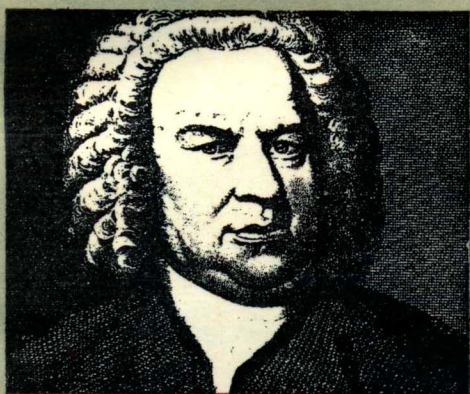


GREAT WESTERN COMPOSERS

十八位伟大的 西方作曲家生平

J. B. 麦克 著
商菊宋 罗希和 注释



Macmillan
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前 言

如果一个青年学生在锲而不舍地追循着人类探索科学的漫漫道路前行时,他发现艺术之花也处处可寻,他不禁无限欣喜于艺术世界的绚丽多姿……这个专攻科学的青年学生一定也是十分具有艺术气质的。

在即将到来的 21 世纪,随着科学与艺术的高度发展,人们期待着新一代将不仅在科学技术领域,而且也要在艺术文化领域,充分展示他们的才华。而且,随着新世纪中西文化巨流的进一步融汇,新一代不但要放眼开放交流的未来,还必须回顾中西文化的渊源长流。因为只有具有历史的视野、达观的胸襟,才能真正领略和珍视人类文明的营养精华。只有懂得珍惜,也才真正懂得创造。而中华腾飞的伟大历史,正有待于新一代去创造。

我们奉上这本小书即希望能向渴求知识的中国青年读者提供一个探觅西方音乐宝库的有益指南,使他们对西方古典音乐的梗概能有一个素描式的了解,并对音乐在西方社会及文化中的地位略有知晓。

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自古以来就传说希腊神话中的缪斯女神掌握着用音乐抚慰心灵的秘诀。在宗教处于统治地位的中世纪社会,音乐是举行典礼必不可少的内容。在欧洲创建了大学之后,音乐作为必修的基础课程之一,与语法、伦理、修辞、数学、几何以及天文学等课程相提并重。文艺复兴时期是西方音乐的黄金时代,音乐不仅深受绅士们的青睐,而且与人们日常生活的关系日益密切;再后来的宗教改革运动对西方音乐的发展也产生了巨大的影响。人们对音乐表现的不懈探索,又大大促进了乐器的发展变化,从古六弦提琴到小提琴,从

竖笛到横笛,从古钢琴到钢琴,乐器逐渐向现代化演变。随之导致演奏技巧的高度洗练,更展示出音乐艺术的独特魅力。加之爱好和重视音乐的王公贵族对艺术活动的积极赞助,为古典音乐的发展开辟了一个崭新的时代。

本书作者追溯了具有代表性的 18 位西方作曲家的生平,以简洁生动的笔触介绍了每个人的音乐生涯、艺术风格以及各自在音乐史上的特殊地位。从被誉为“古典音乐之父”的巴赫开始,还介绍了古典音乐形式的奠基者海顿,才华横溢的天才莫扎特,被称为音乐哲学家的贝多芬,和以旋律优美著称的舒伯特。继而介绍了富有文学特征的舒曼,带有阴郁色彩的勃拉姆斯以及“钢琴诗人”肖邦和技艺超绝的李斯特等浪漫派作曲家。19 世纪的歌剧分别以德国的瓦格纳和意大利的威尔第为两大代表。俄罗斯的音乐由柴科夫斯基融入西方音乐的流派之中。法国音乐因德彪西的现代乐感展现了印象派的特征。马勒预感到因调性音乐的崩溃将带来欧洲文化的危机,而谱写了《葬礼进行曲》送走了世纪末。20 世纪无调性音乐的兴起,又在推崇新古典主义的斯特拉文斯基和以十二音体系开辟现代音乐新纪元的勋伯格的相互推动下,更呈现出复杂的局面。本书通过对这 18 位作曲家生平的介绍,勾勒出了西方音乐近三百年历史的大致轮廓。

