



Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, Virtue, and Beauty in Mozart's Operas

Nicholas Till

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In this fascinating study of Mozart's operas, Nicholas Till shows that the composer was not a "divine idiot" but an artist whose work was informed by the ideas and discoveries of the Enlightenment. Examining the dramatic emergence of a modern society in eighteenth-century Austria, the author draws on such famous writers and thinkers of the time as Richardson, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Goethe, Schiller, and Blake to reappraise the history and meaning of the Enlightenment and of Mozart's role within it. He evokes for us the Vienna of the 1780s, a world of intense intellectual argument, political debate, and religious inquiry, which deeply influenced the philosophical content of Mozart's operas. From the early *La Finta Giardiniera*, based on Richardson's *Pamela*, to *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, designed to support the political aims of Emperor Joseph II; from *Le nozze di Figaro*, a profound exploration of marriage as a human and social institution, to the post-Enlightenment *Zauberflöte*, the operas bear witness to the era's changing views and to Mozart's own quest for personal and artistic identity.

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