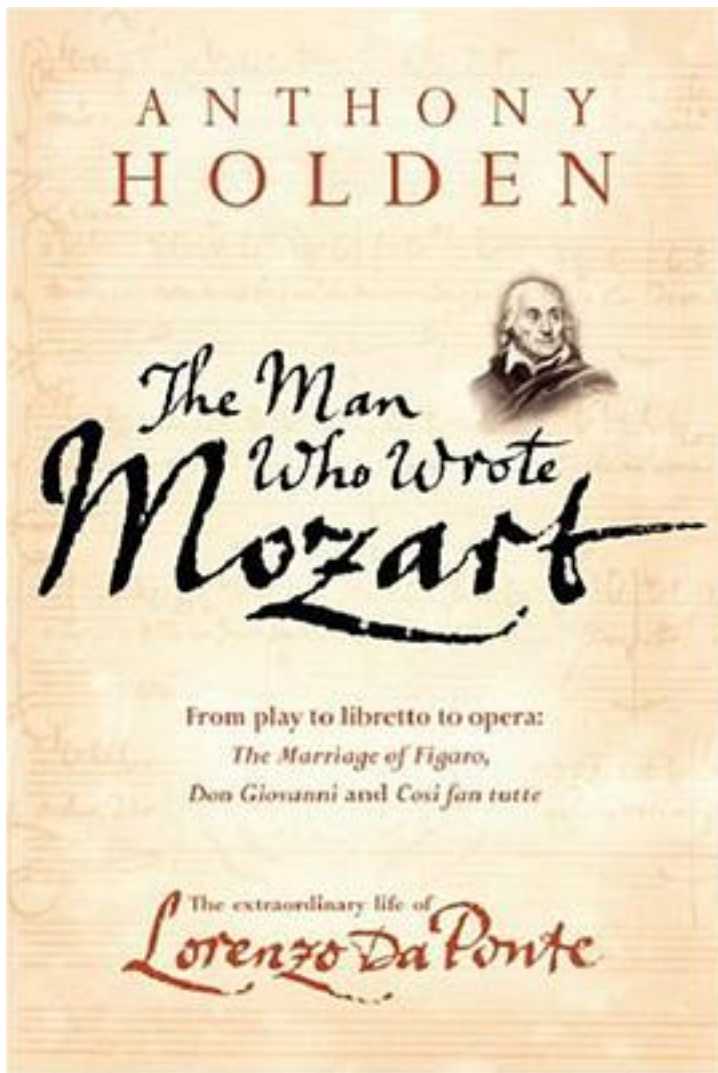


# The Man Who Wrote Mozart



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In June 1805, a 56-year-old Italian immigrant disembarked in Philadelphia carrying only a violin. Before dying in New York 23 years later he would find New World respectability as the first Professor of Italian at Columbia University. For now, he set up shop as a grocer. There was always an air of mystery about the Abbe Lorenzo da Ponte. A scholarly poet, teacher and priest, with a devoted wife, he also had a reputation as a womanizer. Da Ponte charmed all he met, pioneering the place of Italian music in American life. But his self-assurance also excited mistrust. When the first Italian opera was performed in New York in 1825, he had the nerve to claim he had written it. Like the memoirs he had recently written, to pay off more debts, the old man was so full of tall stories...The many lives of Lorenzo da Ponte - librettist of Mozart's three great operas, The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni and Cosi Fan Tutte - begin in Venice, linger in Vienna and London and ends in New York, where today he lies buried in an unmarked grave in the world's largest cemetery.

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