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LÉONIE ROSENSTIEL, General Editor

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PLANCHART

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Margaret Ross Griffel, Consulting Editor

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Preface

Ranging from antiquity to the twentieth-century avant-garde, the Western music tradition confronts students with a complex assortment of styles. Any of these styles may be said to owe its characteristics not simply to the inventive genius of the composers, performers, and theorists of a given period but to a variety of extramusical influences—wars, political and religious beliefs, philosophical trends, social and technological conditions—that serve to remind one that music-making is and always has been inextricably linked to the great endeavors of human thought and activity. In writing the *Schirmer History of Music*, therefore, we have attempted to discuss the intrinsic qualities of the music of each period while taking pains at the same time to place the music in its larger historical and cultural context.

We have tried as well to present the Western music tradition in a balanced fashion. Having decided to work as a team, with each of us an expert in one era, we agreed to allot equal consideration to each period. As a result, we have devoted more attention to the early Middle Ages and to the twentieth century than is customary in such texts. Furthermore, at the close of the book we have added a unique section on the music of the New World. This section, which traces music history in the Americas from the Renaissance to the present, attests to the fact that musical and cultural ideas have long traveled in *both* directions across the Atlantic.

Throughout the book the history of music is discussed as the history of a performing art. In recent years musicians have attempted to recreate the performance practices of their forebears, seeking to understand the ways in which earlier music was actually interpreted and performed. Although it seems obvious that this process of reconstruction bears directly on the historical study of musical style, many music scholars have shown no special interest in investigating the history of performance. Because each of us regularly performs many of the compositions we discuss, we believe we have made a contribution toward examining this neglected area.

We presume that our readers are familiar with the terms of harmony but

have defined other terms as they are introduced in the text. Photographs and musical examples serve pedagogical purposes, illustrating or emphasizing important points; when we discuss works found in the standard anthologies of music, such as *HAM*, we cite them in the text. In addition, a complete list of the anthologies used can be found on page xvii. Each chapter ends with a summary of its contents and a selective bibliography of books and scores for further study.

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