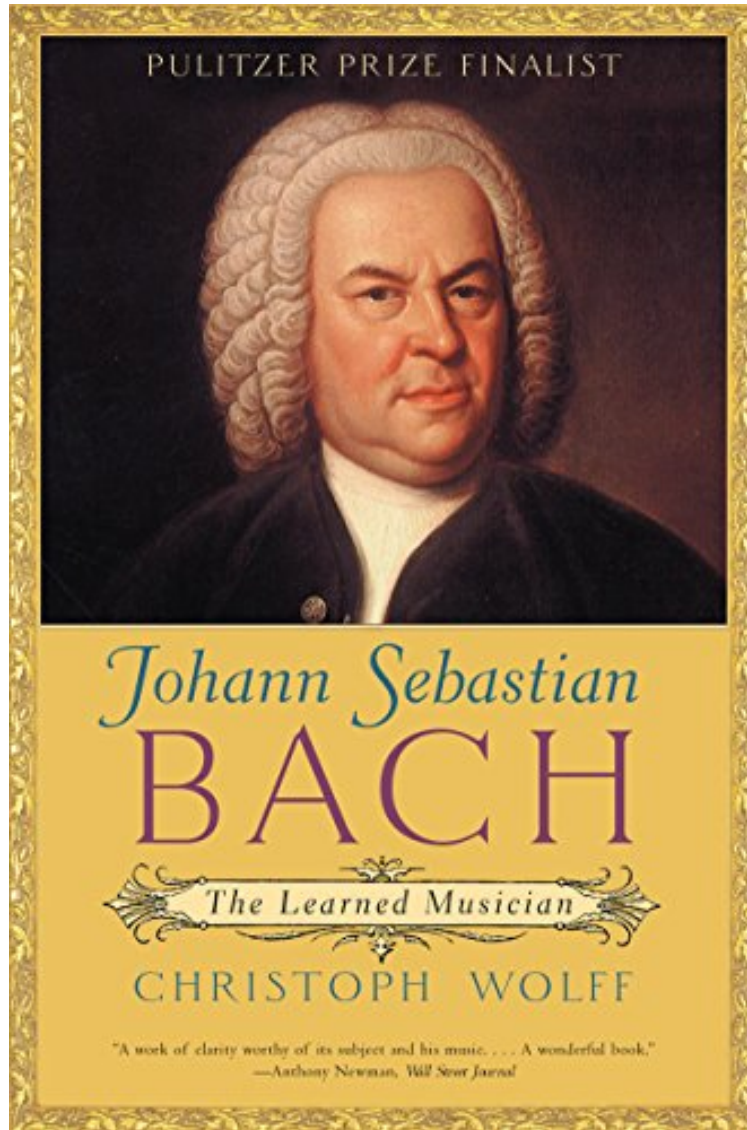


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## Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician (Norton Paperback)

*Christoph Wolff*

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**Christoph Wolff : Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician (Norton Paperback)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician (Norton Paperback):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Even the non-musician can enjoy this well written biographyBy JasonI just finished reading this book - loved it. I have, of late, fallen in love with classical music. It's all I listen to in the car and at work. I felt it was time to learn more about one of my favorite composers, and this book was great.Facts I found most interesting:Bach came from a family of talented and respected musiciansHe was an incredibly talented

