

#56

IDEAS
WILD

JANUARY
2025

Wild Ideas #56 is published by Henry Grynnsen. The PDF version can also be found at efanzines.com. **Letter of Comment:** mail grynnsen@hotmail.com. January 2025.

Editorial

In this issue, we return to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart for the fourth time. The controversial question surrounding the composer concerns doubts about the extent to which he actually was the author behind the works ascribed to him, a topic I first explored in an essay in *Wild Ideas #8*. In this issue, I interview three researchers – Luca Bianchini, Anna Trombetta and Martin Jarvis – about their study of Mozart’s Musical Diary, also known as his Thematic Catalog. Their research suggests that this document was apparently not written by the composer himself but by others, casting new doubts on the established narrative of the most famous name in music.

- Henry Grynnsen.

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The Fabricated Catalog

Interview with Luca Bianchini, Anna Trombetta and Martin Jarvis

I don't remember how it was that I started to wonder about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's biography, but when I looked into it in more detail than I had previously, there was a clear feeling that it didn't add up, that something was off.

This led me to write an essay about the topic that was published in *Wild Ideas* #8, with an overview of the many strange facts about the composer's life that can be detected through an impartial examination. I basically just listed the inconsistencies, and the result showed that something in the official story seemed to be hidden. It may be that what lies behind the veil is trivial, perhaps small family secrets unrelated to music, but nonetheless I believe that the whole story has not been told.

In *Wild Ideas* #18, I had the opportunity to interview two scholars, Luca Bianchini and Anna Trombetta, who had researched Mozart in detail from a critical perspective for many years, written several books on the topic, and revealed significant findings that further reinforced the idea of a hidden story.

In #37, I published a short update relating the Mozart siblings to other artistic siblings, noting a rare pattern in which this kind of family relationship sometimes leads to artistic deception. In such cases, the sister can play a hidden part in the artistic career of her famous brother. As for Mozart, I think that this part was significant.

Now, in issue #56, I was able to interview Bianchini and Trombetta again, as well as to include Martin Jarvis from Australia alongside the two Italian scholars. The occasion is a paper about a forensic study of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Thematic Catalog published in the *Journal of Forensic Document Examination*.¹ It reveals significant doubts about the catalog's authenticity. Bianchini, Trombetta, and Jarvis conducted a multidisciplinary analysis using advanced ink analysis, calligraphic comparisons, and digital image processing. Their findings indicate that the catalog, historically attributed to Mozart and preserved in the British Library, was likely not his creation but a posthumous compilation crafted by various hands, potentially under Constanze Mozart's direction around 1798. Discrepancies in handwriting, chronological inconsistencies, and the use of different inks support this conclusion. The study challenges traditional narratives in musicology, highlighting the importance of forensic techniques in historical document verification.

When I wrote my essay published in January 2021, I had no idea I would connect with musicologists and musicians who had long harbored doubts and written extensively about the Mozart story, nor that I would have the chance to publish their ideas, but this is probably not the last time that *Wild Ideas* will return to this topic. Given that this approach to Mozart is so little explored, there will certainly be exciting discoveries in the future.

Research into the hidden Mozart story is truly cutting edge, and I anticipate that the number of researchers exploring it will grow in the coming years. Even though the perspectives are slightly different, what unites these scholars is the conviction that the official Mozart story is distorted and hides significant parts of what really happened.

The music itself – regardless of how it came about – does not change: the notes on the sheets that musicians play and that billions of people have heard remain tangible facts. As Martin Jarvis has said, “the research is not an attack on Mozart or his music, but rather a desire to have the truth finally told.”²

Q. How did the three of you – Luca Bianchini, Anna Trombetta, and Martin Jarvis – come to meet and collaborate on this paper?

Luca: We first connected online after seeing a comment Martin had written under an interview with us, published by the prestigious Hong Kong magazine *Interlude*.

Anna: Martin had read the book *Mozart: The Fall of the Gods* and was asking about the second volume. So, we wrote to him, and one thing led to another.

Martin: We met up in person in 2023.

Q. How did you decide on the topic for your collaboration?

Martin: We collaborated because we share the same interest in Mozart's Thematic Catalog.

Anna: We've been studying the catalog, supposedly written by Mozart, since 2016. We had already explained the reasons why the catalog is a forgery.

Luca: Martin, from Australia – literally the other side of the world – was independently studying the same subject alongside Professor Heidi Harralson. It turned out we were investigating exactly the same thing.

