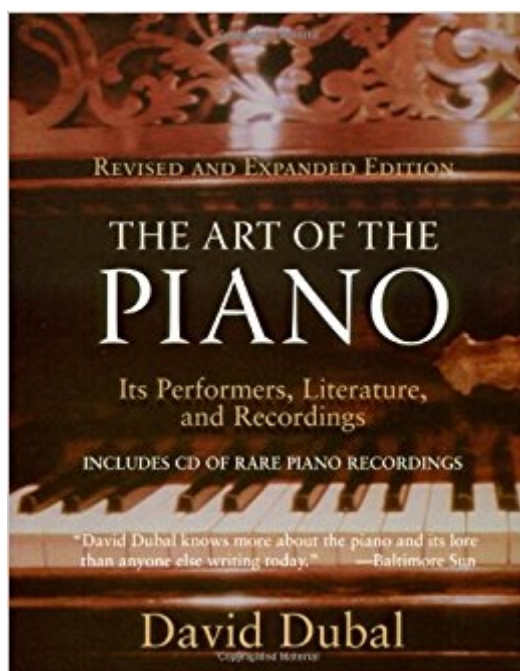


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# The Art Of The Piano: Its Performers, Literature, And Recordings Revised & Expanded Edition



## Synopsis

(Amadeus). This is the only complete and up-to-date book profiling every major pianist (thousands) and their essential repertoire and recordings. This third edition is completely revised (second edition: 1995 Harvest Books, ISBN# 0-15-600019-9), with hundreds more entries and updated information about existing entries. The book contains a CD for the first time featuring rare performances. "For all those interested in the piano, this book will provide great insight and knowledge. It must be read by everyone who loves the instrument." Vladimir Horowitz "The Art of the Piano is the best companion a piano aficionado could ask for." Baltimore Sun

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a basic handbook for piano enthusiasts, this is an informative and well-researched volume. The first section offers capsule biographies of pianists through history, alphabetically arranged, that assess the stylistic or pianistic traits of each. Recordings--or, in the case of historical figures, contemporary reports on playing styles--are cited for documentation. The second section presents a critical survey of the important piano literature, solo and concerto, with a selective discography for each, based on the author's comparative listening. The amount of space accorded each pianist, as well as the author's critical commentaries, are of necessity highly subjective; nevertheless, Dubal's choices give us an impression of careful judgment and genuine love of the subject. There are some surprising omissions (e.g., Gilbert Kalish, Christian Zacharias) in the biographical section, but the

discography lists many additional performers. In sum, this book incorporates in one volume the kind of useful information contained in an historical work such as Harold Schonberg's *The Great Pianists* and in the various guides to the piano literature that are available.- Susan Kagan, Hunter Coll., CUNY Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

". . . a critical appreciation of pianists' talents . . . [a] practical volume." -- American Reference Books Annual, 36th vol.". . . inclusion of many concert pianists not . . . in standard biographical music dictionaries makes [Dubal's] work important for college music libraries." -- Choice, June 2005"A reference book that is also compelling reading is a rare book." -- Music Teacher Magazine, June/July 2005"Dubal presents an amazing wealth of information and does so in a genial but erudite way . . . [a] valuable book." -- American Record Guide, July/August 2005"Dubal's supple language fits each portrait. . . . This is a bargain treasure. Let it entice, outrage, and inform you." -- Clavier, July/August 2005"In its new guise, this important title effectively superseded earlier editions and is quite a bargain for libraries; highly recommended." -- Library Journal, February 1, 2005"an excellent resource book . . . its spine will be getting many creases over the next few years." -- Piano Professional UK, April 2005

This is one of my favorite books about pianists and piano recordings. The details of the book are extensively described in several other reviews, so I won't rehash that aspect. This review will be more about how this book has helped to rejuvenate and expand my love of classical piano (i.e., Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Modern eras of piano/keyboard music). The best thing that I can say about this work is that it has really stimulated my thinking, and has really increased my appreciation for the piano. I have been relistening to works long forgotten about, and have started listening to more new works than I have since I first became interested in classical music. Mr. Dubal's passion for piano music is amazing, and his in-depth critiques of artists and their recordings have deepened and expanded my own experience, both in listening to and in playing piano music. (I am working up a piano piece that I never would have considered before reading this book). I think that this is so because Mr. Dubal's great passion and love in life is clearly the piano. This is as such a DEEPLY personal view on the subject, and he says so in pretty much so many words in the book. So I don't really understand the negative reviews that basically criticize this book for not being something it never intended to be, or probably could be. While I am sure that there is a place for an even-handed, comprehensive guide to pianists and piano recordings, that kind of work by definition

would be devoid of the passion that defines this work. As such, such a work would satisfy a certain academic role, but could not possibly INSPIRE and EXCITE like this book has done for me. Isn't music making supposed to be about emotional involvement, passion, etc. more than a dry listing of facts? Despite my great enthusiasm for this work, I have knocked off a star for the previously mentioned inaccuracies. Better fact-checking was clearly needed, and hopefully there will be better editing of the next edition if and when it comes. If he does update it, I will gladly and eagerly get the new one, errors and all, and be the better off for it! Highly recommended for those who love classical piano!

