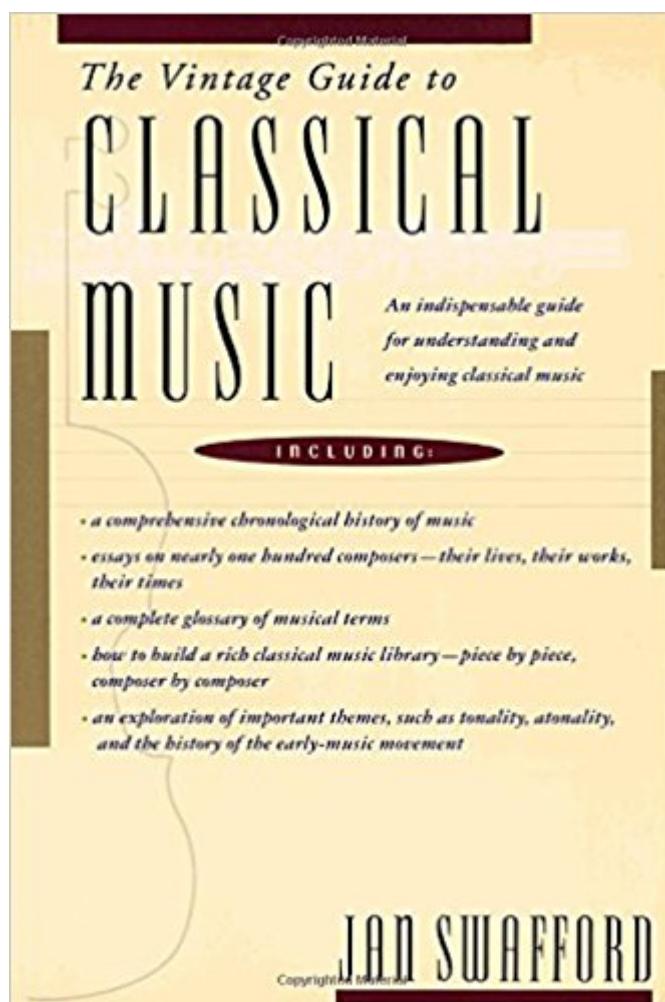


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# The Vintage Guide To Classical Music: An Indispensable Guide For Understanding And Enjoying Classical Music



## Synopsis

The most readable and comprehensive guide to enjoying over five hundred years of classical music -- from Gregorian chants, Johann Sebastian Bach, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Johannes Brahms, Igor Stravinsky, John Cage, and beyond. The Vintage Guide to Classical Music is a lively -- and opinionated -- musical history and an insider's key to the personalities, epochs, and genres of the Western classical tradition. Among its features: -- chronologically arranged essays on nearly 100 composers, from Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300-1377) to Aaron Copland (1900-1990), that combine biography with detailed analyses of the major works while assessing their role in the social, cultural, and political climate of their times; -- informative sidebars that clarify broader topics such as melody, polyphony, atonality, and the impact of the early-music movement; -- a glossary of musical terms, from a cappella to woodwinds; -- a step-by-step guide to building a great classical music library. Written with wit and a clarity that both musical experts and beginners can appreciate, The Vintage Guide to Classical Music is an invaluable source-book for music lovers everywhere.

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The most readable and comprehensive guide to enjoying over five hundred years of classical music -- from Gregorian chants, Johann Sebastian Bach, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Johannes Brahms, Igor Stravinsky, John Cage, and beyond. The Vintage Guide to Classical Music is a lively -- and opinionated -- musical history and an insider's key to the personalities, epochs, and genres of the Western classical tradition. Among its features: -- chronologically arranged essays on nearly 100

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Composer and writer Jan Swafford received degrees from Harvard and the Yale School of Music; his work has been played throughout the United States and abroad. Among his awards are an NEA Composers Grant, a Tanglewood Fellowship and a Mellon Faculty Fellowship at Harvard.

Until I got to retirement age, I had been a big fan of classical music without really knowing much about it. I finally ordered this book to get myself some education. The author has his strong opinions, but what the heck, so do I. I am never going to become a fan of atonal music -- in my opinion, the quickest & surest way of emptying a concert hall. But it was a bit disturbing to learn that Richard Strauss was "a pig" and that Bruckner was a "nincompoop" -- not that these facts affect their music in the slightest. Two coincidences strengthened my opinion of this book. I had recently discovered Beethoven's Piano Concerto #4 on YouTube (Bernstein / Zimerman) and it blew me away. Swafford agrees that the Fourth is Beethoven's best piano concerto. The second coincidence was Theodore Dalrymple's very enthusiastic mention of the Haydn String Quartets. I began listening to some of them on YouTube and realized that there was a complete universe of beautiful music I had never noticed before. Swafford has basically the same opinion, that classical music has nothing to compare with the Haydn Quartets. There is a world of excellent information in this book, & I recommend it highly.

Enjoy the book very much. For the non-music major, who has not been exposed to a great deal of "classical music", this is a grand start. If one finds certain sections a little lacking, then it's because we were ready to move on to something other than this book. After all, some have been exposed to classical music early. Others have not, and need a place to start. The suggested playlist in the back is excellent. With the help of the wonders of the Internet, , Naxos, and other websites, we can figure out what versions of what song we want to hear all by ourselves. But we all have to have somewhere to start. Kudos to the author. Only suggestions I could think of at first read, was to

improve the glossary, so that it matches closer the book. Some terms were lacking. Is there a possibility of a second version? Just asking.

Bought this book after listening to 36 hours of lectures from The Great Courses. The book is excellent, providing explanations that sometimes are better stated than what I heard in the lectures. Places music in the context of its time, introduces major figures of each period, provides expert recommendations for listing and explains major musical terms as they emerged over time.

I want to join the chorus of praise for this book. It's been my only reading matter since I started it and I put it down only to call up YouTube or to play a CD I happen to own. I love the style - high-flown, personal, inspiring, sometimes touching, sometimes snarky. It got a bit shaky during the section on Wagner - not adequate, perhaps, to the polite expression of the author's opinion of Wagner the man. That's as far as I've got - I'm about to start on Verdi. I was thrilled that the greatest of my musical beloveds, Bach and Schubert, were treated with as much admiration and love as even I could wish. I had a quick look ahead and it seems that another of my favourites, Hugo Wolf, doesn't get a mention. Oh well, one can't expect perfection. The little essays on technical subjects are clear but it's the historical overview that has been really helpful to me. I've got books on most of my favourites but it's nice to have my understanding of their works reinforced and, often, expanded. I also enjoyed seeing just where other composers like Monteverdi and Domenico Scarlatti fitted into musical history and which of their works are the most rewarding - the CDs are winging their way to me. I will have lots more new information to digest as the book heads into the twentieth century and I look forward to developing new tastes, because Jan Swafford is a writer who is not ashamed to share his enthusiasms.

Most books about music are pretty dry. This one is really not - the articles (about composers, works and general musical concepts) provide insight and enhance enjoyment of the music. It covers major composers with a detailed discussion about each significant work and provides recommendations on recordings.

I purchased this book for an Intro to Music College class. The purchase was a great buy. It was affordable, came in around the expected time and was even in GOOD condition. However, the book is setup in such a way where you have to read a top section, and then go back and reread the bottom section for a deeper understanding. Some people may find that wonderful, but my OCD

made it hard to read the book in that format. At the end of the day, I'm getting used to how to read it in the best manner possible and I'm still happy I purchased from rather than my little red bookstore that would have charged me twice or more the amount that I paid for.

A well-balanced brief survey of the history of Western cultivated music.

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