Q. What is Mozart's Thematic Catalog, and why is it significant?

Luca: According to tradition, Mozart wrote a thematic catalog from 1784 until his death in 1791. He died in December of that year. It's a small, elegant leather-bound booklet. This so-called autograph catalog is said to contain a meticulous record of everything he composed during that time.

Martin: The catalog is a book supposedly containing a list of his works from February 11, 1784, to November 15, 1791.

Anna: The titles of the compositions, the instruments used, and descriptions are written on the left-hand pages of the book. The musical themes are notated on the right-hand pages. Each time Mozart supposedly finished writing something, he recorded it in an almost obsessive order in the catalog. This is peculiar, given that Mozart was notoriously disorganized and often forgot to sign or date his manuscripts. The catalog is important because Mozart frequently neglected to sign his works. It became a crucial reference for attributing many pieces of music to him. Until now, it has been regarded as an authentic, primary source.

Q. Is there a connection between Mozart's Thematic Catalog and the complete list of the composer's works, the Köchel Catalog?

Anna: The Köchel Catalog is a complete list of Mozart's works, compiled in the mid-1800s, more than half a century after his death. There have been several editions of the catalog, the most recent of which was curated by Neal Zaslaw. It includes all of Mozart's compositions, from those attributed to him as a child playing the harpsichord to the *Requiem*. It's essentially a comprehensive list of everything Mozart supposedly wrote during his lifetime.

Martin: There is no direct connection between the two catalogs, though it can be assumed that the Thematic Catalog was used at some point.

Luca: For works composed between 1784 and 1791, the Köchel Catalog relies heavily on the Thematic Catalog. For example, the Clarinet Concerto is attributed to Mozart because it is listed in the Thematic Catalog. Without it, there is no guarantee that the concerto is his.

Anna: The only surviving score of the Clarinet Concerto is a printed edition from the early 19th century.

Q. In September 2024, Neal Zaslaw published his 1,300-page Köchel-Verzeichnis 2024, a project that took three decades to complete, and it has been described as potentially “the final one.” Do you believe this claim will hold true?

Martin: It's possible that Zaslaw's version will be the last attempt because it will undoubtedly contain works that are wrongly attributed to W.A. Mozart – those signed “Amadeo Wolfgango Mozart.”

Luca: Absolutely. The signatures made in that way, with the reversed name order, are forgeries. And not just those – everything needs to be reconsidered. No book can ever be definitive, and a catalog of such an extensive oeuvre even less so.

Anna & Luca: Now that we've demonstrated the Thematic Catalog is a forgery, the Köchel Catalog must be entirely rewritten. At least from 1784 to 1791, it is fundamentally flawed.

In 2021, we got in touch with Professor Zaslaw, the chief editor of the new Köchel Catalog, before it was published, to alert him to errors we had found in it. He thanked us, so in November 2023 we wrote again, telling him we had discovered that the Mozart catalog was a posthumous forgery. We emphasized the urgency of addressing this in the new Köchel catalog because the dating and attribution of Mozart's most important works depend upon it. If the catalog is indeed a fake, Mozart scholarship must be revised, as all current certainties would come into question.

Since then, he has not replied – neither when we informed him at the end of 2024 that our peer-reviewed article had been published in the *Journal of Forensic Document Examination*, nor after we shared a copy of that article shortly before Christmas. We're still awaiting a response and remain open to discussing our findings with him publicly at any time.

Q. What inspired you to investigate the authenticity of Mozart's Thematic Catalog?

Luca: The catalog appeared suspicious to us from the beginning, back in 2016, due to its contradictions. We discussed these issues in the book *Mozart: The Fall of the Gods*.

Anna: In 2018, we held a conference in Sassari, Sardinia, with Luigi Picardi from Radio Vaticana, where we publicly debated the many substantial problems with the catalog. The proceedings of that conference were later published in the book *Mozart: The Construction of a Genius*.

Martin: There are too many errors in the catalog for it to be as claimed, so we wanted to uncover the truth.

Q. What methods did you use in your analysis of the catalog?

Martin: We initially applied forensic handwriting analysis techniques, followed by a series of digital analysis methods.

Anna: Absolutely – historical, musical, paleographic, philological, and diplomatic [The science of analyzing old texts. HG.] methods of graphic investigation. All these approaches were taught to us during our studies in Musical Philology and Paleography in Cremona.

Luca: We introduced a new discipline in Italian musicology: graphonomy, the forensic graphic analysis of sources to verify their authenticity. To make the analysis objective and irrefutable, I developed a C# software program, which I presented at the IGS 2023 Conference in Évora, Portugal [IGS = the International Graphonomics Society. HG.]. It measures and compares writing characteristics and identifies different handwriting types. This is not merely opinion – it's scientific research presented at an international congress, peer-reviewed by expert graphonomists.

