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JOHN ROSSELLI



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To Lisa  
*'Voi che sapete . . .'*

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## PREFACE

What follows is a short critical biography of Mozart, designed to place his life and music in their historical context, and based on the vast amount of material available in print. The principles on which it is structured are set out in the Introduction.

I am not a musicologist but an historian with a strong interest in music and a lifelong devotion to Mozart's work. When faced with questions of evidence, historians are apt to say rather often 'we do not know' or 'the evidence is not such as to make possible a firm conclusion'. Readers will find a number of such statements about aspects of Mozart's life. They should at least make a change from some recent biographies. On the interpretation of Mozart's music I have not hesitated to quote from works of criticism where they make a point better than I could.

Titles of operas are given in the form most familiar in English-speaking countries – *The Marriage of Figaro*, but *La clemenza di Tito* – and Köchel catalogue numbers in the traditional rather than the revised form, which is still unfamiliar to most people. Quotations from the letters of Wolfgang, Leopold, and Anna Maria Mozart are taken from *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, translated by Emily Anderson (3rd revised edn, London, 1985). Quotations from other contemporary documents are mostly taken from O. E. Deutsch, ed., *Mozart: A Documentary Biography* (London, 1965), and C. Eisen, ed., *New Mozart Documents* (London, 1991). The sources of other quotations can be

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found by consulting the note on further reading at the end of the book (pp. 163–6).

Sums of money are given in florins (also known as gulden). The Vienna florin was worth about 8 to 9 to the pound sterling, but both prices and wages were generally much lower in the Austrian lands than in Britain. The Salzburg florin was worth about five-sixths of the Vienna florin.

Part of the discussion of *Così fan tutte* in Chapter 4 first appeared, in somewhat different form, in *The Times Literary Supplement* of 7 June 1991.