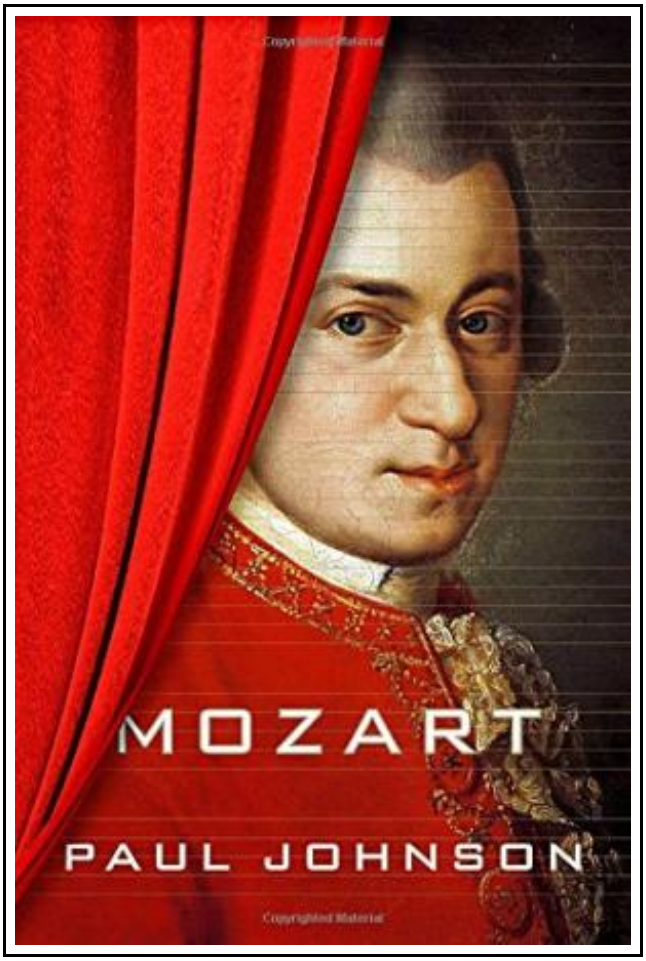
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MOZART: A LIFE

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Viking. 1 Cloth(s), 2013. hard. Book Condition: New. Franz Liszt once said that W.A. Mozart composed more bars than a trained copyist could write in a lifetime. Mozart's gift with orchestral instruments was also remarkable, as he mastered all of them (except the harp); no sooner had the clarinet been invented, for example, than Mozart began playing and composing for it. Also the biographer of Napoleon, Churchill, Jesus, and Darwin, Paul Johnson here offers a concise, illuminating portrait of Mozart that focuses on the music, but also challenges myths about the composer's health, wealth, religion, and relationships. "Popular historian Johnson lauds everyone's favorite composer so as to pique the interest of every reader of this profile. He seems to have two primary objectives: to explain why Mozart's music is so good and to uproot the sentimental legends that have grown like so much honeysuckle (a weed, after all) around Mozart's life. While proceeding overall in good biographical chronology, Johnson prosecutes his first objective by, for instance, discussing how Mozart's writing for particular instrumentsfrom piano to viola to the then-new clarinet to trombone to tympanireflects mastery of the qualities and capabilities of each (the chapter occupied with this argument is reason enough to rejoice about the book). Johnson starts debunking myths on the first page, where he insists that Mozart wasn't a sickly child. Thereafter, he continues to lay bare misconceptions: that his father coldly exploited him; that he ever lived in poverty; that he was lascivious and unfaithful to his wife, as well as that she was improvident and shrewish; that he had a pauper's burial; that he ever was a neglected musical presence in his time; that he was ruinously in debt. They all crumble under Johnson's commonsense presentation of evidence. An altogether excellent primer on possibly the most...

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