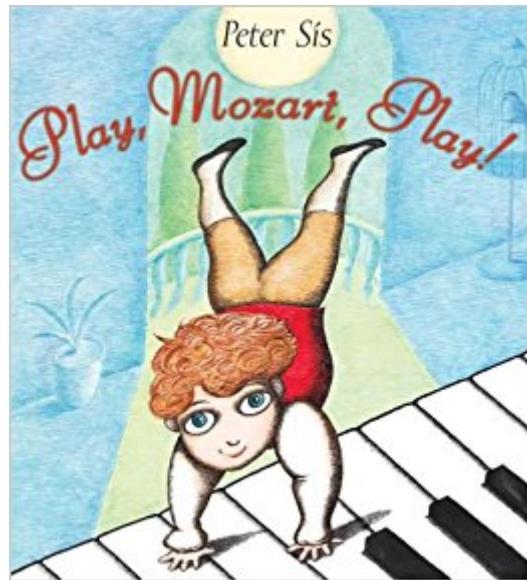


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# Play, Mozart, Play!



## **Synopsis**

Listen. A little boy named Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is playing the piano. Look. He is playing backward! He is playing blindfolded! Imagine. What must his life be like? Play, Mozart, play! Acclaimed artist Peter SÃ-s introduces very young children to the child genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in this picture book tribute to the beauty of listening, looking, imagining, and -- most of all -- playing!

## **Book Information**

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

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Age Range: 3 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## **Customer Reviews**

PreSchool-Grade 2 Recognizing his son's talent at a very young age, Mozart's stern father resolutely turned him into a child sensation! The facts of the musician's childhood are familiar to many, but what sets this biographical picture book apart is its skill in introducing a world master to children in a way that is emotionally resonant, easily understood, and remarkably indelible. SÃ-s unerringly chooses details that will have the most relevance for his audience and then selects the cleverest means of illustrating them. The cover depicts the child Mozart playing the piano by turning handsprings on the keys, simultaneously playing and playing. His father, who dominated his life, is represented in dark silhouette, his authoritarian finger raised, looming over a tiny boy whose feet do not even touch the floor as he plays. Mozart's triumphant childhood concert tours through Europe are presented in trademark SÃ-s fashion, each city painted in miniature within a bubble

superimposed on a map; the royalty before whom he played are depicted in small decorative fans. On most spreads, Mozart's shock of red hair and bright red vest give the diminutive prodigy the most visual weight and render him conspicuous. Illustrations give a hint of a unique boy who, despite a childhood of narrow restrictions, was released by the freedom he found in his music and his imagination. The clear, brief, readable text is augmented by a biographical afterword. Kate McClelland, Perrot Memorial Library, Old Greenwich, CT Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

K-Gr. 3. Sis follows *Starry Messenger: Galileo Galilei* (1996) and *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin* (2003) with another picture-book biography, aiming this time for a slightly younger audience. The simple, brief words focus on Mozart's childhood. Inset scenes, some cleverly tucked into the folds of handheld fans, show the prodigy performing for Europe's great courts. Young children may not have the context to understand some spreads, particularly the clever illustrations for musical terminology. An appended glossary of those terms would have helped (an accompanying CD would have been even better). What children will connect with most are scenes of Mozart's father (pictured as an authoritarian black silhouette) juxtaposed with full spreads of Mozart's glorious musical daydreams of dancing instruments and animals, which may remind children of their own playful, imagined worlds. A final one-page biography adds more background. Along with Loriot's retelling of *Peter and the Wolf* (1986), this is an excellent title to introduce classical music and the stories it can tell. Gillian EngbergCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

great condition

Excellent illustrations. Makes Mozart easy for young children to relate to.

My two year old loves Peter Sis. He has many of his books. I also enjoy his illustrations. They are a bit unusual and beautiful.

Beautifully illustrated with simple information about Mozart's early performance life. Easy for pre-schoolers to understand and appreciate. Sure to inspire budding appreciation of classical music.

Poor Mozart comes through as a child who plays music but longs to PLAY play. Peter Sis, as always, does a wonderful job with the text and the illustrations. Although the cover looks geared to

very young children, I would caution parents that little listeners probably won't get much out of the book. It belongs as a grade school picture biography -- better illustrated and more creative than most -- full of facts and ideas for what led to Mozart's greatness. Excellent notes section at the back. Bravo, Peter Sis.

