

The Lives of the Great Composers

By Harold C. Schonberg

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An updated and expanded edition of this perennial favorite, tracing the line of composers from Monteverdi to the tonalists of the 1990s.

In this new edition, Harold Schonberg offers music lovers a series of fascinating biographical chapters. Music, the author contends, is a continually evolving art, and all geniuses, unique as they are, were influenced by their predecessors. Schonberg discusses the lives and works of the foremost figures in classical music, among them Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, the Schumanns, Copland, and Stravinsky, weaving a fabric rich in detail and anecdote. He also includes the creators of light music, such as Gilbert and Sullivan and the Strausses.

Schonberg has extended the volume's coverage to provide informative and clearly written descriptions of the later serialists such as Stockhausen and Carter, the iconoclastic John Cage, the individualistic Messiaen, minimalist composers, the new tonalists, and women composers of all eras, including Mendelssohn Hensel, Chaminade, Smyth, Beach, and Zwilich. Scattered throughout are many changes and additions reflecting musicological findings of the past fifteen years. Photographs

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal
This third edition of a work that has become a standard resource since its publication in 1981 includes brief but significant changes. A new chapter brings the work up to date, covering later serialists such as Stockhausen and Carter, minimalists Philip Glass and John Adams, and Alfred Schnittke and Peter Maxwell Davies. Schonberg discusses the recent phenomenal success of recordings of Gregorian chant and the search for styles of composition that combine originality and complexity with audience appeal. Women composers Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Amy Beach, Cecile Chaminade, Ethel Smyth, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich are now included. Though each has been given only one paragraph, it is valuable to see them placed in the context of their contemporaries and their predecessors. Schonberg writes for the lay reader. His intention is to humanize the composers and the writing, always highly readable, emphasizes biographical information rather than musical analysis. Recommended for all public and academic libraries.?Kate McCaffrey, Onondaga Cty. P.L., Syracuse, N.Y.
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Review
A smooth, closely woven sequence of brief biographies . . . set in a surrounding continuum of depth and breadth which reflects the author's solid musical culture, his erudition, his command of socio-historic background, and his long experience in every kind and degree of performance. -- *The New York Times*

About the Author
Harold C. Schonberg, senior New York Times music critic for twenty years, was the first in his field to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism (1971). He is the author of many articles and eight books, including one on chess. Schonberg lives in New York City.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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