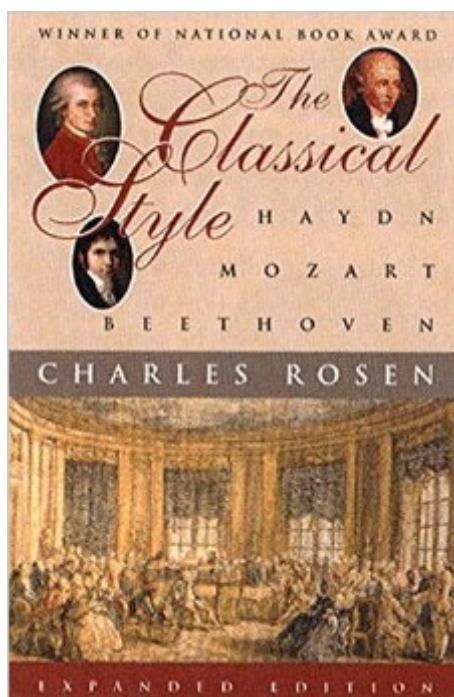


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The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven (Expanded Edition)



Synopsis

A greatly expanded edition of the National Book Award-winning masterpiece by a world-class pianist and writer on music. This outstanding book treating the three most beloved composers of the Vienna School is basic to any study of Classical-era music. Drawing on his rich experience and intimate familiarity with the works of these giants, Charles Rosen presents his keen insights in clear and persuasive language. For this expanded edition, now available in paperback for the first time, Rosen has provided a new, 64-page chapter on the later years of Beethoven and the musical conventions he inherited from Haydn and Mozart. The author has also written an extensive new preface in which he responds to other writers who have commented on his ideas.

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Customer Reviews

Charles Rosen by now has attained a place among musical analysts on a par with the likes of Tovey and Grout, though his style is very different from either of these luminaries. Taking the music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven as the pinnacle of the musical style that developed in the late eighteenth-century, Rosen explains how around 1775 there was a decisive shift away from the High Baroque style of Bach and Handel, and why this new music was different. After his general introduction to the style most of the book explores different genres, symphony, opera, concerto and string quartet among them, to create a lucid and multi-faceted picture of how these three great composers approached and solved common musical and formal problems. The new edition adds a

preface that addresses criticisms of the original book and an additional late chapter on Beethoven. Rosen's writing, though it can be dense and repetitive, at its best is unmatched in its ability to relate analysis to what actually is heard by a listener. To this end, an ability to read and understand the copious and detailed musical examples is essential to fully grasping his points--this book is not for the casual amateur. But to those willing to do the work, *The Classical Style* remains as richly rewarding after three-plus decades as when it first appeared. As another reviewer has mentioned, it is a book one returns to again and again simply for the sheer pleasure of reading it.

Rosen's *The Classical Style* is my favorite book all-time on classical music in general, and Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn in detail. There are other books about these great composers that I love and cherish, but this one is the most intellectually stimulating. It is full of those rare insights that have total impact on my thinking. There are gems in its pages that will enrich your understanding profoundly. The book is laid out in topics that either address a certain type of piece, a certain period of time and a particular composer. For example, a chapter would be "Haydn before the death of Mozart." Or "Piano concerto". Or "Haydn after the death of Mozart". Or "Piano Trio". Each chapter shows who was best at a certain type of work, why they were the best and then he gives specific musical examples to bolster his arguments. Of course in the process of doing this, Rosen greatly expands your understanding of every topic he covers. While there are many printed musical examples, it is really better if you are familiar with the pieces in the examples. If you are a proficient music reader, especially on piano, you can probably do pretty well without knowing the music but chances are those two skills aren't mutually exclusive and if you do one, you've probably done the other. In any case, this is a serious book that requires serious work by the reader. You will get out of the book a direct proportion to how much listening and thinking you are willing to do. If you want to seriously learn about the classical period and the elements of music that grew out of that period, this book will help you do that. If you think that by buying and reading this book you will learn everything there is to know about the classical period, you might be disappointed. How? Well, if you don't know the music from that period and you can't read music, this will leave you seriously lost. In other words, you need some background or you will need to do some serious listening to really get the jewels out of this book. If this sounds elitist to you, you are right. Yet it is done with the purpose of keeping you from wasting your money. So make sure you have some background or are willing to do some work if you expect to get the best this book has to offer. So, if you have some background in classical music and you want to sharpen your understanding of the period, I think this is easily one of the best books out there for that purpose. The more listening you do, the more you will get

out of this great book. Rosen isn't the easiest read but he is brilliant and writes like a very brilliant person talks. The sentences are compound and sometimes require you to hold more than one thought for the span of many paragraphs. If you stay with Rosen's prose and read with care though, you will have many "aha" moments and increase your understanding of the elements of the classical period manyfold. I found this book not only an absorbing read and a top flight textbook, it is a reference book as well. I refer to it from time to time and it solidifies my understanding everytime I visit its pages. It helped me understand Haydn's wit and genius as well as his growth as an artist. It turned me on to his wonderful Piano Trios to go with his great String Quartets and Symphonies. It helped me understand Mozart's gifts in opera and his astonishing String Quintets. It also gave me a much greater understanding and appreciation of his great Piano Concerti, which I already loved to a great degree. Somehow he refreshed my joy in those works and that alone made the book greatly worthwhile. He opened my eyes to Beethoven's originality and rekindled my enjoyment of his music. Most of all, it always enhances my understanding and enjoyment of the musical works being discussed. So many times it has inspired me to fire up the stereo and put actual sounds what I've just read. In the end, satisfaction is greatly increased and you actually feel smarter! Rosen is a rare intellect who has written strikingly original and highly valuable books on classical music. This particular book is his pinnacle and belongs in the library of any serious student of the classical period, or anyone who appreciates classical music and would like to sharpen their understanding of the finer elements of one of the greatest pinnacles of Western culture.

As a music lover with a superficial knowledge of the technical aspects of music-making, I found this book to be a real challenge. It took me several attempts over the course of a couple of years to get through it. But having expended that effort, I can say that every minute was worth it. I now have a good understanding of what "classical" music (in the stricter definition of "classical") is about, and why its three great Viennese exponents were such masters. I now can listen classical music -- indeed, to any common-practice period music -- with much more insight, understanding, and enjoyment than I could heretofore.

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