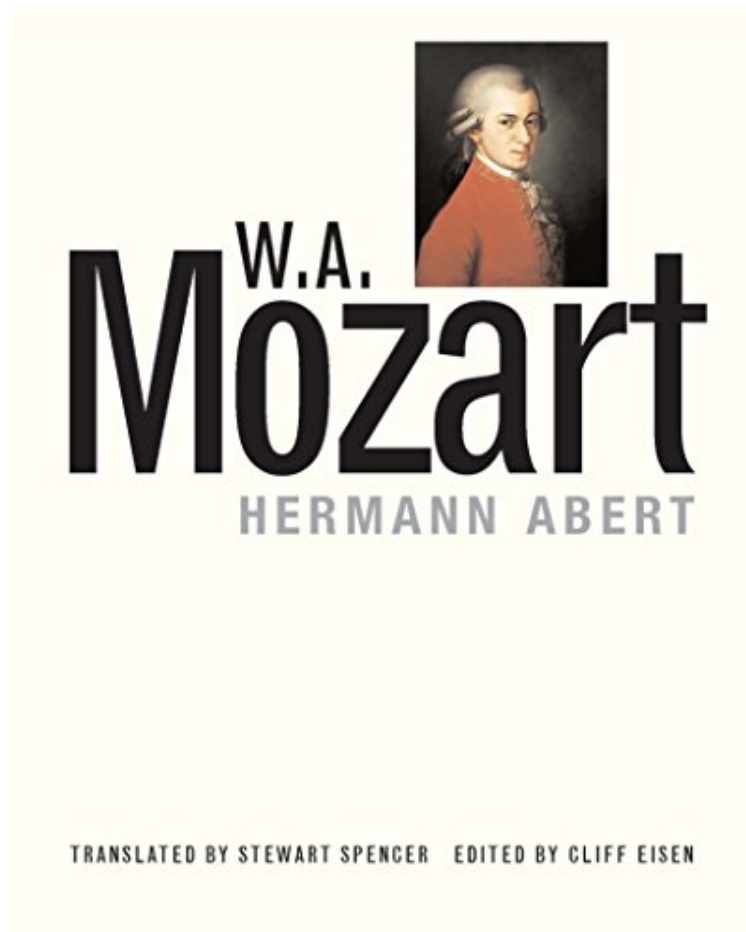


## W.A. Mozart

*Hermann Abert*

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**Hermann Abert : W.A. Mozart** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised W.A. Mozart:

32 of 32 people found the following review helpful. A BIBLE FOR ALL MOZART ENTHUSIASTS SCHOLARSBy Roo BookarooThis is a huge tome. Some comments on its physical aspect are in order.For people who have only used their forearms for mostly light work: nothing more than holding their TV remotes, lifting their spoon and fork, and reading only paperbacks, this book is absolutely not advisable, even dangerous to handle.But for people fascinated by Mozart's music and life, and who have regularly used their dumbbells to develop good shoulders and arms, this book is a godsend and, in spite of its massive aspect, with some practice, moderately manageable.The format of 10" x 7.5" is slightly above the norms of standard 9" x 6". However, this Abert book is definitely much thicker than your regular hardback novel, 3", for 1515 pages. And, at 6.6 lbs, heavier than most books, though not the heaviest. Any good dictionary, for instance, the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 1987 2d edition, is much larger and heavier (12 lbs).Still, for all its forbidding look, on the whole Abert's book is somewhat handy -- although not enough to stick in your pocket going to your favorite coffee-shop, or even in your bag going to the park or the beach for summer

reading. One marvelous feature is the wide 1" margin on the side (and nearly as much on top and bottom) which gives you comfortable space to scribble marginal notes. However, the major problem with this thickness is that it proves very difficult to write your own notes in those enticing margins once the mammoth 1,500-page book is open flat on a table (forget about reading this on your lap!) The wrist having no support, you must find it necessary to haul a thick dictionary to place alongside and give your hand an even support to scribble your own sagacious comments. The book being published by Yale, it was reasonable to expect it to be an American book. Far from it. This is a British book throughout. The translation is by Stewart Spencer, who used to be an academic at London University, and who must be highly lauded for what must have been a Herculean job. His translation style is formal, elevated, and very "proper" English -- to us sounding a bit dry and lacking in humour. Don't expect any Americanism or colloquial English in this book. The English text had to respect the dignified German language used by Hermann Abert. You'll never find an opportunity to laugh, giggle, or even repress a smile, reading this text. This is seriousness as heavy as it can come. The German book was published 90 years ago, in 1919, and, with good German practical sense, in two volumes: The 1st vol. covered the 1756-1782 period, and the 2d vol. 1783-1791. Since then, research has continued and modified many of its original conclusions -- often reverting them. The constant updating comes in excellent and copious notes written by Cliff Eisen, an academic at King's College in London who is also a most respected Mozart scholar. These notes, printed at the bottom of all pages, correct, amplify, or, most importantly, debunk some of Abert's assertions. One valid complaint is that the print of these immensely valuable notes is so small that they are extremely difficult to read, and even more difficult to underline when they make an important point, which is practically all the time. This beef is much more serious than any objection to the weight or thickness of the book. That a microscopic font has been selected for the most important aspect of the book seems a major mistake. Saving space was the obvious goal, but it is no saving at all and a disservice to passionate readers. These notes are truly invaluable and a good part of the interest of this book, since they define the current state of Mozart scholarship. For that reason alone, yes, an edition in two volumes, following the original edition, keeping the 127 pages of indexes at the back of the second volume, but with a normal font size for the notes, would have been a welcome presentation. Even a total of 2,000 pages would have been acceptable, but then in two volumes. Mozart enthusiasts, who are the only buyers of this massive tome, would have been willing to pay for the extra cost. No expense should have been spared, and the British practice of an uncomfortably tiny font for notes is not right for us, Mozart fanatics. A final remark on the physical presentation: This book was printed in Great Britain, and to our dismay, on somewhat cheaper paper. The publisher balked at using high-quality glossy paper, as