

Classical Composers



The Horn Book Guide

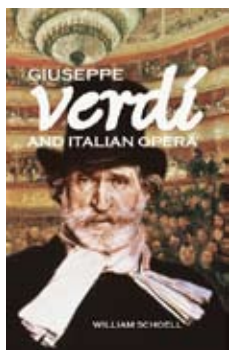
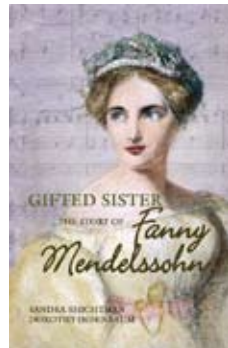
Fall 2007

Schoell, William **Giuseppe Verdi and Italian Opera** 128 pp. Morgan LE ISBN 978-1-59935-041-7 \$27.95

Shichtman, Sandra H., and Dorothy Indenbaum **Gifted Sister: The Story of Fanny Mendelssohn** 128 pp. Morgan LE ISBN 978-1-59935-038-7 \$27.95

(4) YA Classical Composers series. These thorough, well-researched composers' biographies focus almost solely on their subjects' lives, with a few glimpses at historical context. Verdi incorporates brief summaries of his major operas, but neither book elucidates the composers' musical styles.

Mendelssohn's story is meatier, as its subject attempts to reconcile gender roles with professional ambitions. A list of suggested recordings would have been a welcome addition. Timelines, websites. Bib., ind. NCP

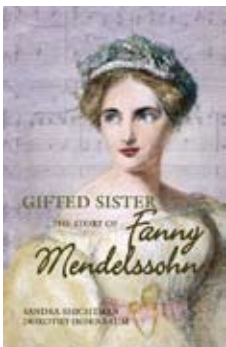


School Library Journal

June 2007

SCHOELL, William. Giuseppe Verdi and Italian Opera. 128p. photos. reprints. bibliog. chron. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. 2007. PLB \$27.95. ISBN 978-1-59935-041-7. LC 2006026369.

Gr 9 Up—Schoell focuses less on the music and more on the man, providing details of Verdi's personal life and relationships, struggles with censors and publishers, and his patriotic fervor and influence. While each opera is given a brief synopsis, there is little attempt to describe the influences on the composer's work and his own effect on the musical landscape. Technical phrases such as "bel canto" and "libretto" are defined within the text, but no glossary is included for easy reference, and not all of the foreign-language titles are translated. The illustrative material is of good quality. The book has good information, but students (particularly of music) will require additional sources.—Christi Voth, Parker Library, CO



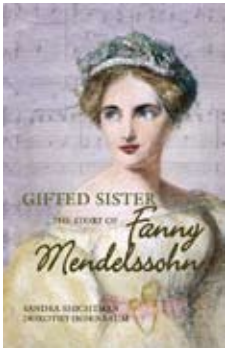
Booklist

September 15, 2007

Gifted Sister: The Story of Fanny Mendelssohn. Shichtman, Sandra (Author) and Indenbaum, Dorothy (Author) Jun 2007. 128 p. Morgan Reynolds, library edition, \$27.95. (1599350386). 786.2092.

Growing up in a wealthy, accomplished German family in the early 1800s, Fanny Mendelssohn and her younger brother Felix were recognized as musical prodigies and given many opportunities to develop their talents. Only when she reached the marriageable age of 15 was Fanny treated differently. She was encouraged to compose pieces for performance in the home, while Felix was expected to create more complex music for the concert hall. Because of social strictures, Fanny abandoned hope of a professional music career, but she continued to compose and perform throughout her life and, after her parents' deaths, began to publish her music. Color reproductions

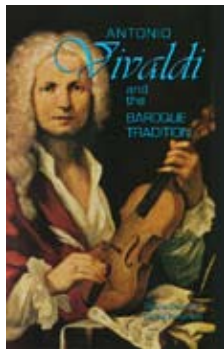
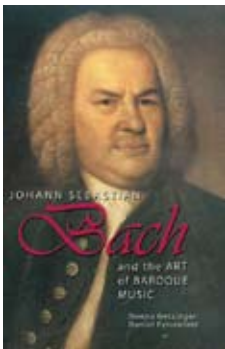
of many fine paintings and drawings appear throughout the book. A time line, source notes, a bibliography, and a list of Web sites are appended. Although Fanny's relationship with her brother and the frustration of her musical ambitions are important themes here, they appear within the context of her life as a whole. A clearly written, thoughtful portrayal of a notable woman in Western music. — Carolyn Phelan