本书虽为英语通俗读物,但内容翔实,英语文字流畅生动,可使读者在英语学习和音乐历史知识方面均获收益,甚至取得相得益彰的效果。在阅读本书的同时,如能选择一些名家名曲加以欣赏,无疑可更好地领悟书中内容,并通过欣赏音乐达到与作曲家心灵上的共鸣,激发起对古典音乐的无比热爱和极大兴趣。

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本书原为日文注释本,此中文注释本对原书略有参照,在此特向日文注释本编注者顺致敬意。

INTRODUCTION

Why, the reader might wonder, did I choose to write an English textbook about Western classical music for Japanese students? Many reasons come to mind, but two stand out. First is my love of classical music. Ever since I was a child, the joy this music brings me has been unbounded. I started playing the piano at the age of six, and still do today. When time permits I practice at least two hours a day—hardly enough—but the joy of playing is both rewarding and relaxing.

Equally important, in terms of writing this book, is my admiration of the Japanese for their (relatively) new-found appreciation of Western music. As long as I have lived in Japan, I have been impressed with how much the Japanese know and admire classical music. One has only to look at the concert halls of Tokyo alone. The finest orchestras and soloists appear in Japan, and concert-goers are willing to pay a king's ransom to see and hear these virtuosos and the music they play.

I should also like to comment on my choice of composers for inclusion in this book. What may seem to be wholly arbitrary really is not. Part of my choice reflects my own particular favorites: Bach, first and foremost, Handel, Beethoven, Brahms, and Schubert too. However, I also have included composers whom I regard as "trail-blazers," those who changed the course of development of Western music.

This book, then, is an attempt to familiarize the Japanese reader with the lives of these composers in the hope that it will make the music of the masters more understandable and even more appreciated than it already is. These men were geniuses and yet very human, and this is what I have tried to convey in the following pages.

GREAT WESTERN COMPOSERS

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1

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(1685–1750)

Towering Genius of the Baroque (I)



Without question Johann Sebastian Bach is one of the towering geniuses of Western classical music. Moreover, he was a source of inspiration to many later composers.

It has been said that without the Protestant Reformation, Bach would never have composed the hundreds of religious works—the masses, the passions, the cantatas—that he did. When we look at Bach's childhood, we see what a prominent role religion played in his life.

He was born on March 21, 1685 in Eisenach, Germany. When he was ten years old he was orphaned, ¹⁰

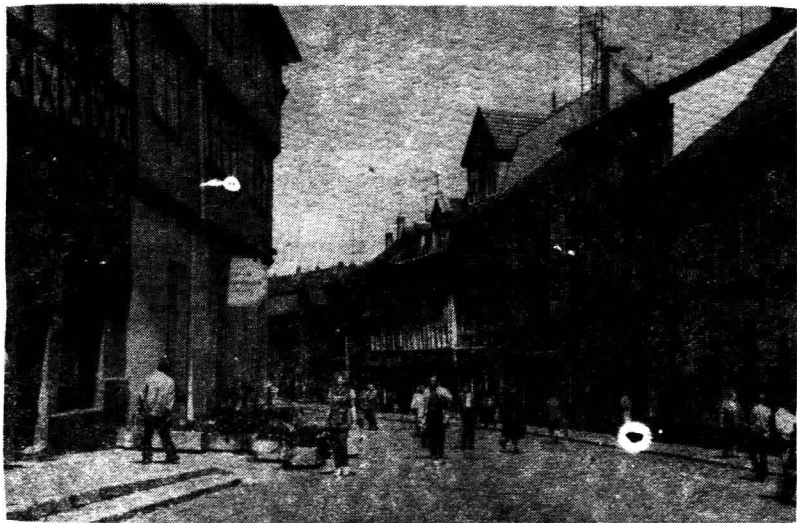


Statue of Bach in front of the house where he was born.

and so was taken in by his eldest brother Johann Christoph Bach, a church organist in the town of Ohrdruf. There he was enrolled in the Latin School where he received a strict Lutheran education.

