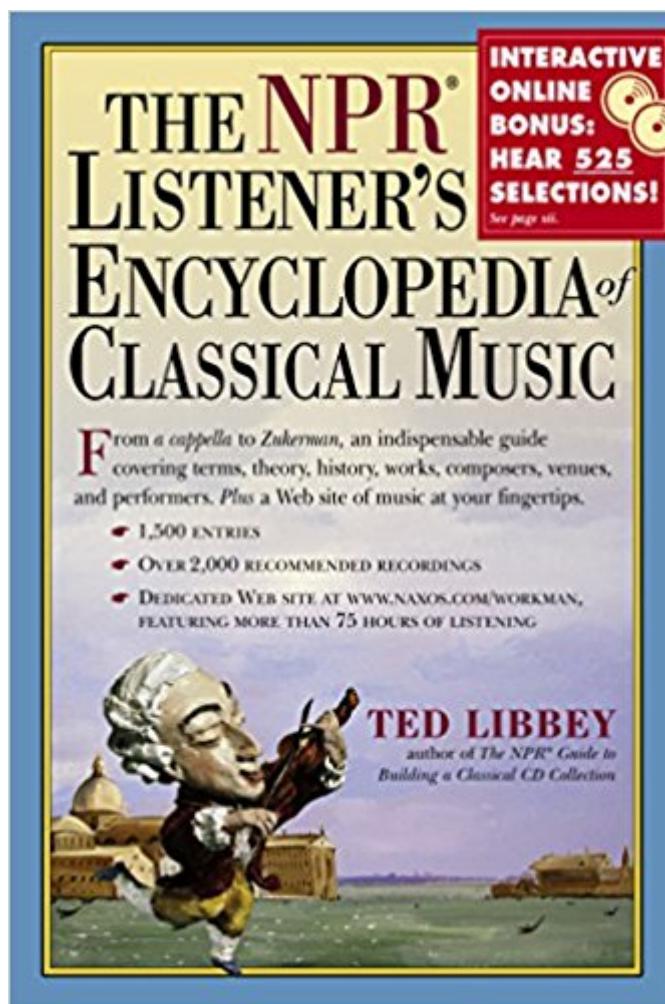


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The NPR Listener's Encyclopedia Of Classical Music



Synopsis

A complete education in classical music, written with verve and wit. No music lover can pick up this one-volume compendium without becoming a more knowledgeable, discerning listener.  The sonata form revealed, and why it's been deeply satisfying for three centuries.  What to listen for in Brahms, a self-described Classicist who was one of music's great innovators.  Pizzicato, fioritura, parlando, glissando.  The transformative power of Toscanini who earned more conducting the New York Philharmonic than his contemporary Babe Ruth made with the Yankees.  And throughout, more than 2,000 recommended recordings. Log on and listen. Created with Naxos, the world's largest classical music label, the book includes a unique Web site featuring more than 500 examples cited in the text. Look up barcarolle. First read about its swaying 6/8 meter and Venetian origins; then log on to the music Web site and hear it performed in Act IV of Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. If that whets your curiosity about Offenbach, click to hear the cancan in his *La vie parisienne*. All online samples are marked by an icon in the text.

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Customer Reviews

"No one book can include everything that's important to everybody," notes music critic Libbey in his introduction, and the flawed work that follows confirms this. Limited space and Libbey's emphasis on popular performers reduces the volume's historical comprehensiveness (Hilary Hahn appears but not Reynaldo Hahn). The book targets the general public, which may explain its superficiality but not some of the chances it misses. And it doesn't explain numerous factual errors: among them,

Libbey erroneously states Mahler was ousted from the Vienna Hofoper, when he resigned; he also neglects to note that the main Allegro theme of Saint-Saëns's Third Symphony ("Organ") is based on a melody associated with Liszt, the work's dedicatee. The misguided pop-culture tone of the tome is exemplified by photos of F. Murray Abraham as Salieri and Tom Hulce as Mozart in Amadeus in their respective entries--despite the fact that portraits of the actual men are available. Despite its faults, this is a good book for those curious about terminology and names they encounter in broadcasts or CD booklets. Some entries are gathered into thematic sections, such as "exotic instruments," "American Mavericks" and "New Voices" (i.e. young composers), that will help direct a reader's exploration of the repertoire. Additionally, a companion website has free audio links to over 500 pieces mentioned in the book. Hundreds of b&w photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. Grade 8 Up
An outstanding classical music resource, worth every moment devoted to its 11-year creation. With 1500 entries on composers, performers, instruments, musical terms, compositions, and historical periods, this clearly written, witty overview accomplishes the author's stated intent: to connect with the broadest possible public, and to focus on those areas of the literature that are well represented on recordings and accessible to the general listener. The encyclopedia is a perfect general introduction for novices or casual listeners, as well as an informative review for more seasoned classical music fans. Almost every entry for a composer, performer, or composition includes a small text box of Recommended Recordings, most of which are reviewed in *The NPR Guide to Building a Classical CD Collection* (Workman, 1999). Many clear, captioned black-and-white photos, primarily portraits, are included. One unique and particularly useful feature is a series of links to more than 500 musical selections on a Web site created by Naxos, a large classical music label. Readers can access more than 75 hours of music using the log-in code to gain initial access and register as users. Every library will want this excellent book.
Ginny Gustin, Sonoma County Library System, Santa Rosa, CA
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I thoroughly enjoy this treasure chest of information about classical music--it is one of the best book purchases I've ever made. (In response to the few negative reviewers: "What's not to like about this? It offers the most of any single similar source.") I find that I can open the book to almost any