Q. What challenges did you encounter when analysing the Thematic Catalog, and how did you address them?

Martin: The biggest challenge was finding reliable examples of Mozart's handwriting, as he rarely signed his manuscripts. However, he did sign his final complete composition, the *Little Masonic Cantata*, on November 15, 1791.

Anna: Another challenge was the lack of prior studies on authenticity. There are no systematic studies on Mozart's handwriting focusing on the entire thematic catalog. Only a handful of fragmented articles exist, but no one has ever examined the catalog in depth, either from a graphonomic perspective or in relation to the many contradictions between its entries, the opera chronology, and Mozart's authentic manuscripts. Anyone approaching the catalog critically can quickly see that each entry contains problematic elements. The catalog was considered authentic simply because it was declared so, based solely on the account given by Constanze Mozart, the composer's widow, in 1798.

Luca: Over 250 years, we were the first – Anna Trombetta, Martin Jarvis, Anthony Jarvis, Heidi Harralson, and I – to seriously study Mozart’s handwriting from a forensic graphonomic perspective.

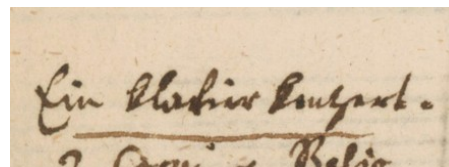
Q. What were your findings, and what is the most surprising discovery you made during your investigation?

Martin: The research shows that the catalog is a total fake – this was very surprising.

Luca: Certain words appear in the catalog but not in Mozart’s letters and vice versa. His vocabulary differs, suggesting that the catalog was written by multiple people. For example, “Concerto” is spelled with a “C” in his letters but with a “K” in the catalog (Figure 1).



Figure 1 (1786): “Concerti per Cembalo”, autograph



“Ein klavier konzert”, catalog

In the entry for the Harpsichord Concerto in F, the catalog mentions timpani and trumpets – an impossibility in that key, as Mozart never used these instruments in F major. Additionally, multiple types of ink and handwriting are evident, clumsily attempting to imitate Mozart’s script (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Every ink used in the eighteenth century had its own distinct hue. The figure above shows a catalog entry supposedly dated November 6, 1787, in what is claimed to be Mozart’s handwriting. According to Constanze, the composer finished composing the piece on that very day and recorded its theme on the two staves of the catalog. However, this is not the case. We applied a computer filter designed to highlight a specific range of green tones. In the image, the type 1 ink appears as green dots, while the type 2 ink remains unaffected. Had the same ink been used throughout, all elements would show a consistent pattern of green dots. This analysis reveals the presence of different inks, which would otherwise go unnoticed by the naked eye. It becomes evident that someone wrote the bracket on the left, the clefs, and only the melody and accompaniment between the two staves. Later, the same person – or possibly someone else – completed the entry by adding the two initial rests and the lower notes on the second staff. The text at the top was added afterward, while two poorly drawn staff lines were overwritten. Furthermore, the number “20” and the plus sign on the far right were written by different hands.

Anna: There are contradictions at every level – biographical, historical, and musical. The handwriting in the catalog is not Mozart’s; it was penned by multiple hands trying to mimic his style (Figure 3).

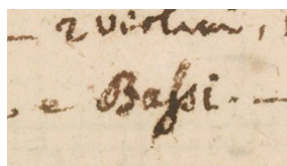
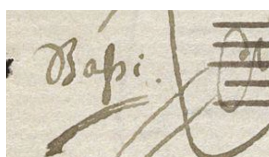


Figure 3 (1788): “Bassi”, autograph “Bassi”, catalog

Q. What are the key inconsistencies in the established narrative about how the catalog was created?

Martin: The most significant inconsistency is that the music-calligraphy and handwriting are not Mozart's (Figure 4).



Figure 4: autograph



catalog

Luca: Everything is inconsistent, starting with the signature on the cover of the catalog (Figure 5).

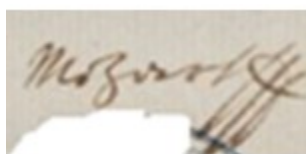
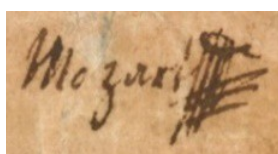


Figure 5: autograph



catalog

For instance, none of the bass clefs in the catalog are Mozart's. This was proven by Anthony Jarvis in a scientific paper presented at the IGS 2023 conference in Évora. We also demonstrated this in our peer-reviewed article presented there (Figure 6).