used in the great dictionaries like the the Random House Unabridged, 2d edition, one of the most superb big books ever published for the mass market. You can't write comments in this British book's margins without the markings appearing on the other side, which is terribly annoying. And never drop some of your coffee on a page, as it would surely instantly dissolve. This is infinitely regrettable, as this is a capital book, a Bible for Mozart enthusiasts and scholars, and it should have been published with top-quality paper. Again we have to suspect the British tendency for strict economizing on the unit cost of production to be the main reason. Book lovers would have much preferred a first-class American printing job with high-quality textbook-like paper. Otherwise, the presentation of the text itself, the font type, the layout, the binding and cover are all irreproachable. Cliff Eisen's editorial notes (of 2007) are most interesting, while Hermann Abert's own preface of 1919 most enlightening. And the 127 pages at the end covering bibliography (brought up to date), the whole Koupml;chel listing, the index of Mozart's works by genre, and the usual index of names and subjects, make this book invaluable for any study concerning Mozart. All considered, for the right user, this is a fabulous book. But, physically, it could have been a bit better. With respect to Abert's text itself, the key thing to keep in mind is that he was also another academic, publishing in 1919, with the Weltanschauung of a German scholar. He did most of his research before the First World War, and was still deeply steeped in the Romantic view of Mozart and his music. Abert's style is academic to an extreme. His approach is imbued with the German scholar's typical "deutsche Gruuml;ndickkeit" (German thoroughness), and his product is a temple of exhaustiveness. Not a stone is left unturned, and not a flicker of thought left unsaid. Abert made the wise decision not to separate in his biography the two traditional parts of Mozart's life and Mozart's works -- thus going against the prevalent tendency in the Mozart biography business. This avoids duplicating a lot of details, keeps the momentum going throughout the whole huge book, and inserts each work in the corresponding creative slot in Mozart's tumultuous life. In his preface, Abert reaffirms "the new and entirely valid insight that of all the great composers, Mozart was the one who was the most sensitive to artistic impressions, the one whose ability to adapt was matched only by his need to adapt and A GIFT FOR SPONTANEOUS EMOTION THAT HE RETAINED TO THE VERY END" (p. xix). Mozart's "restless imagination was perpetually producing" spontaneous ideas. All his life, he remained "particularly responsive to new artistic impressions" (p. 817), and to the emotional impact of his experiences. Abert adds: "But we should never forget that what was so great about Mozart was his own self and its creative ability, not the material on which he tried out those abilities. And so it is the biographer's principal duty to identify what was most unique about his subject, A UNIQUENESS THAT FINDS EXPRESSION IN VARYING FORMS at varying stages of his development, but THAT ULTIMATELY REMAINS THE SAME. Mozart's art is like a finely polished crystal that REVEALS DIFFERENT COLOURS WITH THE CHANGING LIGHT, WHILE NEVER ALTERING ITS BASIC

SUBSTANCE" (p. xxi). One significant change of light happened in 1781, when, at age 25, after the success of his opera "Idomeneo", K. 366, in Munich, Mozart left the security of his Salzburg environment and the stewardship and guidance of his father, to go it alone in Vienna, and become a free-lancer, with all the excitement and new worries involved. This new situation also prodded Mozart into a hasty marriage (in 1782) that supplied him with a partner to take care of the needs and practicalities of his daily life, an assistance that Leopold and his family had provided until then. Constanze Weber was six years younger, a well trained singer, like her sisters Aloysia, Josepha, and Sophie, and the first cousin of composer Carl Maria von Weber. She was a fun companion, offering emotional support to Mozart, but inexperienced in facing daily life problems. She exhibited none of the solid down-to-earth practical sense of the wives of Wagner, Verdi, or Richard Strauss. Abert holds Constanze partly responsible for the chaotic management of the Mozart household and its finances, and the troubles that undermined Mozart's health and contributed to his early death. In the literature of the 19th c. this transition was interpreted as creating a new artist. The "adult", or "mature", or "real" Mozart had, supposedly, suddenly emerged, like a butterfly out of his cocoon. But this is another myth