

DNA INVESTIGATIONS OF THE PUTATIVE MOZART SKULL

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died December 7th 1791 in Vienna, Austria. The next morning his coffin was brought to St. Marx cemetery. At that time the graveyard was more than a one hour walking distance outside downtown. According to the emperor's directive the funeral should be kept simple. Nobody attended the ceremony when the ordinary coffin was lowered into the shaft grave. So, the history of Mozart's remains is based on a legend.

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In 1902, the International Mozart Foundation in Salzburg, Austria took possession of a skull, 'the cranium of the great composer,' so the gravedigger who retrieved it testified. Ever since, its authenticity has been subject to numerous investigations with controversial results and heated debate. On a decision of the International Mozart Foundation to use DNA for the first time to identify the cranium, the Institute of Legal Medicine, Innsbruck Medical University, received the mandate in November 2004. AFDIL joined the project as renowned international DNA laboratory for independent DNA analysis.

The talk leads through the course of events and describes the (sometimes unexpected) difficulties that arise when a relic is at the centre of scientific debate.