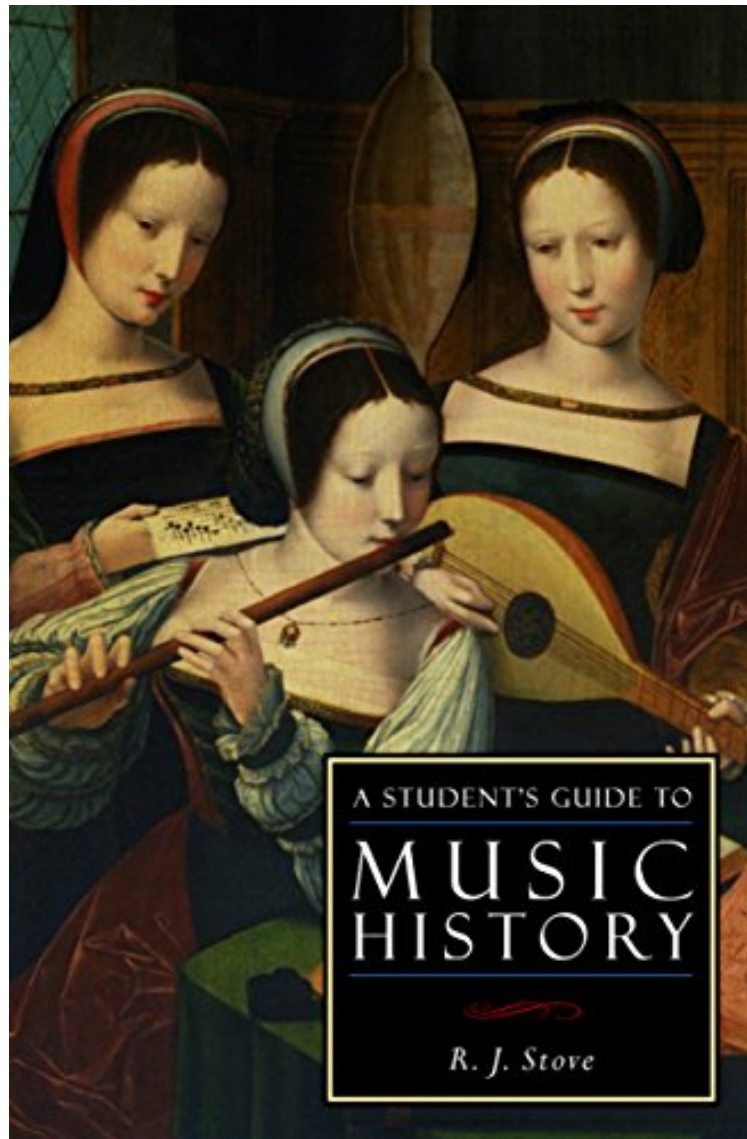


A Student's Guide to Music History (ISI Guides to the Major Disciplines)

R.J. Stove

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R.J. Stove : A Student's Guide to Music History (ISI Guides to the Major Disciplines) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Student's Guide to Music History (ISI Guides to the Major Disciplines):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Very Good Overview of Classical Music By Bruce J Blanchard Most books in the arena of Classical Music, though very good in their own respects, usually cover a little of the pre-Baroque era through the musical compositions of say Stravinsky (Rites of Spring) and Aaron Copland (Appalachian Spring).

They tend to deal with the greats, such as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, Liszt and so many others. In this, they would be right. The first thing that strikes me about Stove's book is he takes it into the modern era with names that took the Classical efforts into new and strange orchestral compositions. Another element within the confines of the book we get to know their personalities making them human, despite the fact they dealt with grander visions of imagination than most of us will ever know. The writing is not pedantic. It does not take the time to list each and every work of the composer; other books will attempt to do just that. It leads you along in a readable way and gives the reader a very nice overview of the composers, their eras, the influences, and their humanity. The book takes the iconic, along with the essential technical aspects of music, and presents the material into a format that you can understand and appreciate. I like this work and would highly recommend it for all who lose themselves with the strains of music that transcend and go beyond the inanities of our normal lives. If you have always been curious about Classical Music and why the rest of us appear to be so lost in the past, this is your chance to understand the grandeur and glory of Orchestral Music.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great introductory music history book!

By Gail Nelson I really enjoyed the abbreviated history, it's a great overview without too much detail and an enjoyable read.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Meager

By Olivier Goessens I guess a real newbie to musical history could use this introduction, but most people with the interest of buying it will already know half its content, or more.