Play, Mozart, Play! by Peter Sis is a new book that I found at our local library! My young son was enchanted by the lovely illustrations. It is a simple story and a great way to introduce classical music composers to young children. Here is a description of the book from Goodreads: "Acclaimed artist Peter Sis introduces very young children to the child genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in this picture book tribute to the beauty of listening, looking, imagining, and -- most of all -- playing." (I'm asking grandma to consider it for a birthday gift, along with a Mozart CD!)

The excellence of Peter Sis' illustrations is evident even from the frontispiece (that page before the title page). The line drawings of diverse musical instruments against dappled watercolor backgrounds, are simple, elegant, and completely caught my eye. The rest of the book fulfills this initial promise, as Sis displays a dazzling variety of technique and style: Close-ups and silhouettes, various backgrounds for the text (faux parchment paper, musical scores, patterned paper), watermarks and age spots, and period drawings of European capitals--like the ones you see on old Porcelain teacups and plates. The pictures consistently amaze. Unfortunately, Sis' kid bio of Mozart takes the easy way out after an imaginative beginning. Mozart was a "famous composer and a child genius. His father turned him into a child sensation." Yet, as the story progresses, it becomes clear that his father's hand is on the tyrannical side. More on that later... Mozart plays for "kings and princes and dukes." Sis displays these royal appearances as decorations on six ornate fans (with fan-holding courtiers placing the fans in historical context). Moreover, Mozart was apparently the Jimi Hendrix of his era, playing blindfolded, backwards, with covered keys, and while standing on furniture (there's no mention of whether he played with his teeth or burned his pianos). This light tone shifts abruptly, however, as the silhouetted figure of his stern father points a commanding finger at him. We learn of Mozart's dilemma: "...Mozart did not play with other children, because his father made him practice all the time." We view young Mozart from above, as we hear the commands from Dad: "Play, Mozart, Play!" Mozart escapes into his music amid this fevered atmosphere, and things in the piano room morph into animated, slightly bizarre objects with faces: An airborne clock, a melting candlestick, winged potatoes, a whale spouting notes from his blow hole. The slightly bizarre "Alice in Wonderland" like images are even larger on the next 2-page

spread, commanding an entire stage, with Mozart playing a flute (no doubt a reference to his Opera, "The Magic Flute"). In the only reference to his father's regimen, Sis has him asking, "Wolfgang, are you playing," and Mozart scampers back to his piano, looking like he's been caught with his hands in the cookie jar, not on the keyboard. The objects in the room return to normal, and they're in an austere black and white. They appear defeated. This is where Sis lets us down. He could have continued the father/son conflict, the battle between ambition and playing for fun and emotional release. This theme was explored in the great "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T.," the film that revealed the double-edged sword of striving for musical perfection. However, having led us to this point, Sis abandons it, showing us only that Mozart continued to play day and night, in his imagination, in his dreams, and throughout his life. In the biggest betrayal, the last scene shows Mozart's dad lifting the smiling young Mozart above him, as the story applauds his "beautiful music." This rendering of the father is almost repulsive. Sure it's a kids' book, and we shouldn't expect the dark revelations of either "Amadeus" or "Mommie Dearest." Still, it's clear that something is wrong here (in fact, Mr. Sis leads us right up to that idea): Herr Mozart's demands, the lack of friends, the inward escape (albeit, beautifully captured), and the book plays it safe. The pictures remain brilliant, but it's unfortunate that we have a sanitized, fairly bland conclusion, rather than further play with the discordant side of ambition. 'Dr. T' showed that this complexity could be achieved in an intelligent mix of comedy and mock horror. Still, an excellent book that can be enjoyed (on very different levels) by toddlers and those in the first few grades of elementary school.

The title of this book and the cover are incredibly inviting. We checked it out at the library because my 3-year-old loves the piano. We both found the content and the illustrations, well, boring. That Mozart's dad was a tyrant about the piano is not something I even want to share with my daughter at this point. I want to draw her into music, not give examples of abusive parenting related to music. It's a strange angle for a kid's book. Much of Mozart's music is very child-like and approachable. Too bad the qualities of the music didn't get more 'play' than the production of it.

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