

Turning the pages: Mozart's own thematic catalogue

Mozart compiled a catalogue of his own works from 1784 until his death in 1791 ('Verzeichnüss aller meiner Werke'). It lists the works he composed during this period chronologically, with brief, dated, verbal descriptions of the pieces written on the left-hand leaves of the openings, and the corresponding musical incipits written on the right-hand leaves.

The importance of this document has been recognised since Constanze, Mozart's widow, mentioned it in correspondence with the Leipzig publishers Breitkopf & Härtel in 1798. It was to the publisher André, of Offenbach, however, that the manuscript passed in 1800, with the rest of the Mozart Nachlass. André published the catalogue in 1805, a second edition appearing in 1828. By 1833 André had prepared a catalogue of Mozart's pre-1784 works, but this remained unpublished and was acquired by the British Museum in 1884. All of this material was an important source for Köchel's own Catalogue, first published in 1862.

Many of André's Mozart manuscripts were bought by the Royal Library in Berlin in 1873; the remainder were auctioned by the firm of Leo Liepmannsohn in 1929 and 1932. The 'Verzeichnüss' did not reach its reserve of 36,000 Marks, and was subsequently bought by Stefan Zweig in 1935. Zweig's heirs placed the manuscript on loan at the British Museum in 1956 and presented it, together with the rest of Zweig's fabulous collection of musical and literary manuscripts, to the British Library in 1986. The British Library has now published Mozart's 'Verzeichnüss' in digital, interactive, format, allowing the widest possible access to this most fascinating of musical sources

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