5 He was one of the youngest and best students, and early on showed a deep interest in music. Indeed, his musical education had begun earlier. So intense was his love of music that he decided he wanted to learn the difficult keyboard compositions in a book belonging to
10 his brother. When his brother deprived him of the book because he thought it too difficult, Bach copied the compositions secretly.

When he was fifteen, he went to Lüneburg, three hundred fifty kilometers away, to become a member of
15 the Metten Choir. During this time he also attended the Michaelis School where he studied religion, philosophy,



A street in Arnstadt

Latin and Greek. In 1702 Bach completed his studies at the school, and took a position as organist in Arnstadt the following year. He met his second cousin Barbara Bach, and they fell in love. However, Bach did not have much money, so they had to wait to get married. 5

In the meantime he took a vacation in Northern Germany to hear the great organist Buxtehude. It came about that he could be Buxtehude's successor at St. Mary's Church in Luebeck if he would marry Buxtehude's thirty-year-old daughter. Bach, however, refused. 10

In 1707 he and his cousin Barbara were finally married. In 1708 they moved to Weimar where Bach was offered the position of court organist. Here his reputation began to grow.

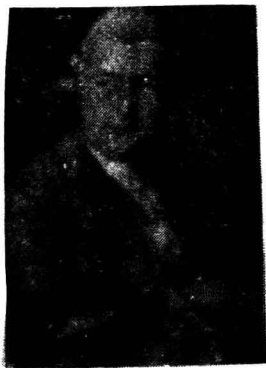
In 1717 Bach was offered the position of court conductor in Koethen. This post was completely different 15



View of Weimar

from his duties in Weimar. While the atmosphere of the Weimar court was very religious, in the Koethen court non-religious, instrumental music was emphasized. Bach was enthusiastic about this new position, but the Duke
5 in Weimar was very angry at the prospect of losing the composer. He even held Bach under house arrest for four weeks! Finally, however, he released him from service.

In the meantime Bach's family had grown dramati-
10 cally. By 1720 he had seven children, and began to see musical talent in his eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann. Unfortunately, in the same year Bach suffered a very traumatic experience. While he was on a trip to



*Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (right)
and Johann Christian Bach (above)*

Karlsbad, his wife became ill and died. The illness had been very sudden, and Bach did not even find out about her death until his return home.

Soon after, as was custom at the time, Bach began to look for a new wife and mother for his children. In 1721 he married the twenty-year-old Anna Magdalena Wilcken. Although she was sixteen years younger than he, they shared many interests—first and foremost music. Anna bore him thirteen children (seven of whom died young), in addition to caring for her four surviving stepchildren. Many of these children later became outstanding composers in their own right, most notably Wilhelm Friedemann, Carl Philipp Emanuel and Johann Christian.

In 1723 Bach took the position of music director and conductor at the St. Thomas School in Leipzig. Here he wrote over three hundred cantatas in one year! However, the years in Leipzig were not without problems: he

often had arguments with the city fathers.

In the later years of his life Bach was plagued with failing eyesight. The long years of composing had taken their toll. In 1749 he was totally blind. In the same
5 year an English oculist arrived in Leipzig. Although the doctor seems to have been a quack, he was known for performing eye operations after which his blind patients regained their sight. Bach decided to undergo two operations, but there was no improvement. Moreover,
10 an infection set in, and the medicine the doctor prescribed had a bad effect on Bach's high blood pressure. He suffered either a heart attack or a stroke and lingered unconscious for ten days. He died on July 28, 1750.

View of Leipzig



GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL

(1685–1759)

Towering Genius of the Baroque (II)

In the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach was born—1685—George Frederick Handel came into the world on February 23 in Halle, Germany. Both composers are the most magnificent exponents of Baroque music. But whereas Bach's influence and fame never spread beyond his immediate surroundings, Handel's reached as far as Italy and England.