page at random and find something I didn't know about a composer, a great work, a conductor or other performer, or a musical term. My musical education stopped in elementary school, but I've enjoyed classical music since then (remembering listening to records of "Danse Macabre" and "Grand Canyon Suite" and attending Pittsburgh Symphony kids concerts back in the 50s), but still have only a limited knowledge of the technical/artistic aspects of music. The book seems well oriented to a general reader like me. While Ted Libbey doesn't hesitate to express his critical opinions about composers and performers, he does so in a respectful, non-opinionated fashion. The book is well-written and engaging, and I never find it dry and boring like some references. My only complaint is that the link to the Naxos classical collection website referred to in the book doesn't work with Windows 7, and the folks at Naxos have failed to respond to my inquiries. Despite that minor difficulty, this is a work that any casual but engaged classical music aficionado will love--even more sophisticated listeners may learn something from it. It would make a great gift for a friend or relative who enjoys classical music.

I would have given this a five star rating, but for Kindle users, it has a maddening table of contents. It probably cannot be helped. I've figured out a way to zip to, say, Vivaldi, without plodding through page after page of the table of contents (go to the alphabet and right click through to the V's and then work your way carefully...) But the content never fails. Yes, there are some omissions, but how could there not be? Superior to other encyclopedias I have. I have it at bedside and frequently refer to it when I learn of something or someone new, or just want to brush up on a person or piece. Well worth having. Probably, I would get the book form rather than the Kindle if I were to do it again.

This is a very good music encyclopedia for the targeted audience. So there are really two questions: 1) why is this book only very good, and 2) who is the targeted audience? I initially bought this book because I was trying out several encyclopedic volumes for my classical music reviews here on . I wanted a book or books that would be a quick reference for factual bibliographic information regarding composers and some additional information regarding their compositions. With regard to composers, the book contains much bibliographic detail on all of the major composers. What is missing is info on the others. For example, there are no listings for Henze or Rubbra, both significant 20th century composers. The major composers prior to the 20th century have been filtered by time so that it is relatively easy to say who the major ones are. In a hundred years, there will probably be a half dozen "major" composers of the second half of the 20th century, but today we can only say who the contenders are. For me, it isn't worth looking up many composers of the last

50 years, because they often aren't listed. The problem is even worse for works of music. Only often recorded works are certain to be included. Again, for the majority of works from the last 50 years, they are unlikely to be included. The audience best served by The NPR Listener's Encyclopedia are all listeners relatively new to classical music. More experienced listeners and those, like me, with formal training in music, will be less likely to benefit from the book for the reasons noted in the preceding paragraph. Those listeners who are not new to classical music but are still listening primarily to the major 16th to mid-20th century compositions should also find the book beneficial. I think that the term "Listener's Companion" might have been a more accurate title for the book. It is not encyclopedic. If you are looking for succinct presentations of most all composers, this is the wrong book for you. This is no fault of the author or editors. No single book can give you what it seems to promise. I am partial to the Oxford Dictionary of Music and the Harvard Dictionary of Music and use them primarily. So, for its intended audience that I have described, I think this is an excellent reference.

Don't get this if you are looking for an overview of music history, this is a reference book--exactly as advertised. It comes with a login to naxos.com that allows you to listen to literally hundreds of hours of music from the naxos library for free! This is a tremendous value. I was most impressed by the sheer amount of information--not just the historic information, even my favorite 20th and 21st century composers were given a fair amount of coverage.

Enjoyable reference book and fun just to page through. Bought this as a gift, one for my son on his way to the Eastman Conservatory, and another for his friend on his way to Oberlin Conservatory. Two thumbs up from the kids!

This is a must have for any music lover. I really like the fact that there is a website to refer to very musical illustrations of terms and concepts.

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