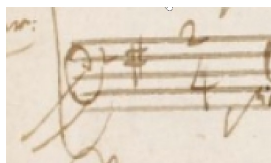
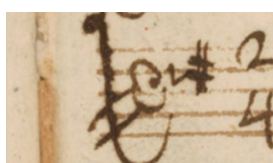


Figure 6 (1785): autograph



catalog

Anna: Many things don't add up: handwriting, vocabulary, inks, titles, and descriptions. If the bass clefs aren't his, it's impossible for the treble clefs – or any other aspect – to be his. Imagine one person writing the treble clef and then waiting for someone else to write the bass clef. It's absurd. Moreover, even the treble clefs don't match Mozart's known handwriting. We showed this at Évora in 2023 (Figure 7).

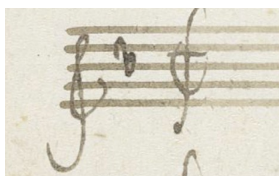
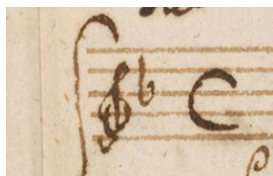


Figure 7 (1785): autograph



catalog

Q. Who do you believe wrote the catalog, and what role, if any, did Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart have in its creation?

Martin: The catalog was created after Mozart's death, so he had no part in its creation. It's possible his sister, his widow, and others were involved in its production.

Luca: Yes, Mozart had no role whatsoever in creating the catalog. It was written to exploit his name around 1798 and sell his music.

Anna: Mozart never signed many of his works, so what interest would he have had in keeping a catalog? If he had cared, he would have signed his original manuscripts. He never mentioned the thematic catalog during his lifetime. None of his friends, acquaintances, or family members ever referenced the catalog while he was alive.

Q. Why do you think the catalog was created?

Martin: The catalog had to be created to authenticate unsigned manuscripts as Mozart's compositions.

Anna: Exactly, and also to date his compositions – so that the scores could be sold to music publishers, even including works by other composers. In 1798, Eberl publicly accused Constanze Mozart, the composer's widow, of tarnishing her husband's legacy by passing off others' music as his. She was accused of fraud in a newspaper.

Luca: I'm not sure how Constanze Mozart can still be considered a credible source. Constanze's credibility as a witness is now seriously compromised since she falsely claimed the catalog's authenticity. She is no longer a reliable source, as she has been considered until now by the Mozarteum. Constanze orchestrated the creation of the Thematic Catalog around 1798 – years after Mozart's death – to track and sell Mozart's compositions. This was necessary to prove they were her husband's works since he often failed to sign or date them during his lifetime.

Q. Why are your findings significant, and what are their implications?

Luca: The Thematic Catalog is a forgery. Consequently, the Köchel Catalog, which relies heavily on it, and the NMA (the critical edition of Mozart's works), along with all Mozart-related literature, must be rewritten.

Anna: All dating and other details depend on that catalog.

Martin: Our findings challenge the entire narrative surrounding Mozart.

Q. What reactions have you received to your research so far?

Martin: The reactions have been positive.

Luca: We notified the Mozarteum as early as 2023, as well as Zaslaw and the editors of the NMA. The Mozarteum said they needed time. To answer our questions, they claimed they had to find experts – experts they apparently still haven't found.

Anna: When we sent them a follow-up letter a year later, they replied:

“Thank you for sharing your research on Mozart's Thematic Catalog and for keeping us informed of your latest findings. Your work is impressive and clearly demonstrates significant expertise.

After careful consideration, we must respectfully decline your offer to present your findings at the Mozarteum. Our current priorities do not allow for further engagement on this matter.

We wish you all the best.

Kind regards,

S. Seymer on behalf of the Rector.”

If proving that the catalog is a forgery isn't a priority for the Mozarteum, one has to wonder what its purpose is.

Q. The Mozart establishment may be difficult to convince. Is there one piece of evidence – that may or may not be found – that is so hard to contradict it forces a re-evaluation of Mozart and his music?

Luca: It's not our job to convince people who turn a blind eye to the evidence. But their reluctance is understandable. If the catalog is fake, an entire industry collapses: the musical world, everything revolving around Mozart, and probably many careers. They would have to rewrite everything.

Anna: Ethically, it is essential to inform Mozart scholars about the implications of these studies and the fact that the catalog was created posthumously in 1798 by multiple contributors. Ignoring what is now certain, while pretending the catalog is authentic, is no longer acceptable. Respecting Mozart means accurately dating and attributing works to him and not attributing others' compositions for profit. He was exploited in life – let this indecent marketplace attributing everything to him end now.