about Mozart, which is parroted by legions of journalistic reviewers of the performances of Mozart's works. In these journalists' imagination, Mozart had finally "found his true voice"! (A more absurd statement would be hard to conceive). Artistically, and Abert takes great pains in demonstrating this continuity, there is no real split between a Mozart 1, the "young Mozart", and a Mozart 2, the "late Mozart". This "late Mozart" became canonized as an object of veneration by Mozart cultists, who decided that the "real" Mozart, the "great" Mozart, the "divine" Mozart, appeared only in the 1785-1791 period. This Mozart cult was elaborated in the 19th c. when the public at large knew only the last 4 or 5 operas (which did most to establish Mozart's uncontested pre-eminence in the musical world), the last 3 symphonies, the "great" klavier concertos, the violin concertos, the major string quartets, and the key wind concertos and serenades, including "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik", K. 525. This public had no access to the larger bulk of Mozart's music, that was left unknown and considered as practically non-existent. This cultish appreciation of Mozart is again the same myth, resulting from ignorance and superficial exposure to the whole of Mozart's music. What's exceptional in Abert's text is that all Mozart's works (about 700 of them) receive individual attention and analysis. Nowhere else has this kind of loving attention to detail and "Gruuml;ndlichkeit" been lavished on examining each work of Mozart. And Abert's formidable scholarship of musical history enables him to evaluate the originality and creativity of each work. He makes us see things that our amateurish impressions would not have detected. To his credit, Abert devotes the same care and insightful perspicacity to the early works of Mozart as to the late works. He refuses to follow the skewed popular cult of Mozart's final works in his last decade in Vienna, or even, more restrictively, in his last five years. Way before the general spread of recordings, radio, and movies, Abert had the insight to realize that the "great" Mozart was already at work in his earliest pieces. He already saw the same spirit (even some themes) that was to animate the "Requiem, KV 626", in Mozart's very first symphony, K. 16 (as, later, did Karl Boehm, the foremost conductor of Mozart's music and operas), as well as in Mozart's oratorio/opera "La Betulia Liberata", K. 118. Abert pooh-poohed all those Mozart lovers who, in their ignorance, affected to dismiss the early works as juvenilia. These cultists are seriously mistaken. Even though Mozart's sensitivity naturally reacted with different expressions to the changed conditions of his life, and to his continually richer exposure to the music of other composers that he unflinchingly stored in his phenomenal memory, Abert repeatedly emphasizes: It is the same artist, with the same "genius", throughout. Abert was among the first to extend to the early Mozart the same level of appreciation given to the later works. He was emphatic on this critical point: "Yet the works of this 'young Mozart' have a very special charm to them, such is their galant ardour, their often sudden outbursts of emotional anguish, and their profligate flood of ideas. Writers who restrict themselves to the works of the final decade of his life, as they all too often do, KNOW ONLY HALF THE ARTIST" (p. 370). In essence, there are no two Mozarts. THE "YOUNG MOZART" WAS ALREADY THE "REAL MOZART" BEFORE HE EVER BECAME THE "GREAT MOZART" OF THE BLINDERED CULTISTS. Of course, Abert's view of Mozart is still strongly colored by the Romantic image of the "genius" as an outworldly artist who follows his own artistic urges, trajectory and destiny, nearly always in battle with his philistine social environment. For the Romantics, Mozart's life was elevated and revered as the emblematic example of genius against society. This 19th-century Romantic view tends to deify a great artist, turning him (practically never "her") into an iconic figure obeying different rules of behavior and artistic pursuit, and ultimately driven by an inner engine and fueled by a personal flame to overcome all obstacles and resistance to his miraculous creativity. The script is always "Extraordinary Creativity Triumphant over Conformity" -- usually at a painful cost. Mozart became a vivid illustration of this cultural myth. No attention was paid to the fact that this ideal image didn't even apply to all great artists of the 19th century. Rossini, for instance, who spent all his time and money eating the most delicate French foods in Paris, did not seem to have suffered much. Verdi and Puccini had fairly happy lives, and even Wagner was pretty successful in organizing the practicalities of his personal triumph. Bizet, in France, could have been another example of the unrecognized great artist. However, we've fortunately come a long way from this Romantic iconic image of Mozart. The debunking of the "divine" Mozart image is the healthy product of modern scholarship, which has brought back Mozart to the level of us, human mortals, without denying his one-off miraculous talent. We thus have restored Cosgrave; fan tutte, K. 588, previously rejected and abhorred by Beethoven and the

