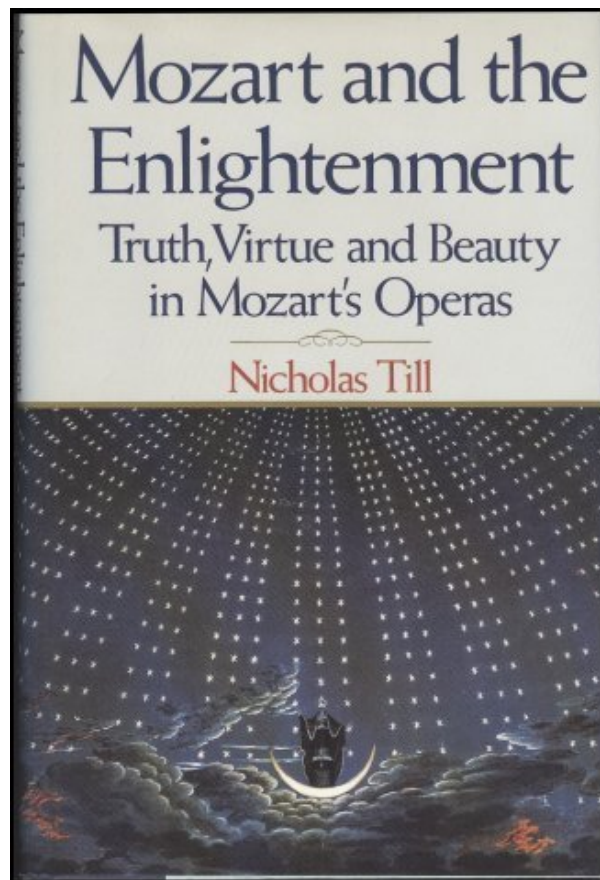
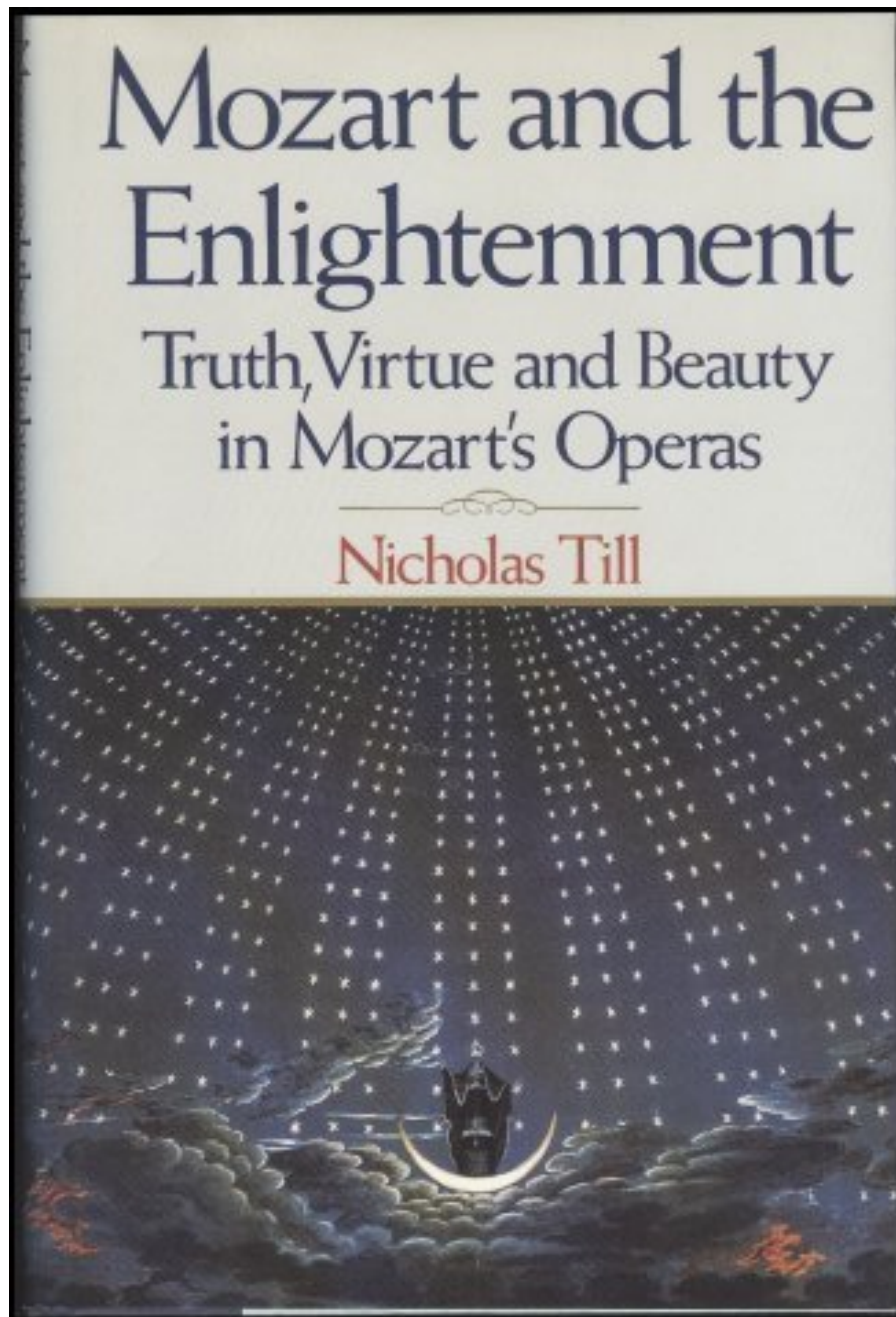


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TRUTH, VIRTUE, AND BEAUTY IN
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In this fascinating study of Mozart's operas, Nicholas Till shows that the composer was not a "divine idiot" but an artist whose work was informed by the ideas and discoveries 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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Brings it all together

By Conceptor

The Enlightenment, Freemasonry, Josephinian reforms, and Mozart converged upon Vienna in the 1780s to produce perhaps the most intensely creative epoch in the history of the human race. Till takes you there and serves it all up as has no other author I have read. The wealth of information here is too great to be absorbed in one reading, but just as one continues to enjoy Mozart's music with successive exposures, so may one expect re-reading of Till to be informative and pleasurable.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Thought provoking

By David Vergauwen

This study by Till really makes a Mozart lover re-think some of the ideas or preconceptions he had about the opera's.

The author doesn't approach the opera's as a musicologist might do (no musical analysis or musical examples) , but analyses the literary and philosophical contents of each work very carefully. It offers a lot of background and really tries to capture the essence of each piece separately.

Really strong is the part about Don Giovanni, where Till argues that the introduction of the divine is not simply a remnant of the old Molière-play, but is in fact one of the central elements of Enlightened thought. It shows convincingly that Mozart nor his audiences had any sympathy for Don Giovanni (unlike most people today) and that he is not at all a free-thinking liberal who willingly says no to God. This goes to the heart of the opera and reveals to us that even today, this opera is poorly interpreted by directors and scholars alike.

The most disappointing part of the book is perhaps the chapter on Die Zauberflöte. This is the only opera which Till has trouble explaining some of the oddities involving Enlightened thinking in connection with this opera. He doesn't develop the Masonic context as well as one should expect and that's a pity, since Mozart's central message of universal respect regarding other peoples religion, thoughts and lifestyle is so tremendously important, especially today!

However, Till does a good job putting Mozart's work in there proper philosophical and cultural context and really makes his reader consider aspects that never before occurred to him.

The book is really well written, has excellent structure and is thought provoking. For this price, you cannot miss!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

From review by Kirkus Review

By technophobe

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