and respected organist. Churches would have him come to examine and inspect their newly built organs. (Makes his organ compositions more interesting) He had 20 children (from two wives - the first died suddenly of illness) 10 made it to adulthood. While living in Leipzig his family lived in a large home by the time's standards - 803 square feet! Much of Bach's work was lost after his death. He divided his manuscripts among his four musical children, and only Carl Philipp Emanuel managed his inherited music with care - the others sold theirs piecemeal. I am completely uneducated when it comes to the technical side of the music, so a lot of the discussion of the music itself went over my head. Still, I enjoyed the book immensely. 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Impressive! By rodboomboom Wolff certainly has done the research and then written a passionate account of this "learned musician" for the ages. Among the fine qualities of this biography is a clear, concise writing style with erudite thinking demonstrated sorting out the historical sources surrounding Bach's life. Tracing his life chronologically, the book's theme is one of a composer/virtuoso/organ expert who develops out of self-interest and passion for music and especially his family background of musicians. He certainly had some ins because of this family heritage, but certainly on the same hand earned his way by his demonstrated abilities on the organ, pipe organ construction and maintenance and finally composition. Revolutionizing the music craft by his counterpoint and harmonization, his influence both to those who come after him including his two older sons, this man continues to play vital role in unfolding world of music. Minor missing element which certainly is understandable for the non-theologically inclined is the major influence that Bach's theology played in his music. From the surviving Cavlov Bible that we have from J.S., we know this as certainty. 41 of 44 people found the following review helpful. dry but readable and insightful By Michael J. Cashen After reading this book I came away with a good understanding of Bach's musical achievements and his concept of what music is all about. This is a very well written and comprehensive look at Bach's music and musical evolution thru life - including his major, longer works (no minuets included) and musical surroundings. It is very well worth reading for its study of Bach's music if you have some technical musical background (more on that later). One small complaint: most of the music titles are given in German only. Since there are hundreds of such cases, it was impractical to do always search for a translation on the internet so I'm sure I missed a few points. For example the titles of Bach's first three key teaching works are listed - with only the first in English. Wolff then says that "the carefully coordinated phraseology of all three titles" were impressive! Fortunately, the German version of "The Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach" is obvious in meaning but shamefully without translation: for many of us, one of our first piano pieces came from that notebook! Finally, this is not a complaint, but a warning. You will have great difficulty with this book if you don't have some background in musical terminology, notation, and Baroque music history. You should know the meaning of terms like "basso continuo", "counterpoint", "thoroughbass" (figured bass), etc. to appreciate the text. For example, there is much discussion of Bach's role in the evolution of the "Fugue". Other forms, such as the "motet" (sacred music not an integral part of the mass) are mentioned without definition. For such a background, I would recommend Kamien's "Music An Appreciation, Ed.8" - or a less expensive alternative that covers music from the Middle Ages to the Baroque Period.

Finalist for the 2001 Pulitzer Prize in Biography, this landmark book was revised in 2013 to include new knowledge discovered after its initial publication. Although we have heard the music of J. S. Bach in countless performances and recordings, the composer himself still comes across only as an enigmatic figure in a single familiar portrait. As we mark the 250th anniversary of Bach's death, author Christoph Wolff presents a new picture that brings to life this towering figure of the Baroque era. This engaging new biography portrays Bach as the living, breathing, and sometimes imperfect human being that he was, while bringing to bear all the advances of the last half-century of Bach scholarship. Wolff demonstrates the intimate connection between the composer's life and his music, showing how Bach's superb inventiveness pervaded his career as musician, composer, performer, scholar, and teacher. And throughout, we see Bach in the broader context of his time: its institutions, traditions, and influences. With this highly readable book, Wolff sets a new standard for Bach biography.

ldquo;A monumental work that must find its way into the library of every musician and every dedicated lover of music.rdquo; (Isaac Stern)ldquo;It's unlikely that anyone will fashion a finer tribute to [Bach's] genius.rdquo; (Los Angeles Times Book )ldquo;A magisterial biographical portraithellip;necessarily learned, but also user-friendly, helpful and entertainingly informative.rdquo; (Chicago Tribune)ldquo;Likely to be the standard one-volume Bach biography for some time to come.rdquo; (New York of Books)ldquo;A work of clarity worthy of its subject and his music.rdquo; (Wall Street Journal)ldquo;Undoubtedly the most important Bach biography since Phillip Spitta's life written over a century ago.rdquo; (The New Republic) About the Author Christoph Wolff, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, is the Adams University Professor at Harvard University and one of the world's foremost experts on Bach and Mozart. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.