Martin: The research findings, using all available methods, conclusively show that the Thematic Catalog is a forgery. That is the truth. Whether this fact changes the minds of those convinced of its authenticity is beyond our control.

Q. What will you research next regarding Mozart, and what do you see as the most important future questions?

Luca & Anna: Anna and I are continuing our work on the catalog itself, compiling a roughly 500-page volume titled Mozart: The Fall of the Gods, Part Three, which follows our two previous volumes, both in Italian under the title Mozart la caduta degli dei. The first volume is already available in English, and the second will soon be translated and published in English. This third volume will list each entry of the catalog, detailing the inconsistencies and demonstrating that these entries could not have been written by Mozart. We will, of course, maintain our collaboration with Martin, exploring every lead that arises from our new forensic and documentary findings.

Martin: My research now focuses on the final two symphonies of Mozart; and the probability that Marie Anne Mozart was directly involved in compositional process.

Thank you, Anna, Luca, and Martin, for your thoughtful responses and for taking the time to share your knowledge with us.

The interview was conducted via mail in December 2024 and January 2025 with

Luca Bianchini

Musician and musicologist, graduated with honors from the School of Palaeography and Musical Philology in Cremona, Italy. He has edited critical editions of works by composers such as Paisiello and Cimarosa and co-authored various publications challenging long-held assumptions about Mozart.

Anna Trombetta

Musicologist and performer, also graduated with honors from the School of Palaeography and Musical Philology in Cremona. She has focused on 18th-century manuscript studies and collaborated extensively with Luca on forensic analyses of Mozart's works.

Martin Jarvis

Professor Martin Jarvis OAM FRSA, is a Professorial Fellow at Charles Darwin University. His PhD is in the application of Forensic Handwriting and Document Examination techniques to handwritten music manuscripts. Dr Jarvis has given many papers at Forensic Science conferences in Europe, the USA, Australia & New Zealand.

List of key statements

We have compiled the following key statements, all of which raise serious doubts about the catalog's authenticity. Our thorough investigation consistently produces negative answers, and to date, no one has objectively provided different responses or counterarguments. The issue is no longer about proving that the catalog is a forgery – it's about demonstrating its authenticity, a challenge that remains unmet.

– Luca Bianchini

1. Watermarks identical or similar to those of the Thematic Catalog have not been found on paper predating 1802.
2. Mozart never mentioned the Thematic Catalog in writing between 1784 and 1791.
3. No member of his family mentioned the catalog in writing during that period.
4. The Thematic Catalog was not listed in Mozart's estate inventory after his death.
5. Constanze Mozart never referred to the catalog in writing before 1798.
6. Constanze Mozart is not a fully reliable or objective source.
(Historical evidence shows problematic attributions of others' works to Mozart, causing public controversy in 1798.)
7. The Thematic Catalog was never mentioned before 1798.
8. There were no bass clefs in the catalog written by Mozart.
(Forensic analysis from IGS 2023 rules this out.)
9. The signature on the catalog is not authentic.
(The Brisbane analysis refutes its authenticity.)
10. The handwriting is not consistent with Mozart's known script.
(The IGS 2023 findings disprove this.)
11. There are contradictions between the Thematic Catalog and Mozart's original manuscripts.
(Numerous contradictions exist, documented in literature, the Sassari and Brisbane conferences, IGS 2023 in Portugal, and our JFDE article.)
12. The catalog was not written by a single person.
(Ink and handwriting analyses confirm multiple contributors.)
13. The vocabulary is not consistent with Mozart's letters (1784–1791).
(Our JFDE article proves this; for example, "Concerto" is written with a "C" in Mozart's letters but with a "K" in the catalog.)
14. There have been no counter-studies validating the catalog's authenticity.

These statements underscore the importance of openness and responsibility from the editors of the new Köchel Catalog and related authorities. If the case for authenticity is found lacking, scholarly and ethical standards compel us to inform the public that a once-foundational reference is now subject to serious doubts.

Notes

All images in Wild Ideas #56 are in the public domain, except for the cover image, © Henry Grynsten 2025.

- 1 Luca Bianchini, Anna Trombetta & Martin W B Jarvis: “Unveiling a New Sophisticated Ink Analysis Technique, and Digital Image Processing – A Forensic Examination of Mozart’s Thematic Catalogue”, 2024. *Journal of Forensic Document Examination* Volume 32, 2024.
- 2 E-mail communication, Jan. 6, 2025.