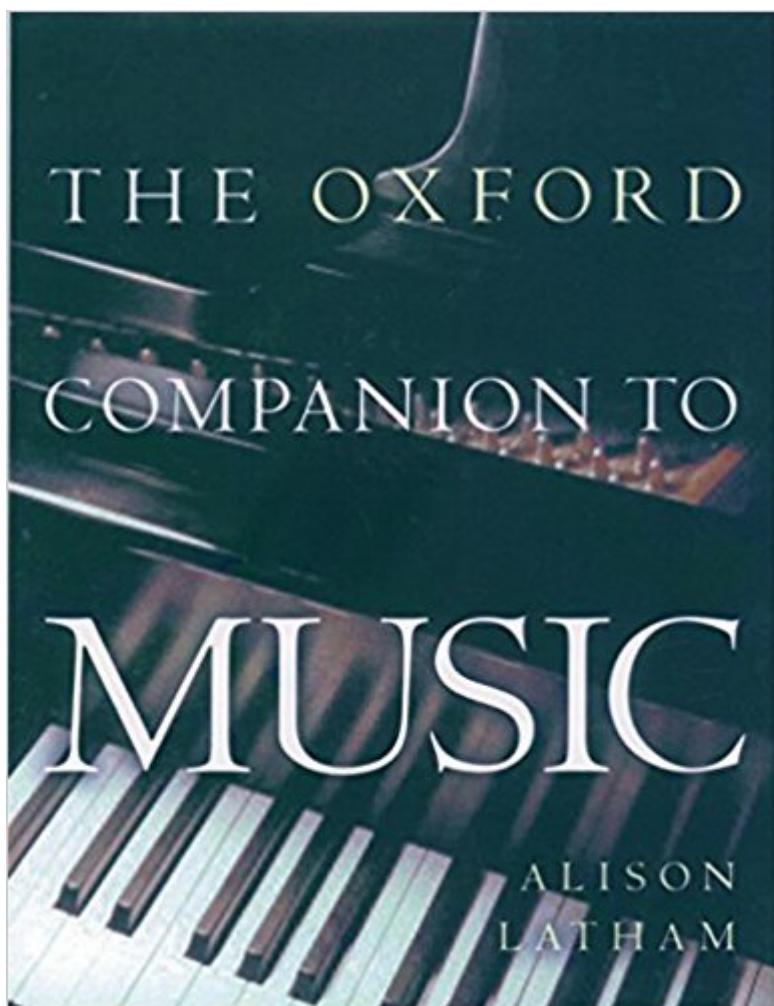


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# The Oxford Companion To Music (Oxford Companions)



## Synopsis

First published in 1938, The Oxford Companion to Music has been the first choice for authoritative information on all aspects of music. Now, 17 years since the last edition, the Companion is here to serve a new generation of students, teachers, performers, concert goers, record collectors, and music lovers. Completely revised and updated by a distinguished team of contributors, the Oxford Companion to Music features more than 1,000 new entries than the previous edition; more than 70 percent of the entire text is either new or entirely rewritten. Here, in articles that range from clear, concise definitions of musical ideas and terms to extended surveys of musical forms and styles, is authoritative coverage of virtually every musical subject. Embracing the world of music in all its variety--including jazz, popular music, and dance--the Companion offers a concentrated focus on the Western classic tradition, from the Middle Ages to the present day. More than 8,000 articles sweep across an extraordinary range of subjects: composers, performers, conductors, individual works, instruments and notation, forms and genres. From the study of music--theory, aesthetics, scholarship--to the way it is performed and disseminated, the Companion provides comprehensive, accessible coverage of music in all its artistic, historical, cultural, and social dimensions. Comprehensive, authoritative, up-to-date, and designed throughout for clarity and accessibility, the new Oxford Companion to Music, like every edition before it, will immediately become an indispensable resource for all who wish to enrich their love and knowledge of music.

