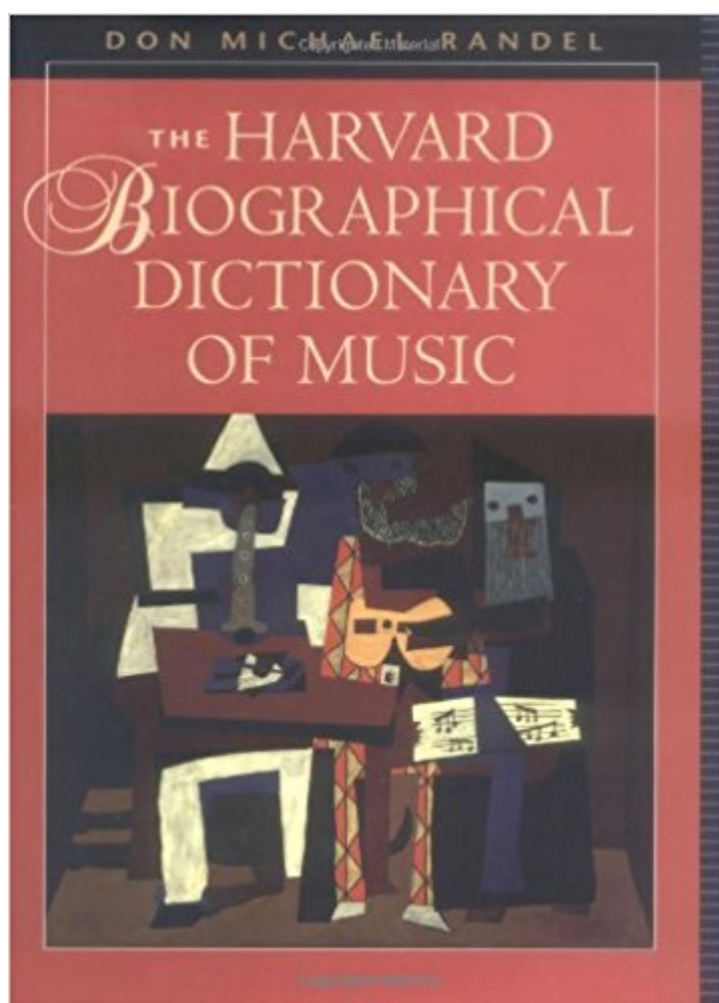


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# The Harvard Biographical Dictionary Of Music (Harvard University Press Reference Library)



## Synopsis

An incomparable guide to the thousands of characters, from humble artisan to lofty genius, who people the unfolding history of music, this volume brings together all the pertinent biographical information about composers, performers, music theorists, and instrument makers from the days of praise chants to the bop and pop of today. A long-awaited companion to *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, and compiled with the same meticulous scholarship and delight in detail, this biographical dictionary emphasizes classical and art music, but also gives ample attention to jazz and blues, rock and pop, and hymns and showtunes across the ages--with unusual care devoted to coverage of the twentieth century. That the Belgian composer Jean Absil was professor of fugue at the Brussels Conservatory is a little-known fact. And few are aware that Roy Acuff began his country-and-western career in medicine shows. The writings of the seventeenth-century organist Jakob Adlung may be obscure, while Theodor Adorno's are widely read and studied. But they can all be found in the A's, along with 218 more entries, from Herb Alpert and the Andrews Sisters to Carl Friedrich Abel and Emanuel Ax. And this is only the beginning. Here then is the information you need about 5500 figures in the world of music--the major, the minor, the famous, the nearly forgotten, from Bach and Beethoven to Irving Berlin, Benny Goodman, and Bruce Springsteen--capsule summaries of the lives and careers behind the music enjoyed in every era. The volume is enlivened with illustrations, some revelations in themselves. A compendium that no music lover should be without, this rich volume, along with *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, constitutes the standard reference work for the musically inclined, the curious, the informed, and the expert.