whole 19th century as "immoral", to its legitimate place as perhaps the most brilliant and psychologically profound opera of Mozart. In the same spirit, modern publishers have stopped suppressing the delightful "Baumle" letters to his charming cousin Maria Anna Thekla Mozart in Augsburg, who became Mozart's famous sexual playmate in his early 20's. And thank God for this, because those letters are a true classic. And most importantly, the 20th century finally stopped bowdlerizing Mozart's precious letters, restoring his scatological outbursts, his delight in joking, fun and unbounded nonsense. For instance, publishers started reintroducing the suppressed original texts of the famous scatological canons such as "Leck Mich Im Arsch," K 231, in the body of his music, that nobody before wanted to mention in the original, ashamed and unbelieving that the "divine" Mozart could indulge in such low-class language. Abert, for all his "deutsche Gruemlichkeit" could not bring himself to print the original Mozart text of these canons, coyly apologizing that it "is better never repeated here". Similarly, Abert mentions only the bowdlerized and sanitized text for K 233, where the original reads "Leck mir den Arsch fein recht schoum; n sauber." Abert must have fainted the first time he encountered this canon. How could one reconcile this with the Great Mass in C minor, K. 427 ? It is only in the late 20th century that a truer picture of Mozart the man has begun to appear in all its crude and sublime expressions. Suddenly Mozart does not look any longer like the music director of God's angels, but much more like another great earth-bound genius such as, for instance, Shakespeare. Abert could not foresee this new perspective, and he still lived with the artificially prudish and divine image constructed by the Romantics and Victorians of the 19th century, who hypocritically averted their glances when discovering that Mozart, for all his genius, was human all the same. Abert, as all the prudish critics who preceded him, had to respect the formalities and respectabilities of his academic milieu. He could not admit that Mozart found great pleasure in using salty and scatological language, a predilection that modern research has established to have been a cultural habit for his mother, sister, and probably most of his intimate circle in Salzburg. Abert was a prisoner of his time, still far removed from our modern obsession of recovering the "authentic" and historic Mozart in all his forms and expressions, bar none. As late as 1938, Emily Anderson had translated into English "THE LETTERS OF MOZART HIS FAMILY". She included all the letters written by Mozart, but omitted large spans of Leopold's letters, producing a slanted and skewed account of events and of the relationship between Mozart and Leopold. Anderson used a beautiful, high-sounding polished English, which bore little resemblance to the real, natural style of Mozart, as has been strongly underlined by Robert Spaethling, a recent translator. He rightly mentions that Anderson made Mozart sound like his sententious and pedagogical father Leopold, (and now we could also say, like Hermann Abert himself). Emily Anderson cannot entirely be blamed, since the German edition used by her had already bowdlerized Mozart's own writings. Only in 1975 was completed for the first time a German edition of Mozart's letters in their original, natural language and style, "Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen", that is, for us, "Mozart: Letters Documents" (by Bauer, Deutsch Eibl, in 7 volumes, published by Baum; renreiter Verlag, Kassel, 1962-1975, plus an 8th volume in 2005.) This historical edition has not yet been translated into English. Robert Spaethling, an American academic, born and raised in Bavaria where the local dialect is close to that of Salzburg, has rendered an immense service to all lovers of Mozart and contributed significantly to the job of cleaning up Mozart's image of its Romantic polish, thanks to his new translation of Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life: Selected Letters (2000, Norton Co), including about 275 letters and postscripts. Spaethling set himself the task of preserving all the original colors, crudities, language