Mozart and His Operas by David Cairns

Talent That Put The Rest Of 1787 To Shame

David Cairns--winner of the Whitbread Biography Award and the Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction--has spent his life immersed in Mozarts music, both as a performer and as a listener. This intimate biography sheds new and important light on the composer by placing his operas in the context of his life and his complete musical output. Mozarts unusual childhood as a musical prodigy touring Europe as a performer from an early age is well known. But even more remarkable is that the genius grew up to produce works of increasing maturity and originality. Cairns unravels the many myths surrounding Mozart to reveal the opinionated, passionate, and exceptionally intelligent man behind the legend.

Cairns shows that familiarity with the operas can transform our perception of Mozarts art. He demonstrates that the composers approach to composition was that of a consummate dramatist. Using the operas as his guide, he traces the steady deepening of Mozarts musical style from his beginnings as a child prodigy, through his coming of age with, in Cairns opinion, the most Romantic and forward-looking of all Mozarts operas, Idomeneo. He discusses Mozarts later genius as displayed in the three comic operas The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Cosi fan tutte, and in The Magic Flute, the final and greatest triumph of his career.

My Personal Review:
Cairns does a great job revealing all sorts of detail about each opera while developing some very compelling themes across operas. He is a very accessible and interesting writer, who combines research, the music, and the biographical tidbits all very well. I really recommend this book.

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