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## Customer Reviews

Latham, an editor of musical reference works, offers a new edition of this popular volume, which first appeared in a quite different form in 1938 and was last updated in 1983. Latham spruces up this edition with over 1,000 new entries; more than 70% of the book is essentially new material, not just about Western classical music, but also jazz, pop and dance music. Long articles are devoted to the most famous composers, while the approximately 8,000 short entries show a decided British bias there is almost as much space devoted to eccentric English composer Lord Berners as to Leonard Bernstein. There are also, perhaps inevitably, some omissions: while 20th-century German composer Boris Blacher is included, his arguably more original contemporary Wilhelm Killmayer is left out. Some readers may be frustrated with Latham's fondness for qualifying phrases, such as the observation that American composer Libby Larsen's music is "generally bold, clear, and colorful" or that the work of another Yank composer, Vincent Persichetti, "normally [keeps] some relation to tonal centres." Others may disagree with the value judgments assigned here, such as the praise of Gian Carlo Menotti's famously reviled 1970 opera, *The Most Important Man in the World*. Such provocative choices aside, the compendium is solidly researched, with useful biographical information and lists of suggested reading. Priced reasonably, given the book's size, this title may find its way not only into reference collections, but into the hands of music lovers who want an up-to-date browsing tome. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

The Oxford Companion to Music is back with a deft new editor, a smart new look, and a reasonable price tag, considering the wealth of information. A member of the editorial board of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and former coeditor of *The Musical Times*, Latham oversees more than 150 musicians and scholars in this blending of the tenth edition (1970), edited by John Owen Ward, and the two-volume *New Oxford Companion to Music* (1983), edited by Denis Arnold. The writing team, which includes original Companion author Percy Alfred Scholes (1877-1958) in selected, updated articles, has achieved what a single expert could not in today's expansive musical landscape: that is, it has provided comprehensive coverage of "Western classical music" in a single, reliable book. Among the 8000 entries are articles on composers, theorists, and some performers; instruments, forms, and terms; subjects like electronic music, individual countries, and politics and music; and some pieces (and even some famous arias). Each entry is presented in a dictionary format, with a select index of names appended and sometimes with bibliographic references. Pertinent illustrations, both linear and musical, are sparsely used. The bias is still English, but the book provides cross references to American terms and includes plenty of American composers and

musical subjects. A solid reference with a grand pedigree, usefully improved for home and general library use, this is highly recommended for all public libraries. Bonnie Jo Dopp, Univ. of Maryland Libs., College ParkCopyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

This updated (2002) Oxford Companion is probably the best choice if you are looking for a serious reference for the many aspects of musicology AND in-depth biographies of the major and minor composers. This guide gives about 2-4 full pages of text to "the big guys" like Bach, Beethoven and Liszt and only 1-3 paragraphs to the less influential composers like Biber or Locatelli. But this will probably not be enough to fully satisfy the more serious student's interest (the multi-volume New Grove Dictionary is the place to go then). The OCM also gives a few pages each to describing the major eras of music (Renaissance, Baroque etc). Its descriptions of musical terms (like what is allegro, a sarabande dance, a hurdy gurdy etc) are written in straightforward language but are usually not excessively descriptive. However, some topics get quite a thorough treatment - such as the many aspects of harmony and sound - so the OCM is certainly not any "lightweight" reference. Of course, it all reads in the tone of an encyclopedia and thus does not really make captivating reading for the non-music major. Other guides to classical music are better at introducing musicology to the newby, such as the NPR Encyclopedia or David Dubal's compelling "Essential Cannon of Classical Music." But, if you are a more serious music student or listener with a greater interest for in-depth musicology (and already have enough references on the lives of the composers), then the Harvard Music Dictionary is probably the top choice. It is pure musicology (with the composer biographies in a separate, companion volume). As a result of such focus, the Harvard Dictionary has more space for more detailed treatment of each music topic. It is slightly more technical in nature (superb graphs, charts) and academic in its writing compared to the Oxford Companion. But, either one is excellent and can be had on marketplace used for about 1/3 the list price.

The Oxford Companion to Music is an excellent reference work for those who love classical music. It's probably not detailed or technical enough for most professional musicians; but those who enjoy listening to the endless variety and vast range of emotions of classical music (that's a plug!) will find the OCM can considerably enhance their enjoyment. This is a big work of 1,434 pages; but the typeface, while small, is well-chosen. It's clean and clear; even these old eyes read it with no difficulty. There are extended articles on famous conductors and all the major composers plus numerous others that you never heard of. The biographies are helpful in placing a composer's

works in the context of his life. Especially helpful is a well-chosen but unannotated bibliography after most of the biographies. There are also major articles on different forms of music, types of instruments, etc. I thought I knew a lot about the sonata form, but I know more now after reading that article. There is almost no analysis of individual works; to include them would probably have doubled the size of this work. I've used a number of classical reference works over the years, but the OCM is easily the best. It's complete enough so as not to oversimplify too drastically but not so long that "you learn more about penguins than you really want to know."

Wonderful reference.

I Like the book. Very good reference material. I recommend his book for any one studying or interested in music

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