games, and mannerisms of Mozart's natural style. Mozart was a superb and fun writer, with a style influenced by his musical sensibility, lively and spontaneous, proceeding immediately "in medias res", that is coming at once to the point, unlike any other writer, and Spaethling is to be unreservedly admired and complimented for his unique success in rendering Mozart's idiosyncratic German style into equivalent English. Our only regrets are first, that the selected letters are often not even completely translated, subjected to unwelcome cuts marked by ellipses -- a breach of the promise made in the title "Mozart' Letters, Mozart's Life" -- and, second, that Spaethling was discouraged from translating ALL of Mozart's letters in order to give his book a wider market. He does not make room for any of Leopold's vital letters. Spaethling had honed his skill in fashioning an acceptable rendition of Mozart's natural German style, and it is regrettable that he didn't avail himself of his retirement time to give us a complete translation and more scholarly edition. In Spaethling's book, we have the opposite of the Abert book: large font, wide spacing, huge margins, little text per page -- all the drawbacks of American packaging. It is a "trade" book for the popular market, but of limited scholarly use. Fortunately Cliff Eisen (editor) and Stewart Spencer (translator) published in 2006 a far more scholarly edition, "Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - A Life in Letters (Penguin Classics)". This new edition of 184 letters, following Spaethling's example, strove to retain the full flavor of the originals. But, most importantly, the letters are complete, and they include a substantial proportion of Leopold's vital letters. For it is the dynamic between Mozart and his father that is the engine driving the whole Mozart story forward. Leopold's preserved letters account for about 2/3ds of the whole family correspondence, in spite of Constanze, after Mozart's death, revengefully destroying all Leopold's letters written to his son in Vienna (1781-1787). Without Leopold there would have been no Mozart. After their marvelous translation and edition of "Mozart - A Life in Letters" and of Abert's monumental masterpiece "W. A. MOZART", a new hope would naturally arise to see the same two scholars tackle yet another colossal job, that of translating the full German edition of Baum; renreiter's eight volumes of "Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen" into English ("Mozart: Letters Documents"),

as they constitute the irreducible font of primary documents. This includes the full 1,200 letters of the Mozart family. It is certain that, whenever such a new, modern translation, is made available, it will become, next to Abert's translation, the other fundamental text of any future Mozart study in the English-speaking world. Of course, the effort should be continued to restore in English Mozart's lively idiosyncratic style. It is reasonable to envision this new translation to become the next obvious project for the Stewart Spencer/Cliff Eisen/Yale Un. Press team. But, please, let's be serious: This future publication, whenever it comes, must be in MULTIPLE volumes! Contrary to Mozart's fluid and concise style, Abert suffers from the German academic tendency to express all nuances and connotations in long inflated phrases, which could have been drastically shortened without losing any of their content. Any page of his book would offer countless examples of this long-winded style. For instance, at random, let's mention "the various canons that Mozart probably wrote throughout the whole of his time in Vienna", the concise meaning being "Mozart's canons in Vienna". But conciseness was not an acceptable virtue for Abert. Hence 1,515 pages. The English translator, Stewart Spencer, has done his best at making this heavily plodding style digestible, thanks to his elegant, much lighter, and airy rendition. Amazingly, Abert never learnt from Mozart the art of coming to the point tellingly and swiftly with lovely musical sentences interspersed with dashes of humour. From a purely musical perspective, Abert's analysis is incomparable. His deep, encyclopaedic knowledge of musical history and of Mozart's scores makes his explanations riveting and enlightening. But it is sometimes annoying to see Abert distributing compliments and criticisms to Mozart's works from the top of his pontifical academic chair that only reflect his own personal standards and biases of the time. Some of his criticisms are biased or obsolete. He is always lauding Mozart whenever he finds unified thematic development, and mercilessly criticizing Mozart for his instinctive and irresistible compulsion to introduce new ideas and