

Mozart and Garlic

Two memoirs for summer reading.

MOZART IN THE JUNGLE: SEX, DRUGS, AND CLASSICAL MUSIC, memoir by Blair Tindall. Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005. Hardcover. \$24.

GARLIC AND SAPPHIRES: THE SECRET LIFE OF A CRITIC IN DISGUISE, memoir by Ruth Reichl. The Penguin Press, 2005. Hardcover. \$24.95.

With a few days between me and the end of Blair Tindall's tale of life in the world of classical music, I've begun to wonder if the subtitle is meant to be ironic. It's just tacked on there so wholeheartedly that the idea never crossed my mind, despite the fact that in the whole 307-page book, the author tiresomely refers to sex only as "making love," and, while she sees some cocaine use and takes a few pills here and there for stage fright, her worst indulgence seems to come in the form of a third martini late one night.

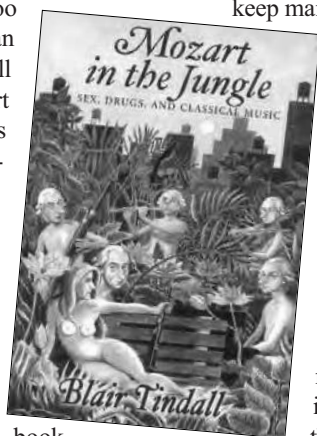
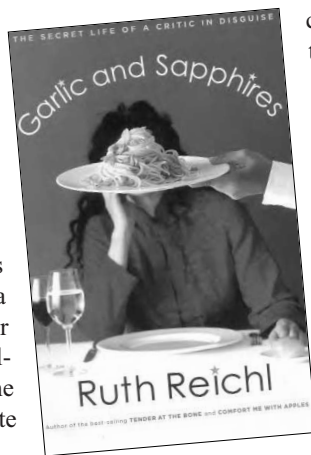
Mozart in the Jungle isn't about sex and drugs. It's about making a life in the arts, and thus it's about struggles, frustration, talent, burn-out, jealousy, unfairness, moments of beauty, friendships and love. Tindall's story could be that of a writer, a singer, a pop star: Like the classical musicians in Tindall's story, they too are trying to make a living in an industry that cannot support all the people that work to be a part of it. In that sense, Tindall's personal story comes as no surprise: From a very young age, she worked at playing the oboe; it became her job, and a frustrating one at that, until she finally quit, turning the oboe to a part-time gig while attending graduate school in journalism.

It's the rest of Tindall's book that's fascinating. As a memoirist, she's a frustrating writer, glossing over events that seem key to the story and drawing out parts that feel repetitive or weak. But when her journalistic training takes over and she writes for pages on the history of classical music in America in the 20th century, she's downright fantastic. Arts funding becomes deeply engrossing stuff, and people who were previously just names on buildings or CD covers become characters. Tindall

details music's place in American lives with great respect and a clear understanding of the world outside the classical bubble, which is, in part, why it's so jarring when she slips back into her own narration. The author's younger self is naive and insulated, taking the short-lived jobs she's handed by her temporary first-chair boyfriends until she winds up playing for Broadway shows — which lead to good money but no respect. Tindall the character can be droopy and unsympathetic; Tindall the author is a fine journalist with a sharp eye for the human details that make stories interesting.

On the opposite end of the memoir spectrum is Ruth Reichl, whose *Garlic and Sapphires* is an utter treat, the sort of book you can't put down but also wish would never end. The book chronicles Reichl's term as a food critic for the *New York Times*, from the moment she's recognized on the plane on her way to New York through the point at which she backs away from the job, realizing she's become the food snob she never wanted to be. Reichl is warm, smart, and incredibly funny as she takes the reader through a host of characters, the disguises she wore to keep maitre d's and restaurant owners

from recognizing her and giving her star treatment. Her first review for the *Times* was in two parts: One for the time she went in disguise, and one for the time she went as herself. The difference is stunning, and Reichl, by including her review as well as her memory of the meals, lets the experience speak for itself: There is clearly much at stake with the fourth star she removes from Le Cirque's rating. Reichl takes the backlash as well as anyone could, but as she slips into disguises and tries on personalities, making her way through New York's top restaurants, she finds herself slipping away from the joy she took in food and in cooking. In the end, like Tindall, Reichl steps out of the small, insular world in which she's been living, back into a place where she can appreciate the things she loves. **CW**



BOOK NOTES Phillip Margolin, Chuck Logan and Reed Arvin read, 7 pm 7/14, Powell's, Beaverton ... **Steve Raymond** (*The Year of the Angler and the Year of the Trout*) reads, 7:30 pm 7/14, Powell's on Hawthorne, Portland ... Midnight Magic parties for the release of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* happen at 8 pm 7/15 at Barnes & Noble and 9 pm 7/15 at the UO Bookstore and Borders Books ... A Harry Potter release day Wizarding Festival is from 8 am-3 pm 7/16, Books Without Borders ... **Bakari Kitwana** (*Why White Kids Love Hip Hop*) reads, 7:30 pm 7/18, Powell's on Hawthorne, Portland ... **Blair Tindall** reads, 7:30 pm 7/18, Powell's on Burnside, Portland ... **Elizabeth Kostova**, author of buzz book *The Historian*, reads, 7:30 pm 7/19, Powell's on Burnside, Portland ... Memoirist **Beth Lisick** reads, 7:30 pm 7/20, Powell's on Burnside ... **Inga Muscio**, author of *Cunt*, reads from that and her new book, *Autobiography of a Blue-Eyed Devil: My Life and Times in a Racist, Imperialist Culture*, 7 pm 7/21, Mother Kali's ... **Mike Lapinski** reads, 7:30 pm 7/21, Powell's on Hawthorne, Portland ... **Holiday Reinhorn** reads, 7:30 pm 7/21, Powell's on Burnside, Portland ... **Jimmy McDonough** reads, 7:30 pm 7/22, Powell's on Burnside, Portland ... Oregon Writers' Colony presents **Candy Davis**, 7 pm 7/25, Powell's, Beaverton ... **Megan Clark** reads, 7:30 pm 7/25, Powell's on Hawthorne, Portland ... **Jasper Fforde** reads, 7:30 pm 7/26, Powell's on Burnside ... **Damali Ayo** reads from *How to Rent a Negro*, 7:30 pm 7/27, Powell's on Burnside.

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