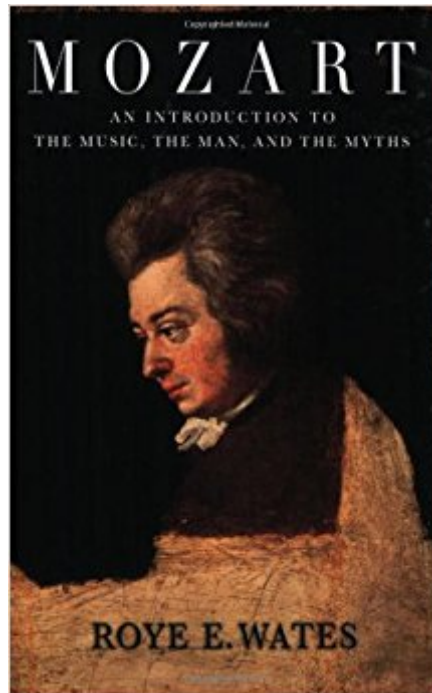




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# Mozart: An Introduction To The Music, The Man, And The Myths



## Synopsis

(Amadeus). *Mozart: An Introduction to the Music, the Man, and the Myths* explores in detail 20 of the composer's major works in the context of his tragically brief life and the turbulent times in which he lived. Addressed to non-musicians seeking to deepen their technical appreciation for his music while learning more about Mozart the man than the caricature portrayed in the 1986 movie *Amadeus*, this book offers extensive biographical and historical background debunking many well-established Mozart myths along with guided study of compositions representing every genre of 18th-century music: opera, concerto, symphony, church music, divertimento and serenade, sonata, and string quartet. Author Royce E. Wates, a Mozart specialist, has taught music history to thousands of non-musicians, both undergraduates and adults, as a Professor of Music at Boston University and from 2002-2004 as director of Boston University's Adult Music Seminar at Tanglewood, summer residence of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. *Mozart: An Introduction to the Music, the Man, and the Myths* provides a unique combination of biographical detail, up-to-date research, detailed musical analyses, and clear definitions of terms. Amateurs as well as more advanced musicians will gain a greater understanding of Mozart's encyclopedic mastery.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mozart specialist Royce E. Wates (Boston), professor of music at Boston University and past winner of the university's Teacher-Scholar of the Year award, has devoted decades to unraveling the forms, styles, and techniques of classical music for undergraduates and adult amateurs. Frequently

called upon to give pre-concert talks in the Boston area, she has also lectured on various aspects of Mozart's music at scholarly conferences in the United States, England, Ireland, Austria, and Germany.

Mozart. An Introduction to the Music, the Man, and the Myths by Royce E. Wates is a hands-on, practical and yet erudite guide to the life, music, and times of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The book not only narrates the composer's birth in Salzburg, his travels, his last years in Vienna, but also includes portraits of his immediate family members. The brief accounts of his sister Nannerl and his wife Constanze are outstanding. The book also introduces the reader to the philosophy, literature, musical taste of the period in which Mozart lived, the Age of Enlightenment, and it touches on the problems of early biographical writings on Mozart. But the author is at her best when she introduces the reader not only to the major forms of music used by Mozart, but a good number of his own piano sonatas, concertos, symphonies, masses, and operas. These analyses are done with excellent musicological insight, they are meant for the non-specialist, but many of them are done so comprehensively that knowledgeable music lovers can read them with profit and delight. What we find in this book is not just a biography, but an introduction to Mozart's way of thinking and working, plus an access to the music of his time. Professor Wates has given us here the fruit of many years of teaching and reflection on important issues relating to one of the greatest composers of all times.

I read this book before I went to Vienna and Salzburg this summer. I learned some interesting things about the musician and his family.

Music for my daughter

as expected

As a college music major rediscovering my interest in Mozart, I came to this book with high hopes. The product description sounded perfect: I have been wanting to reacquaint myself with classical forms, and update myself on Mozart biographical scholarship. I had to put the book down 23 pages in, however. The book does not start well: the author relentlessly uses the second person "you" and first person "we"--often confusingly, and often patronizingly; as though speaking to a classroom of middle schoolers, the author writes, "Today's parents expect to receive Social Security in their old age and, if they're lucky, to supplement that with other retirement income, plus medical and

long-term care insurance. But in the 1700s YOU were your parents' Social Security and Medicare." And further: "When you think about it, raising the young Mozarts must have been thrilling . . . . What would have been the best approach with such massively talented kids?" Even the book's thesis is not immune: "Although most of the nonspecialist audience has scant knowledge of the Mozart we now know, you're about to meet him for yourself." While this style is forgivably annoying, however, the author's sexist attitudinizing is downright unpleasant. On the comparatively lesser amount of information known about Mozart's mother than father, the author writes, "the women in Great Composers' lives haven't been seen as worthy of study." Really? Or is it that hundreds of letters--crucial primary sources--were exchanged between son and father--a father who happened to be employed as a music director by a Prince-Archbishop and renowned throughout Europe as a violin instructor? I am a feminist, and I get the point, but it gets worse: "Mozart's musical ancestry may have come more from his maternal than his paternal side--Leopold's father and brothers were bookbinders. [On the other hand, his mother's father, who was] educated as a lawyer, also sang bass . . . ." How can a reader continue to trust the author given this steady stream of biased (mis)judgments? In short, this book is sophomoric at best and misleading at worst, and I wish that I had not made the purchase.

This book is a serious and accessible introduction to the life and work of W.A. Mozart, and I suspect that those with a prior understanding of the composer's music will also find much to learn from it. The purpose of this book is to provide the reader with an accurate portrait of Mozart, from his childhood up to his death. In the process, Wates dispels many of the popular myths about Mozart that still pervade popular culture and academic circles - the prodigy, the pauper's grave (nearly all composers died penniless in Mozart's day!), the arrogant man-child, and others. The result is that the reader sees the composer as a real man, who faces personal and professional setbacks throughout the course of his career, not unlike ourselves (if a bit more talented). Wates also includes analyses of several of Mozart's works, including an excellent section on "The Magic Flute" that explains how the opera originated in part out of Mozart's involvement in Freemasonry. There is also a section devoted to the film "Amadeus" which discusses the film's historical inaccuracies. Overall, a highly readable, enlightening overview of all-things Mozart.

This is the best introduction to Mozart, his life and music. In very short yet rich chapters, Royce Wates manages to tell the story of Mozart, the myths which are still surrounding him, and his wonderful music. There are many examples discussed in detail and even the non-specialist will

enjoy this wonderful book which is a gem among the others written so far about the Austrian genius. In addition, there is a bibliography list and many other references the reader can turn to if he wants to know more about a specific topic. More than highly recommended.

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