unexpected new themes and motifs. Abert is always taking Beethoven or other Romantics as an example of composers who knew how to exploit one musical idea to death. But this is terribly unfair and touches on the very essence of Mozart's composition style. For Mozart's own natural tendency is to give free rein to his inventions and to follow his own spontaneous melodies and orchestral ideas wherever they want to lead him, most often unpredictably to us and also to him. Even during the course of the purest melodic line of an aria or a sublime concerto, the orchestra is constantly animated with bizarre and astonishing, but always supremely effective, interventions and sound effects. Above all, Mozart's supreme value in writing music was "flow" -- music "flowing like oil" is his fundamental motto for composition, as he continually repeated to his father Leopold, even if Mozart was the only one to clearly perceive how the flow should go -- not music laboriously constructed simply to apply intellectual principles of composition. Fortunately, as a creative composer, Mozart never allowed pedantic criticism to intimidate him into reviewing or distorting his original output. He resisted his father Leopold's stern advice, who cautioned him about the need to curb his unbridled imagination and to take into account in his writing that, in his audience, there were 90% ordinary musical amateurs - versus 10% (and, in our modern age, way fewer than 10%) musical "connoisseurs" capable of appreciating his sophisticated complexities. Mozart never agreed with the Emperor Joseph II's veiled chiding about his "too many notes," (if Joseph's comment was authentic). He refused to simplify for the sake of his aristocratic audience, who complained about not being able to follow and remember the immense and relentless outpouring of Mozart's creative ideas. Only for his favorite singers past their prime was he willing to rewrite some stratospheric aria into something more manageable. And no doubt about it, Mozart would have never retouched any of his music simply to abide by Abert's punditry. For one of the immense charms of Mozart's music is exactly in following him through this happy, unbridled sudden jumps to new musical phrases, themes, and ideas which take him and us we never know where, but always have a gracious way to blend with the whole while they deliver at the end a unified piece. And they're so quickly gone that we want and need to re-listen again and again to the work to capture all its subtleties and evanescent beauties. This is the essence of Mozart's "flow" for which there is no formula, and which needs Mozart himself to be perceived and created. He was an astounding, superlative master at improvisations, where he simply used to let himself go and create extraordinary music, a lot of which was never written down, and was thus lost for ever. Reflecting on his extempore creations, Mozart himself was often astonished and pleased by the quality of what came out of this free-style play. Unchecked and inexhaustible spontaneous creativity was a major force of Mozart's composing. And if this was the true, indelible, mark of his "genius", it should be respected and lauded. Abert failed to be consistent with his own concept of "genius" as that of an artist being his only own rule-giver. Abert tended to erect himself as the final judge of "quality" as soon as Mozart's musical composition didn't exactly correspond to Abert's own academic expectations. All these abstract analyses and criticisms, these constant comparisons with the styles of Mozart's contemporaries, these learned references to Mozart's own past and future compositions ("echoes", or "signs", or "signatures", ... whatever), often fade in importance as soon as we return to the living experience of listening to the works themselves and the captivating beauty of Mozart's music. Here again we encounter the contrast between 1) the immediate impact of spontaneous, live impressions in the very act of listening to music, which engrave their emotional connotations into memory, and 2) the post-factum cool light of detached, learned, analysis of data -- the product of essentially mining and comparing reflective memories. Or, as Goethe pithily wrote: "Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie, Und gruendlich des Lebens goldner Baum." - "Dear friend, all theory is gray, And green the golden tree of life." Abert, a strong disciplinarian (in the same mold as Mozart's father, Leopold), was not plugged into