R. J. Stove's *A Student's Guide to Music History* is a concise account, written for the intelligent lay reader, of classical music's development from the early Middle Ages onwards. Beginning with a discussion of Hildegard von Bingen, a twelfth-century German nun and composer, and the origins of plainchant, Stove's narrative recounts the rise (and ever-increasing complexity) of harmony during the medieval world, the differences between secular and sacred music, the glories of the contrapuntal style, and the origins of opera. Stove then relates the achievements of the high baroque period, the very different idioms that prevailed during the late eighteenth century, and the emergence of Romanticism, with its emphasis upon the artist-hero. With the late nineteenth century came a growing emphasis on musical patriotism, writes Stove, especially in Spain, Hungary, Russia, Bohemia, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and the United States. A final section discusses the trends that have characterized music since 1945. Stove's guide also singles out eminent composers for special coverage, including Palestrina, Monteverdi, Handel, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner, Verdi, Brahms, Debussy, Richard Strauss, Sibelius, and Messiaen. As a brief orientation to the history and contours of classical music, *A Student's Guide to Music History* is an unparalleled resource.

From the Author Interview with R. J. Stove author of *A Student's Guide to Music History*

How did you decide what material to put in and what to leave out?

The flip answer would be, "with a heavy heart". If I'd included everything I'd originally wanted to include, the book would've been at least ten times its present length, and wouldn't have been amenable to incorporation in the ISI student guide series. My chief criterion was this: when I came across material which made me say "this has got to go into the book, whatever else must be sacrificed to make way for it", then it went in.

Why did you impose a cut-off date of 1945?

There had to be a cut-off date imposed somewhere, and the end of World War II seemed better than most. Rachmaninoff, Bartok, Manuel de Falla, and Richard Strauss all died during the 1940s. So even at the time there was a sense - stronger in retrospect - of a whole generation passing away. It'll be years before posterity forms some sort of lasting verdict on the composers who emerged only after 1945. Until then, partisan agendas are likely to cloud the issue, particularly when tax money (via national broadcasting networks) is used to further those agendas. As it often has been, to an extent that was utterly unimaginable (outside dictatorships, anyhow) before the war. Of course, the post-1945 notion of the composer as ward of the state warrants a separate book in itself. Someone else should write that book. I'm not qualified to do so.

What's the point of reading classical music history, when classical music can be enjoyed perfectly well without such reading?

Well, yes, even I - who, as a mere Australian, am cursed with an abominable ignorance of baseball - could probably gain some limited level of enjoyment by watching a game, without knowing the difference between a double play and a strikeout. But wouldn't it make more sense for me to wish to increase my enjoyment by trying to increase my actual understanding? And if this is the case for baseball, why shouldn't it be the case for music?

There's a bit in this book's preface which is, I think, relevant, as a defense of reading about classical music history. There, I argue that when one's listening to music, "a certain historical awareness gives, as it were, a three-dimensional effect to what one hears. It imparts the element of the composer's individual humanity; it banishes the assumption that the music concerned is a mere exercise in pattern-making."

Will readers need a classical music background in order to benefit from your book?

No! That's precisely what they won't need. I've deliberately written the book with a minimum of specialist musical terms, although naturally "a minimum" doesn't mean "a complete absence". Again, if I may go back to sporting analogies: no author could write in public about baseball if he had been forbidden from using specialist terms such as "bunt", "pitcher", and "shortstop". For the musical terms

that really couldn't be avoided, the book contains a glossary. I hope that will be of some use. The only background needed to read this book is the ability to follow literate English prose. At the same time, I've done my readership the courtesy of assuming that it consists of adults. It drives me up the wall when writers on classical music try to appear hip by treating their readers like moronic brats. If you could take only one CD to a desert island, what would it be? Scarcely a day goes past when I don't ask myself this question. I'm not much closer to answering it than I was a year ago, when this whole project began. But perhaps my choice would be, ultimately, Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*, "little organ book". It sums up everything Bach achieved in the field of sacred music; it does so in the form of perfect, easily digestible miniatures; and it's far more varied in mood than most people would expect from a collection of organ solos. Had Bach written nothing in his entire life save the *Orgelbüchlein*, he would still have been among the human race's supreme specimens. But when you recall what else he wrote . . .