His father was a well-known barber-surgeon who unfortunately did not at first approve of his son's musical ambitions. Indeed, at the age of seven, Handel practiced



View of Halle

the clavichord secretly at night so his father would not hear him. When Handel senior took his son to visit the court of Saxe-Weissenfels, however, the duke was so impressed with the young boy's talent that he persuaded
5 the father to allow his son to study music seriously.

Handel took up musical studies, but after his father's death in 1697, he entered the University of Halle as a law student. At the same time he was already earning a living as an organist at the Halle Cathedral. He finished
10 his legal studies as his father had wished, but then decided to make music his career.

In 1703 Handel went to Hamburg, a major opera center of the time. There he got a position as violinist and harpsichordist in the opera orchestra. In 1706 he
15 journeyed to Italy where some of the greatest music of the period was being written. He met many of Italy's leading musicians of the day, most notably Corelli and the Scarlattis. While there he wrote the much acclaimed opera *Rodrigo*.

Four years later, in 1710, Handel was appointed conductor in the court of the elector of Hannover. Soon after, however, he decided to go to England. Soon another of his operas, *Rinaldo*, was received with great adulation—this time by the English public. 5

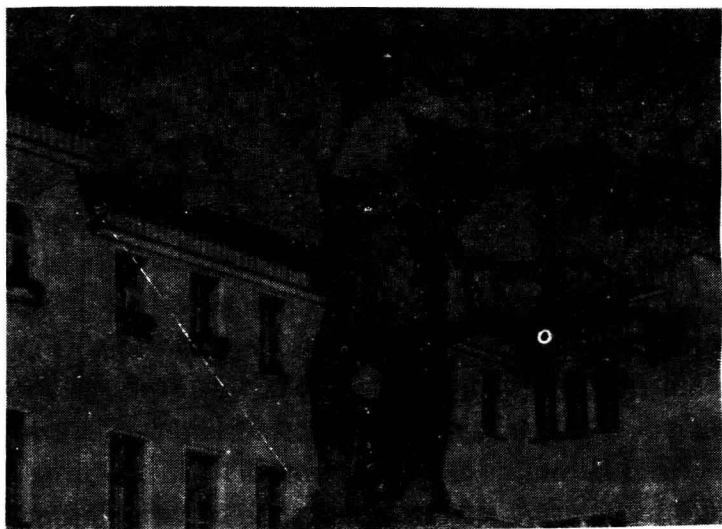
In 1714 the elector of Hannover—Handel's neglected master—became King George I of England. Soon after George's ascension to the throne, Handel wrote his famous *Water Music*. In 1717 Handel himself conducted the orchestra for a royal boat party on the Thames river 10 in London.

Handel also continued to compose and conduct operas in the Italian style. His concern often was to write music which would show off the talents of the singers, many of whom were *castrati*—male singers who had 15 been castrated in order to preserve their soprano voices. As might be expected, these singers were notoriously vain. During one rehearsal, one of them objected to Handel's harpsichord accompaniment and threatened: "I'll jump on the instrument." Handel replied, "Go right 20 ahead, only let me know ahead of time and I shall advertise it, for more people will come to see you jump than to hear you sing."

Handel was later appointed music master to the royal family and became a British citizen in 1726. During the 25 next fifteen years Handel continued to write primarily vocal music, but also orchestral works—most notably the concertos. At this time his vocal music consisted mainly of oratorios, the most famous of which is the *Messiah*—written in just twenty-four days! Although its 30

reception in London was rather cold, it so moved King George that he stood during its famous “Hallelujah” chorus, thereby establishing a custom which has endured to the present day.

- 5 Around 1750 Handel began to suffer from failing eyesight, and by 1752 he was nearly blind. Moreover, his health began to fail—although he continued to conduct performances of his oratorios. On April 14, 1759 he died. At the time of his death he was venerated in
10 England as the greatest composer of his time. He was buried in Westminster Abbey where his monument still stands.



Statue of Handel in the city center of Halle.