**School Library Journal
September 2007**

SHICHTMAN, Sandra & Dorothy Indenbaum. *Gifted Sister: The Story of Fanny Mendelssohn*. 128p. (Classical Composers Series). reprints. bibliog. chron. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. 2007. PLB \$27.95. ISBN 978-1-59935-038-7. LC 2006030864.

Gr 7-9—Felix Mendelssohn's older, musically talented sister, Fanny, is recounted here as one of her brother's most ardent consorts. Her privileged upbringing, with music lessons and recitals side by side with her brother, soon recedes to the background as her young adult years focus on a suitable husband, marriage, and childrearing. As was the custom of the period, Fanny's musical education was not permitted to flourish into a composer's and musician's profession. Through letters and correspondence with Felix, readers see the woman living her dream through her brother's success as he traveled, performed, and composed. She also moved within the circles of upcoming and well-established musicians of the day, such as Mozart and Bach, and managed to compose several pieces that are gaining respect today. This well-documented biographical account incorporates historical aspects of Germany's politics and makes reference to the family's Jewish background despite their conversion to Christianity to avoid the prejudicial backlash of anti-Semitism. The dry, often stagnant text is interspersed with numerous color and black-and-white reproductions of paintings and drawings on display at museums and libraries around the world. An unexciting yet informative biography of an esteemed woman and her overlooked work and potential.—*Rita Soltan, Youth Services Consultant, West Bloomfield, MI*



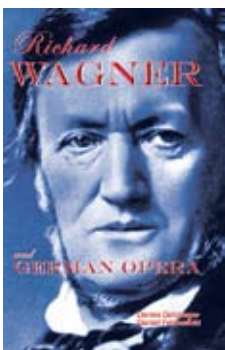
**Children's Bookwatch
December 2004**

Donna Getzinger and Daniel Felsenfeld bring two classical musicians to life in titles which offer insights into the musicians and their times. **Johann Sebastian Bach And The Art Of Baroque Music** (1931798222) considers the achievements of a man born into a family of professional musicians, who left home at the age of ten in search of a life which would allow him to write his beloved music. Bach's 1700s world comes to life here, as does the account of his search for music with worked. **Antonio Vivaldi And The Baroque Tradition** (1931798206) tells of a now-famous classical musician whose work was once nearly forgotten. Vivaldi's compositions gathered dust even as listeners applauded the achievements of his contemporary Bach, and it was only until

the 1920s that they were uncovered and only after World War II that they became truly popular. An eye-opening story.

**The Horn Book Guide
2004**

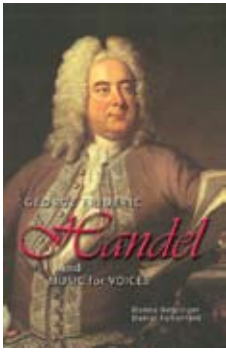
(4) YA **Classical Composers** series. Friends, families, lovers, rivalries, achievements, disappointments, and more are placed firmly in musical and social context that emphasizes Handel's vocal music; Brahms's songs, Requiem, and symphonies; and Wagner's remarkable operas. Chapters brim with events and details of the composers' lives. Period illustrations, many in color, illuminate the carefully documented text. Timeline, websites. Bib., glos., ind. FFB



**School Library Journal
November 2004**

GETZINGER, Donna & Daniel Felsenfeld. *Richard Wagner and German Opera*. 144p. (Classical Composers Series). photos. reprints. bibliog. chron. glossary. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. 2004. PLB \$23.95. ISBN 1-931798-24-9. LC 2003026728.

