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Happy New Year, friends! Welcome to episode 36 of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I am so happy that you are joining me for our first episode of 2021.

Today's episode is brought to you by my Busy Kids Do Piano membership, which is currently open for enrollment through January 11th. This is my signature program for piano students, and contains hundreds of step-by-step piano lesson videos, downloadable sheet music, online theory games, monthly practice challenges and so much more. You can learn more about the program and enroll at busykidsdopiano.com/membership, and I'll be sure to link to that page in the show notes as well.

We are going to kick off the New Year by starting a composer series. I've done composer series in the past for composers Tchaikovsky and Bach, and today begins our first in a series of 3 on one of the most famous composers of all time, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart -- or Wolfi, as his family called him -- was born in Salzburg, Austria in 1756. He was born into a musical family. His father Leopold was a violinist and composer, and taught his children music. At a young age, Wolfgang showed that he had great musical talent as well. By the age of five, he was playing the harpsichord and violin and even composing a little music himself.

His older sister Marianna was a talented musician as well, and their parents decided to bring the young siblings around Europe to perform for royalty and aristocrats. In London, they performed for King George III and met the composer Johann Christian Bach, one of the sons of the famous Johann Sebastian Bach, and played duets with him.

At the age of 11, Mozart was back in Vienna again, recovering from smallpox. He began composing longer works. His first opera was performed in Salzburg in 1769. Mozart was just 13 years old. He took jobs in Salzburg as an assistant conductor and organist. He produced a number of religious works and then wrote his first serious opera, which was performed just after his 25th birthday.

Later that year, Mozart moved to Vienna -- in Austria. At that time, Vienna was considered the place to be for musicians who had big dreams. Shortly after moving there, Mozart married Constanze Weber. They would have seven children, but only two survived past childhood. Unfortunately, Mozart and Constanze were not very good at looking after money and spent more money than they earned. For this reason, they had financial problems for most of their lives.

While in Vienna, Mozart became well known for his keyboard skills and continued to write operas and symphonies as well as some of his best works for piano. He performed a series of concerts in which he played his own piano concertos, and would conduct the other instrumentalists from his spot at the keyboard.

Mozart met another famous composer during this time -- Franz Joseph Haydn, and the two became close friends. They often played together in a string quartet. Haydn told Wolfgang's father Leopold, "Before God and as an honest man I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name. He has taste, and what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition."

There are several different stories about Mozart's final illness and death, so it is difficult to be sure about what actually happened. We do know that he was in the middle of composing a Requiem, which is a mass for the dead, usually celebrated at a funeral.

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He died in Vienna before he could finish it, at the young age of 35. His wife, Constance, asked another composer to finish the requiem.

Mozart's music is part of the Classical period of music, when balance and elegance were valued in musical compositions. He was the first famous composer to write music for the piano, which was a brand new instrument at the time. Mozart composed nearly every kind of music -- symphonies, operas, chamber music, string quartets, masses, dances, serenades, to name a few. He is considered one of the greatest musical geniuses who ever lived.

Over the next two episodes, we'll be taking a look at some of Mozart's most well known pieces, but you can also head over to my show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/36 where I've linked a YouTube playlist that I put together for you, featuring 10 performances of some of Mozart's most well known works. Again you'll find that at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/36

Thanks so much for joining me today to learn a little bit more about the life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. I'm excited to dig deeper into some of his famous works with you in our next episode of Busy Kids Love Music, which airs in 2 weeks. Bye for now!