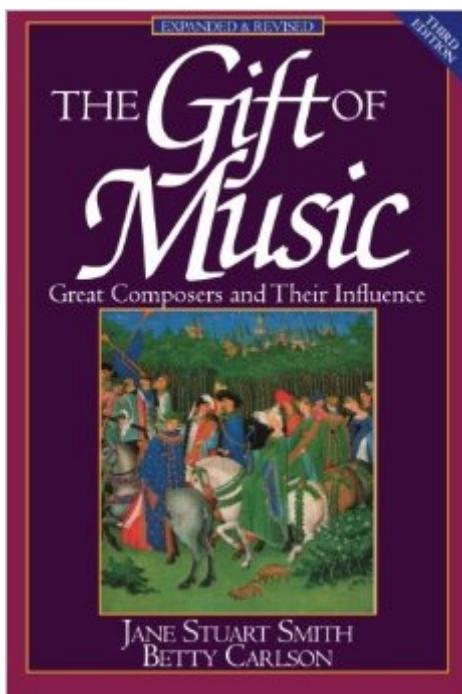


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The Gift Of Music (Expanded And Revised, 3rd Edition): Great Composers And Their Influence



Synopsis

One of the finest achievements of Western culture is its brilliant heritage of classical music. A Gift of Music looks at the lives of the greatest composers who have given us this heritage, and especially at how their music was shaped by their beliefs. The result is a remarkable and inspiring book, showing the importance of Christian faith for many composers, and the effect of this upon their music. But it also shows how the lack of faith has brought profound change in the meaning and form of contemporary music. Thus A Gift of Music seeks to open up a whole new world of musicâ "to encourage listening to the finest compositions with new understanding and pleasure, and to stretch our ears and imaginations. It is a book which will be greatly appreciated by those who already love classical music, and by others who want to explore this delightful world for the first time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a superbly written book that contains 36 intriguing biographies and profiles of some of the great composers: from Baroque masters like Vivaldi and Bach ... through the pioneers of Classicism like Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven ... to the Romantic-era greats like Debussy and Liszt ... up to modern composers like Prokofiev and Bartok. The essays are crisp and flow like a good novel without getting bogged down in musicology terms (so good for young students and non-musical readers). Also their occasional comparisons through philosophy, art and Christian perspective makes for a deeper experience versus a overly "dry," academic treatment of mere dates and milestones. I have come to really appreciate this book's depth and have to admit this humble

paperback is probably my favorite reference for studying a new composer (Schonberg's legendary "Lives of the Great Composers" being the other). It would help to first say what this book is NOT: (1) A complete survey of the history of classical music, (2) A book on music theory or analysis of major works, (3) a presentation of ALL musical styles like Jazz, Pop, country etc. (4) A book ONLY about composers who were of Christian faith. Rather, the focus is on a sampling of the most famous composers of "classical music." Their lives and music are presented in factual, historical and non-judgmental way with the clear emphasis being on the gift of music they left the world. There are some references as to how their Christian faith influenced their music - which some will appreciate and others not. However, if your primary interest is the spiritual aspect of these men, then Patrick Kavanaugh's book, "The Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers," would be a better choice.

Recently, I had the chance to begin reading this book by Jane Stuart Smith and Betty Carlson. These authors wrote a very easy to read book titled Great Women Authors. It is now out of print, but it is one of my favorite books. I was curious about this book because I had enjoyed their writing before. I was surprised to discover that this book is written quite differently. The Gift of Music includes a foreword by Francis Schaeffer, a prelude to the book, and biographies of 42 classical composers. These biographies are less personal than the biographies in Great Women Authors. In the book about women authors, Stuart and Carlson gave a personal sketch of the authors. The reader felt like they got to know them. This book about composers is much more about what they each did, how they interacted with other notable figures and developed a wholistic picture of classical music. There are a few personal details about the composers, but the biographies paint a picture of the music these men wrote and its place in the world of classical music. This quote at the beginning of the book made me pause, "There are things in the Christian world that cause us to be sad. One of these is that for many Christians classical music is a complete vacuum. This robs individual Christians and their children of one of the very rich areas of joy in this life....the chief sadness of knowing little about classical music consists in the loss of the Christian experiences in one of the areas of the affirmation of life." from the Foreword by Francis Schaeffer on page ix. As I read several of the biographies, I realized how little I know about classical music! I was amazed to learn how the composers mentored and influenced one another. This book is a lot like a textbook.

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