

The Essential Canon of Classical Music

By David Dubal

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The ultimate guide to classical composers and their music-for both the novice and the experienced listener

Music, according to Aaron Copland, can thrive only if there are "gifted listeners." But today's listeners must choose between classical and rock, opera and rap, and the choices can seem overwhelming at times. In *The Essential Canon of Classical Music*, David Dubal comes to the aid of the struggling listener and provides a cultural-literacy handbook for classical music. Dubal identifies the 240 composers whose works are most important to an understanding of classical music and offers a comprehensive, chronological guide to their lives and works. He has searched beyond the traditional canon to introduce readers to little-known works by some of the most revered names in classical music-Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert-as well as to the major works of lesser-known composers. In a spirited and opinionated voice, Dubal seeks to rid us of the notion of "masterpieces" and instead to foster a new generation of master listeners. The result is an uncommon collection of the wonders classical music has to offer.

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The Essential Canon of Classical Music By David Dubal Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #802011 in Books
- Brand: Brand: North Point Press
- Published on: 2003-10-24
- Released on: 2003-10-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.27" h x 1.86" w x 6.13" l, 2.10 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 800 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
To attempt to cover the range of serious music is a herculean task from medieval polyphony to the minimalism of Arvo P„rt and Philip Glass, offering insights, biographical information on dozens of major and minor figures, and even finding room for moderately useful, if necessarily incomplete, discographies, Dubal has brought it off better than might have been expected. As a teacher at the Juilliard School and with 20 years as a classical program director at New York's WNCN radio station, he brings strong qualifications to the job, and since he writes decently, if sometimes rather bluntly, and has thought through his organization clearly, the book is probably the most useful of its kind now available. He divides music into the traditional five periods, and lists the significant composers as well as a host of lesser figures chronologically within those. In each case, he offers a few biographical snippets (more extended portraits for the great figures), provides a sense of where the composer fits into the scheme of things, then lists significant works and some chosen recordings. These are likely to be the most controversial aspects of the book, though Dubal is careful to point out that his choices offer a range of approaches to the seminal works. He does seem to have vast affection for the recordings of Sir Thomas Beecham and, more recently, for the work of Charles Dutoit; and inevitably some will question his priorities: nearly twice as much space for Richard Strauss as for, say, Sibelius? For Paul Dukas over Carl Nielsen? But the book's usefulness and comprehensiveness cannot be denied.

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From Library Journal
In this entertaining and informative book, Dubal gives himself the difficult challenge of addressing two audiences simultaneously: listeners new to classical music and more experienced listeners who would like a guide to creating a "lifetime listening plan." A professor of piano literature at Juilliard and a former, longtime classical music programmer for WNCN in New York, he brings strong credentials to the taskAand, for the most part, he succeeds. The scope and attention to detail are very impressive, and the engaging writing style makes for pleasurable browsing. Dubal includes 240 composers in five chronological sections and categorizes them by date of birth within each grouping. He considers 60 to be major and, therefore, worthy of lengthy biographical entries and substantial listening lists. The remaining 180 receive about a page or less of prose, with only a handful of recordings listed. While he is relatively generous to the 20th century (more composers are included in this section than in any other), he ends his survey with William Bolcom (born in 1938), thus ignoring the many significant composers younger than 62. On the other end of the chronological spectrum, Dubal's pre-Baroque listings include only 13 composers, represented by a mere 14 recordingsAa woefully inadequate representation, given the explosion of early music recordings in the last quarter century. Despite these flaws, the book is a valuable resource for those interested in expanding their collections of classical music recordings. Recommended for all public libraries.ALarry Lipkis, Moravian Coll., Bethlehem, PA
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Review

“This is a music literacy handbook packed full of useful information that every musician and music lover needs almost daily” ?*The Tampa Tribune*

“*The Essential Canon of Classical Music* is a terrific book. David Dubal's spirited essays are wonderful introductions to the composers, and his vivid descriptions of the music and recommendations of recordings are invaluable. This book has something for everyone, from the beginner to the sophisticated listener. It has a permanent resting place on my CD player.” ?*Tony Randall*

“No one writes more cogently on music than David Dubal. I learned a lot. Dubal instructs even as he entertains. And he cares deeply.” ?*Ned Rorem*

“A true classic of the genre . . . Dubal's solid book is a valuable work of reference, and a musical education in itself.” ?*National Review*

“The book will please those systematically assembling a library of classical recordings and those simply wanting help at the music store.” ?*Houston Chronicle*

“David Dubal is a truly gifted explainer of the classical repertoire.” ?*Buffalo News*

“Rich and instructive.” ?*New York Observer*

“Provides useful guideposts for the lay reader.” ?*Symphony*

“Here at last is a work that bears nothing in common with the arid machinations of the academic encyclopedists. Instead Dubal offers adroitly written vignettes about every major and more than a few minor composers. Obliterating both myth and shallow idolatry with his keen wit, lively prose and comprehensive scholarship, Dubal minces no words, revealing in every case much of his subject idiosyncratic peccadilloes.” ?*The Times [St. Petersburg Florida]*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Karen Shiner:

Do you have favorite book? For those who have, what is your favorite's book? Book is very important thing for us to learn everything in the world. Each book has different aim or maybe goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people truly feel enjoy to spend their a chance to read a book. These are reading whatever they have because their hobby will be reading a book. Why not the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, individual feel need book if they found difficult problem or exercise. Well, probably you'll have this The Essential Canon of Classical Music.

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