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## Customer Reviews

From Pietro Aaron to Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Don Randel compiles 1,013 pages of thumbnail sketches describing the life and music of 5,500 individuals who figure significantly in the world of music. Intended for "the musically inclined, the curious, the informed, and the expert," this is a beautiful, intelligent, and comprehensive volume that wants only its companion, The New Harvard Dictionary of Music, to feel complete.

Designed as a companion volume to The New Harvard Dictionary of Music (Harvard Univ., 1986), this volume primarily features brief entries on 5500 historical and contemporary composers of Western art and concert music, with some popular figures (e.g., Ray Charles) included. Compared with editor Nicolas Slonimsky's excellent Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians (LJ 1/92. 8th ed.) or Michael Kennedy's Oxford Dictionary of Music (Oxford Univ., 1994. 2d ed.), HBDM comes in a weak third, with numerous contemporary performers (e.g., Eschenbach) and composers (e.g., Santos) missing. Additionally, no rationale for inclusion or omission is provided. Updating also is spotty, with many contemporary entries stopping in the early Eighties. Recommended only as a supplementary volume to the aforementioned titles for large music collections. ?Anthony J. Adam, Prairie View A&M Univ. Lib., Tex. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

As far as scholarship for the buck, this volume perhaps is the best. As another reviewer wrote, it is an ideal companion to The New Harvard Dictionary of Music. In fact, over the past several years my colleagues and I have presented the two books to our top graduating music major award winner. The Harvard Biographical Dictionary includes excellent coverage of important figures from throughout the history of music. Despite the incredible value of this book, the one drawback it has is that it will always be at least a little out of date, no matter how often new editions are issued. Even musicians, professors, and college music students who have access to such resources as The New Grove online, however, will love the Harvard publications for their excellent scholarship, ease of use, and their price. While electronic resources from New Grove and Oxford themselves are of very high quality, there's nothing like having this physical book for browsing. A must have for anyone with

an interest in music history and the contributions of the widest variety of musicians throughout history.

nice

A great companion to the Harvard Dictionary of Music. Well written, comprehensive, and surprisingly complete for a single volume dictionary. Highly recommended for any serious musician or teacher.

If you want to know what a composer or performer means to music, or the contributions they made, this is the book to get. It's the only one you need!

One word. Wow! This book, combined with The New Harvard Dictionary of Music, makes a great resource for serious musicians, amateurs, and students alike. The near 6000 entries make this reference the best for its price. I've used the Baker on several occasions. While the Baker is certainly more comprehensive, a glance at its price (~\$90) is enough to make one think twice. The Harvard Biographical Dictionary of Music, with its bargain price, is a must buy. Couple it with The New Harvard Dictionary of Music (which is the same price as the Biographical Dictionary), and you will have an unbeatable musical resource at your disposal. If you are REALLY tight on budget, then perhaps you may want to check out the Oxford Dictionary of Music. It accomplishes in 1 volume (and ~\$34 compared to the Harvards' \$54 combined) what the Harvard Dictionaries do in 2, though (understandably) to a much lesser extent. Nevertheless, the Harvard music references are still great buys, especially if you have a little extra cash to expend.

Written by over 70 top musicologists, this splendid reference focuses on composers but also includes a generous selection of performers, theorists, and instrument makers, of all eras and genres, in nearly 6,000 entries. Biographical details are of course provided, with a brief professional resume, (with longer entries for composers of greater significance), an accounting of major works, and a discerning bibliography where appropriate. The authors mention lifestyle issues when they bear heavily on the career of the subject (e.g., Chet Baker's heroin addiction), but the emphasis is on music, as it should be. Coverage runs from Edouard Lalo to Little Richard, Johann Friedrich Fasch to Johnny Rotten, so whatever the musical taste, this dictionary will be useful. Highly recommended for music lovers of all persuasions. (The "score" rating is an ineradicable feature of

the page. This reviewer does not "score" books.)

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