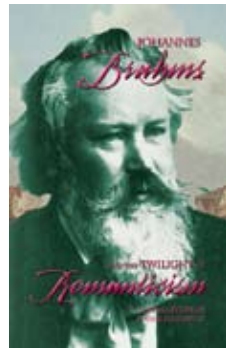
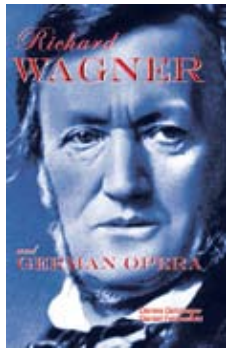
Gr 6-10 —This evenhanded biography presents a portrait of the great yet flawed artist. Born into obscurity, convinced of his own genius at a young age, Wagner struggled constantly with establishment opposition to his radical ideas about opera and against his personal weaknesses, met with both failure and triumph, and left behind a mixed legacy of transcendentally beautiful music and genuinely disturbing racial views. The authors don't shy away from the more unsavory aspects of their subject's character and personality—his chronic overspending, habitual infidelity, and anti-Semitic paranoia, to name just a few—but they also showcase his prodigious talent and the enduring innovations he brought to modern opera. This title goes well beyond the standard information usually provided in books about classical musicians, and does so with considerable style. The plot of Wagner's life is front and center, as it should be, and the authors hit every note clearly. Readers are left to form their own opinions as to the composer's ultimate place in history. Period photos and full-color reproductions provide glimpses into his life and times.—*Sophie R. Brookover, Camden County Library, Voorhees, NJ*



**School Library Journal
November 2004**

GETZINGER, Donna & Daniel Felsenfeld. *George Frideric Handel and Music for Voices*. 144p. (Classical Composers Series). photos. reprints. bibliog. chron. glossary. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. 2004. PLB \$23.95. ISBN 1-931798-23-0. LC 20032026729.

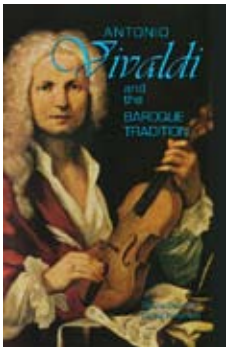
Gr 6-10 –Handel’s importance in the field of music is described in this carefully researched and highly detailed biography. The authors explain how the composer’s focus on music began at an early age and how he managed to pursue his interests despite his father’s belief that music was not an acceptable profession. A social history of the time underscores the details of Handel’s career. Black-and-white and full-color reproductions appear throughout. This is a thorough biography suited largely for reports and other curricular assignments. Helpful appendixes include a lengthy time line, a glossary of musical terms, and an annotated list of Web sites.–Renee Steinberg, formerly at Fieldstone Middle School , Montvale, NJ



**Children’s Bookwatch
September 2004**

Kids in grades 5-8 will find these fine biographical sketches suitable for report material, containing plenty of detail and exciting facts. Donna Getzinger and Daniel Felsenfeld’s ***George Frideric Handel And Music For Voices*** (1931798230, \$24.95) tells of the life of Handel, a beloved composer of the 18th century who toured around Europe before making his name in opera. His growing reputation in the art world was only preceded by his growing reputation as a benefactor of the arts, as Donna Getzinger and Daniel Felsenfeld explore. ***Richard***

Wagner And German Opera (1931798249, \$24.95) also explores the life and contributions of a famous opera writer who both revolutionized the art and who seduced the wives of his close friends. Getzinger and Felsenfeld again provide a moving biographical sketch couched in the atmosphere and politics of Wagner’s times. Their survey of ***Johannes Brahms And The Twilight Of Romanticism*** (1931798214) reveals an artist who spent his life in the shadow of contemporary Beethoven, seeking to compose works in the style of the master, yet ushering in a new era of modernizing traditional music forms. All three are highly recommended pick for any solid music biography collection.



**School Library Journal
June 2004**

GETZINGER, Donna & Daniel Felsenfeld. *Antonio Vivaldi and the Baroque Tradition*. 144p. (Classical Composers Series). reprints. bibliog. chron. glossary. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. 2004. PLB \$23.95. ISBN 1-931798-20-6. LC 2003019830.