If you play the piano well, or want to, or if you think you know something about the art of concert performances, and how to prepare for them; this is your book. Get it and enjoy it.

The book is in perfect conditions

Very helpful reference book and interesting info. Although Dubal writes several pages on Gottschalk, there is nothing in the recording section of Part Two. Nothing Exceptional?

Very well done.

Correction - 4.5 star rating. David Dubal is a Juilliard faculty member, accomplished pianist and a distinguished music author whose books draw the reader deep into the world of classical music. Like his more general 2001 book, "Essential Canon," this book gives you a more colorful, personal view of the composers and performers of classical music. This is the Fourth Edition which has substantial additions (especially in the piano literature) that make it a worthwhile upgrade from earlier editions. Let's say up-front that one thing this book is NOT is boring, overly-academic or bogged down in heavy musicology prose. On the contrary, David Dubal's writing is highly engaging ... his stories colorful and human ... his perspectives deeply personal but well-earned. All of this make this book read more like a page-turning novel than a dry, academic treatise. Here's a snippet from his essay on pianist Wilhelm Kempff to illustrate his expressive writing style: "Wilhelm Kempff's recordings are the marvelous product of a civilized, gentlemanly mind. He had a clear sense of organization, and I always feel warmed by his artistic generosity, keen intelligence, musical dignity and gentleness. His Schubert playing is lovely and full of whimsy. He imparts that unique Schubertian amiability which makes for joy. His reading of the final Sonata in B-Flat is angelic. Only

in the "Wanderer Fantasy" does Kempff's playing lumber. Kempff is often radiant in Brahms; his E-flat minor Scherzo and F-minor Sonata are all heart, and the smaller pieces can be jewels in his hands. In Schumann, Kempff is even more successful. It is a compassionate, sympathetic Schumann. The darker recesses of the composer's soul are closed to scrutiny; instead, Kempff's Schumann is filled with the fragrance and the apple-cheeked youth of early German Romanticism, all optimism and fancy. He is best in the Davidbündlertanze, Kinderszenen, and a flickering Papillons, but less successful in the Symphonic Etudes and Kreisleriana."Very personal reflections indeed. But, the first thing one notices in this book is just how many pianists he lists - not just the well-known ones but a couple hundred perhaps. Dubal rightfully pays due honor to the legends and greats by giving pages of biography chocked full of fascinating stories, defining events, style analysis and critique - all which make for fun and fascinating reading. Significant coverage is given to legends such as Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Rubinstein, Arrau, Gould and especially Horowitz. Thankfully, he gives some interesting commentary on some of today's new and formidable talents like Marc-Andres Hamelin, Evgeny Kissin and Lang Lang - although not hiding his outright distaste for the latter showman. However, other pianists popular with the public (Uchida, Kovacevich, Janos) often get only one tiny paragraph which can leave fans hungering for more. Similarly, it may be frustrating to some readers not to even see their favorites listed (such as Angela Hewitt whose ever-growing discography is quite distinguished). Equally odd too is that many relatively "obscure" pianists get an unusual amount of coverage - but perhaps some of these truly deserve to be better known. What most makes this book so compelling is the way Mr. Dubal weaves in his musical insights, concert experiences and personal conversations with these great pianists which gives the book a more "being there" feeling. For example, he shares some interesting things he took away from private phone calls with Glenn Gould or recalls how pianists in NYC flocked to Carnegie Hall with great anticipation when Martha Argerich flew into town. His impressions of the stage mannerisms of performers like Richter or Serkin are vivid tidbits of intrigue. Certainly, Dubal has "hob-nobbed" around the music scene for a while and has many fascinating stories to share. And while Dubal is definitely not shy to critique someone's style or performance, he also rightfully loads heaps of praise as well - all of this helps transform such a book from more of a sterile, academic quality to a spicier, engaging read. Sometimes though, he could be less definitive in his criticism and leave pure opinions in the realm of personal preference. In all his accounts, Mr. Dubal's sincere love and passion for the art is unmistakable. Even the many portraits in the book of the great pianists that Dubal sketched himself seems to reveal his deep respect and honor for these legends. The second part of this book will delight pianists and fans alike where Mr. Dubal reviews the major piano

literature with decent commentary. For example, he lists and comments on ALL of Beethoven's 32 sonatas, Bach's 48, the majority of Chopin's piano compositions and so on. He also lists (but does not compare or describe) a range of the recordings to consider for each. Last, one enticing bonus in the latest (4th) edition for serious pianophiles and collectors is the inclusion of a CD of RARE RECORDINGS - some 31 works mostly recorded pre-WWII. But, the sound of nearly all is pretty scratchy. In short, this is a most engaging book that should serve as a valuable resource for the serious classical fan or pianist. It is one of my favorite books on classical music that is referred to a lot. In the end, it was Dubal's story-telling and "behind-the-scenes" accounts that won my attention and admiration. Such writing creates more three-dimensional, compellingly-human depictions of the past and present pianists who have blessed our world with the finest art that can be achieved. 4.5 stars (not 3).

David Dubal is extremely knowledgeable, which one might expect, and his writing style is superb, much more than one might expect.

Lots of information. Limited to people interested in classical music, the piano in particular. David Dubal obviously knows his subject.

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