Mozart in Vienna, and on it is an inscription reading, “The **probable** site of his grave.”



The monument to Mozart in Vienna where he probably is buried



Mozart's music is still played today. He wrote such famous operas as *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*, and the piano piece, "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" (which means "a little night music" in German). You may not have heard of these pieces of music, but if you heard them being played, you might recognize them. Mozart's music is used everywhere. You can hear it in a concert hall, or you can hear it in cartoons. He wrote many of his most famous pieces when he was only a little older than you are. And he died while he was still young. Imagine the wealth of music we might have if he had only lived.

## **Glossary**

<b>concerto</b>	a piece of classical music written for an orchestra, with solos by one or more instruments (p. 9)
<b>dreadful</b>	terrible; awful (p. 14)
<b>monastery</b>	a group of buildings where monks live and worship (p. 11)
<b>organ</b>	a musical instrument with keys like a piano and large foot pedals (p. 11)
<b>organist</b>	a musician who plays the organ (p. 4)
<b>probable</b>	likely but not sure; possible (p. 20)
<b>prodigy</b>	a child who is very skilled at something, often more skilled than most adults (p. 7)
<b>requiem</b>	a piece of classical music written specifically for a funeral or death (p. 17)
<b>scales</b>	a series of notes covering every note in one key (p. 6)
<b>smitten</b>	in love with; adoring (p. 13)

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