Gr 6 Up—Lavishly illustrated and well researched, this biography presents a portrait of the musician as an ambitious and politically rapacious businessman. After a quick description of Vivaldi’s childhood, the text focuses on his career as a prolific and popular composer who died in impoverished obscurity. In a few deft narrative strokes, the authors highlight Vivaldi’s contributions to Baroque music as they explain his revitalization of the concerto form, his exploration of complex musical notation techniques to make his compositions richer, and his ceaseless currying of favor among the nobility of 18th-century Italy and Germany. Although they clearly admire their subject’s work, they don’t whitewash his flaws; rather, they address head-on the reasons for Vivaldi’s decline in popularity,

including rumors surrounding his relationship with a protege, his overweening pride and ego, and his loss of patronage through the inevitable change of musical styles in fashion. The back matter includes a fine glossary, a serviceable index, and a comprehensive bibliography. Although the Internet sites provided are authoritative, the list is not annotated. A fine and accessible alternative to Jeroen Koolbergen’s *Vivaldi* (TODTRI, 1996). —Sophie R. Brookover, Camden County Library, Voorhees, NJ



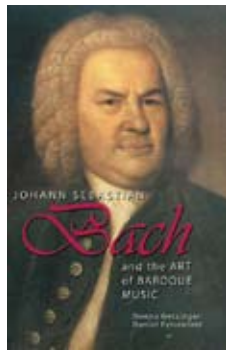
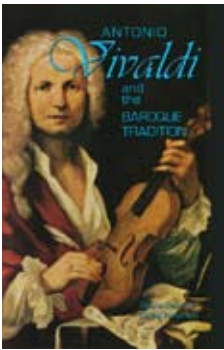
Booklist

April 15 2004

Getzinger, Donna and Felsenfeld, Daniel. **Antonio Vivaldi and the Baroque Tradition**. Apr. 2004. 144p. illus. index. Morgan Reynolds, lib. ed., \$23.95 (1-931798-20-6). 780.

Gr. 6-10. It was rags to riches and then back to rags again for the composer Vivaldi, who started as a sickly little boy playing music in his father's barbershop in the late seventeenth century, became a priest, and rose to world renown, supported by kings and the church. Then he fell out of fashion and died a pauper. He was buried in an unmarked grave, his music lost for 200 years. The authors don't sensationalize; in fact, the writing style is sometimes dull. But they give a strong sense of Venice as a thriving music center at the time, and there are lots of period illustrations in postcard size, reproduced in rich, clear color. Readers will appreciate the honesty about the genius who worked the system, fawning over rich benefactors, turning out four operas a year and two concertos a month,

beset by rumors that he was having an affair with a student. Best of all is the discussion of the music, especially The Four Seasons—music that was, fortunately for us, rediscovered.—Hazel Rochman



VOYA

October 2004

GETZINGER, Donna & Daniel Felsenfeld. **Antonio Vivaldi and the Baroque Tradition, Johann Sebastian Bach and the Art of Baroque Music**. 144p. (Classical Composers Series). reprints. bibliog. chron. glossary. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. 2004. PLB \$23.95. ISBN 1-931798-22-2. LC 2003022868.

Johann Sebastian Bach and Antonio Vivaldi had much in common. Both were composers of complicated musical works that presented challenges to performers, and they were instrumentalists, teachers, and perfectionists. Both were unappreciated after a brief burst of fame, and died in poverty after a lifetime of being victims of "turf wars" between church and civic leaders. Bach was healthy and the father of many children; Vivaldi remained a sickly bachelor until his death. After creating and performing throughout Germany and Italy, both men ended their lives relatively unknown only to be rediscovered and acclaimed any, many years after their deaths by fans including Mozart and Mendelssohn. Sadly many of their original works are lost forever. Preservation was unimportant then, especially when one fell out of public favor. Indeed, Bach expected that the musician following him would throw out all of Bach's works and replace them with his own. The text of each of these biographies flows smoothly through the retelling of their lives with no attempt to cover up flaws. Readers gain not only honest life stories but insights into the society of the times, specifically the influence of the patronage system upon musicians. Small recreations of museum paintings are mostly illustrations of the towns each man dwelt in. Also included are a few somewhat blurry reproductions of their music and elaborate cover sheets. The authors' writing style in both biographies makes these composers accessible, understandable, and sympathetic to readers. Others series titles include Johannes Brahms and the Twilight of Romanticism, Richard Wagner and German Opera, and George Frideric Handel and Music for Voices.—Pam Carlson.