this absolute freedom of writing music "flowing like oil". Whereas Mozart always allowed himself to be freely guided by his instinct, remaining supremely confident that his inner genius was never going to fail him or lead him astray. This superior self-confidence in his exceptional creativity marked him off from all his contemporaries and from all other musicians of the past and the future. In this perspective, it can be argued that the erudite musicologist Alfred Einstein (1880-1952) -- in his insightful musical analysis of Mozart: His Character, His Work -- when it comes to assessing merits and criticisms, is more nuanced and more tolerant of Mozart's idiosyncracies. He never objects to Mozart's exuberant creation of new themes and motifs, and revels in the "depth" of Mozart's emotionalism. In addition, it is a more recent book of 1945, with only 512 pages, and weighing only one pound. Alfred Einstein immigrated to the States in 1939, and, even though he always wrote in his native German, he published only the English version of his text. He also was the editor of the 3d edition of the famous Köchel catalogue of 1937 (in German), which incorporated many revisions and additions to the original catalogue, and was reprinted as the 4th edition in 1958 and the 5th in 1961. With his profound expertise of all works of Mozart's music, Einstein is the direct and modern successor to Abert's own encyclopedic knowledge. It is vastly interesting to contrast Einstein's passionate approach and analysis of the living impact of Mozart's music to those of the more scholarly methodical Abert. All in all, for its superb analytical and historical content, Abert's "magnum opus", even if showing the limitations of its 1919 dating, is a monumental book, a towering Bible for any Mozart enthusiast and scholar. This book can be annotated and updated, but never reduplicated. This kind of masterpiece will never be written again. Modern writers don't have the time nor the lifelong concentration and passion such a work requires. They face too many obligations, too many distractions. They are pulled apart by so many demands for new projects, interviews, conferences, meetings, by plane, or phone, or email. Stanley Sadie, probably the best qualified musicologist for a modern rewrite on the model of Abert, never found the time and peace of mind to produce more than a first volume, "Mozart: The Early Years, 1756-1781" (2006), not exactly comparable in terms of in-depth coverage to Abert's work. But Sadie agrees with Abert that the "early Mozart" is as "essential Mozart" as the "late Mozart". In truth, there will never be another writer capable of Abert's intense attention and endurance. He still was imbued with the monk-like spirit of life-long perseverance and undisturbed industriousness. This atmosphere is gone for ever. And thanks to Cliff Eisen's impeccably scholarly notes, this colossal book also provides the most current state of research on Mozart's life and work. As a physical product, this book is also mightily impressive, but could have been improved with higher-quality paper, a larger font for the notes, and a publication in two volumes. And, as with the Bible, we are not obliged to take some of its myths at face value.

ROO.BOOKAROOMarch 4, 20106 of 6 people found the following review helpful. 30 Stars or "Supernova" Rate. By Ricardo Mena Cuevas If had 50 Stars for rating or a special kind of rating for massive number of them (say, a hundred; I recommend the option "Supernova Star"), I give it to this book. It is so massive and so detailed, that I think Nabokov (the master of details) would have saluted it with tears in his eyes. My bow to the author. Curtains, please...0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By V. Centeno A thorough investigation for the serious reader on the life of W. A. Mozart.

Hermann Abert's classic biography, first published in German more than eighty years ago and itself based on the definitive mid-nineteenth century study by Otto Jahn, remains the most informed and substantial biography of Mozart in any language. The book is both the fullest account of the composer's life and a deeply skilled analysis of his music. Proceeding chronologically from 1756 to 1791, the book interrogates every aspect of Mozart's life, influences, and experience; his personality; his religious and secular dimensions; and the social context of the time. In "a book within a book," Abert also provides close scrutiny of the music, including the operas, orchestral work, symphonies and piano concertos, church music and cantatas, and compositions for solo instruments. While the tone of Abert's great work is expertly rendered by Stewart Spencer, developments in Mozart scholarship since the last German edition are signaled by the Mozart scholar, Cliff Eisen, in careful annotations on every page. Supported by a host of leading Mozart scholars, this immense undertaking at last permits English-language readers access to the most important single source on the life of this great composer.