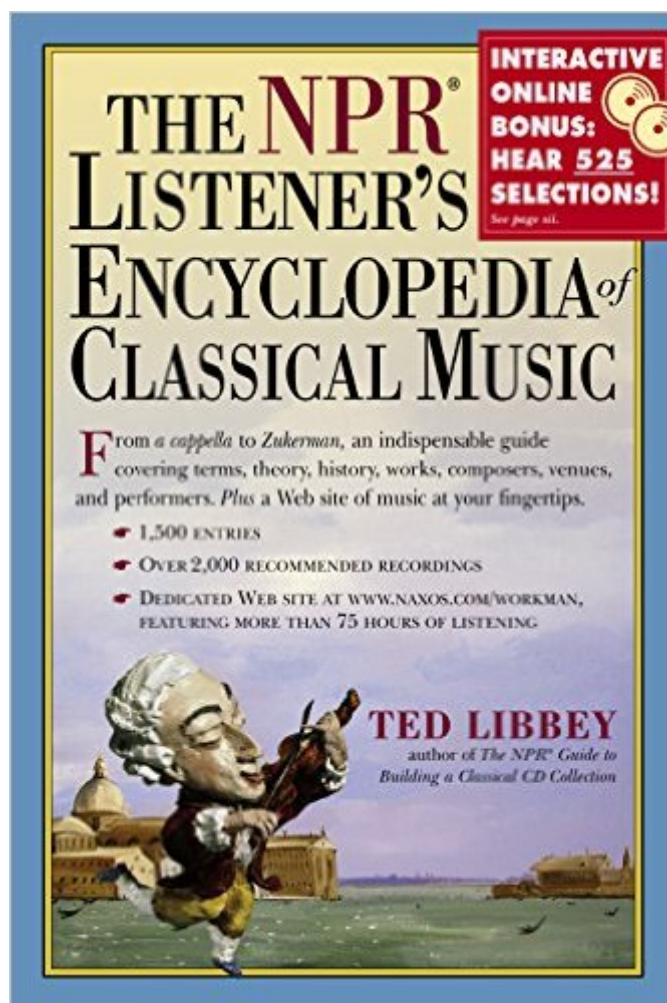


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# The NPR Listener's Encyclopedia Of Classical Music



## 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As someone who helped in the editing of this project, I am altogether loath to praise it in a commercial forum. But I really must wonder what the above foolish critique from *Publishers Weekly* is about. Talk about unprofessional skimming. Is it better to include a truly minor composer (Reynaldo Hahn) than a leading young American violinist (Hilary Hahn)? What of the reviewer's clear implication that there are no pictures of Mozart (there are several) or Salieri (there is a silhouette), or that it would be better to omit any photos from the nitwit movie (*Amadeus*) through

which most laypeople recently have become misguidedly familiar with these two figures in music history? Even if it's called an encyclopedia, it is altogether informed by one person's judgment and taste -- as if it could ever have been otherwise. As for the "numerous" errors alleged, of which only a trivial charge concerning an omission holds up, one disputes the book's report about Mahler's departure from the Vienna Court (today State) Opera, countering that he was not fired but resigned. Alas for the skimming \*PW\* reviewer, Grove's explains it baldly: "... he was again forced to look elsewhere." So you can safely ignore this particular \*PW\* review. Buy Libbey's work to read and decide for yourself how solid it is, how useful for you in your listening, and where you may wish to quibble, if you do.

This is a tremendous resource for anyone needing concise information about anyone involved in or any concept, however obscure, concerning classical music. The one thing missing that I think would be invaluable is a phonetic pronunciation guide. This would be particularly helpful with the composers, conductors and other musicians who are referenced. Everyone probably knows the big dogs, but the strength of this publication is the inclusion of practically everyone of note in this music field; many who are quite unknown to most of us. The pronunciation guide would be extremely helpful. Otherwise, I find this text to be a clearly superior and exhaustive resource.

"The NPR Listener's Encyclopedia of Classical Music" is a delightful combination reference book and video game for all classical music buffs. Besides its nearly 1,000 pages of listings, from Claudio Abbado to Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, the book gives you access to a page on the Naxos Music website which allows you to listen to more than 500 musical selections online. I just signed on to the page for the first time, and listened to the very first listed selection--John Adams' "Shaker Loops." I look forward to hours of fun with this wonderful new toy! I appreciate the breadth and depth of knowledge author Ted Libbey brings to the project, as well as his inclusion of favorites of mine who aren't necessarily well-known to today's listening public, such as the Danish tenor Aksel Schiotz. In his introduction, Libbey notes he tried to avoid the gaps and errors in such standard reference works as Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, and adds, "Doubtless there will be errors still, and for these I accept full responsibility." Alas, I have already caught him in two. The first is the listing of Beethoven's birthday as December 17, 1770, when even "Peanuts" Schroeder and Lucy know that Beethoven was born on December 16. Of course, that could have been a printer's or proofreader's error, but the second mistake is more serious--when Libbey states that Vladimir Horowitz withdrew from the concert stage in 1953 in a severe depression over the suicide of his only daughter.

Actually, Horowitz's daughter, Sonia, did not commit suicide until the 1970s (which caused Horowitz a second bout of severe depression); I'm not sure exactly what caused Horowitz's 1953 breakdown, but I had always understood that an addiction to prescription drugs was at least partly to blame. Nevertheless, these are minor caveats to an otherwise enjoyable and informative volume. Any classical music lover with computer access would be happy to own it.

I went out on a limb and bought this while deployed overseas not really knowing what to expect. I didn't get what I wanted, but turns out, got something else....and its great. This I would say (along with THE ESSENTIAL CANNON OF CLASSICAL MUSIC by Dubal) make up the two books that I think every newcomer to classical music should own to enhance their listening experience. This book will function to explain every piece of strange terminology you will encounter on your journey (and boy are there a lot of them!) and even give you background on some pieces and composers. So listen, enjoy....and keep me updated!

This book contains almost everything you could want to know about classical music, the people up to the present, the instruments, the terms, and the music itself some of which can be accessed on line through a Naxos website, It is well illustrated and engagingly written. The only drawback is that the book is hard to put down. One wants to check out just one more thing and it goes on and on. I also like that it is a paperback or its 980 pages would be too heavy to lift. I heard the author interviewed on NPR and was prepared to pay a lot of money for the book and so was blown away by the price. It is a must have reference book.

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.

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