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The Maestro Myth: Great Conductors In Pursuit Of Power



Synopsis

In this masterpiece on the masters of music, Lebrecht enralls readers with his insightful look into the lives and careers of the world's most celebrated conductors. of photos.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Music critic/provocateur Norman Lebrecht didn't make the high muckety-mucks of the classical music industry at all happy with this iconoclastic book, but he did open a lot of eyes. In 328 fascinating pages, he exposes the foibles and failings (musical and otherwise) of the great conductors of the last century. Why are there so few really outstanding conductors, and so many surface-skimming mediocrities? How did the conductor go from a mere time-beater to a powerful, immensely well-paid figure who jets from continent to continent and from podium to podium, hobnobbing with presidents and tycoons instead of with other musicians? Lebrecht explores all these factors, along with the history of conducting, and in the process dishes a few good anecdotes. He also shines the light on Ronald Wilford, the superagent of Columbia Artists Management, Inc., who controls the careers of more than 100 conductors--and, therefore, controls much of classical music. Lebrecht gets a few facts wrong (mostly minor--there haven't, for example, been stockyards in Chicago for some decades), but most of his points are well taken. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The most penetrating study of the role of the orchestra conductor to have appeared in recent years.

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A great gossip book for conductors, Lebrecht book explores the fame of conductors and whether they really deserved it or not. It has numerous anecdotes on several conductors, though it sometimes skims over a conductor. For example, in the chapter discussing Great Conductorial Dictators (a list which comprised of Toscanini, Furtwangler, Szell, and Reiner), it covered in detail the lives of Toscanini and Furtwangler, but had a short paragraph on Szell and Reiner, though all four were listed in the chapter for discussion. The book moves quickly and efficiently, never staying on a topic, really, longer than it really needs to, though it may ramble a while on a particular conductor (devoting, for example, an entire chapter bashing on Karajan). He accuses many and congratulates few, but Lebrecht offers his opinion convincingly. It's an interesting read and many will be surprised to read about their favorite conductor.

I am still reading this book. I find it very interesting to learn more about the backstage of orchestras. I am a subscriber to the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra and it is fine to see some aspects which can be related between book and OSESP... Timely delivery and for those who like music, this book is a voyage into another world. MH.

I have been looking for this book for some time. It is a masterpiece with a wealth of information based on extensive research.

Great Read - passing on to friends - relevant given today's economic climate and overpayment to administrators, conductors and others

What's the point with writing a book about the conductor who married his step-mother, the one that was the lover of a former minister of culture, the one that publicly humiliated his wife hunting male prostitutes and the countless conductors who are punished for taking the wrong side 80 years ago, as if public music making should have been forbidden between 1933 and 1945 or have mercy on the poor devil who would pay dearly for having done his/her job under an evil regime etc etc etc. Mr. Lebrecht has for now two decades proved that he's incapable of writing one single interesting line about music; only back-stage dirt counts. If he only had the ability to be the Dan Brown of classical music!

Norman Lebrecht has had a career as a serious music journalist, but one would scarcely know it from reading this book. It reads as if conductors (and musicians generally) have the same vacuous existence as media 'celebrities', famous for being famous, with the sum of their personalities distillable down to this tantrum or that whimsical request. Thankfully, that is not the case, and hence it renders this gossipy, fatuous book nugatory. Well-written small talk, even pure invective, can be entertaining on its own level, but Lebrecht fails even in this. Other reviewers seem to find entertainment in his style, if not his substance. I do not share that view. Lebrecht piles tired cliché upon cliché, hack metaphor upon metaphor, and peppers the text with the kind of childish alliteration you read only in school essays and tabloid press. His imagery is frequently ugly and not a little suspect (CD buyers browsing in shops are apparently lined up like men standing at urinals). One is left wondering what target audience Lebrecht had in mind: people interested in serious music? Hardly. People who enjoy empty celebrity biography? Unlikely. One is left with the impression that Lebrecht is writing for his own idle amusement, or apparently with envy that his own musical gifts seem to be in inverse proportion to his propensity to write gossip about the abilities of others. He is welcome to it. For the rest of us, there are finer, more penetrating, more cogently argued and simply better written books on conductors available.

Although I am deeply enthralled by the lives of great conductors and musicians, this was not enough to erase the embarrassment and, at times, utter disgust at the mistakes (typos, misspellings, etc.) and errors found throughout this book. I bought the book on a whim and became deeply entrenched in its pages within minutes (this is not to say that this reads like Clancy but it is very interesting). But the more I read the more frustrated I became at the mindless and senseless editing that was done here. For instance, on one page alone there are 3 different spellings of Mahler's name: 1: The correct way appears- Mahler 2: Then this- Maler 3: And finally this- Mabler. The latter really bowled me over. And the further I read the worse it became. There are also misrepresented facts (such as the stockyards in Chicago) throughout. In short, if you are looking for scholarship and true presentations, look elsewhere. If you are interested in various interesting anecdotes and trivia-like facts about conductors and you don't mind sifting through misspellings and foreign words with no interpretation, then you will enjoy this book. But I must warn you...any book with a typo on its back cover (*The Maestro Myth*) may be more of a hassle than good informal reading.

First published in 1991, which is not all that long ago, the author incredibly often refers to women, female conductors and musicians, as "girls." As well as infuriating, it's very disconcerting because I find myself imagining that the reference is to children, that little girls of six or seven are standing up on chairs in front of huge professional orchestras, guiding them through Strauss or Wagner. And I wonder why all these precocious children didn't continue in their careers as adults -- probably became bored.

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