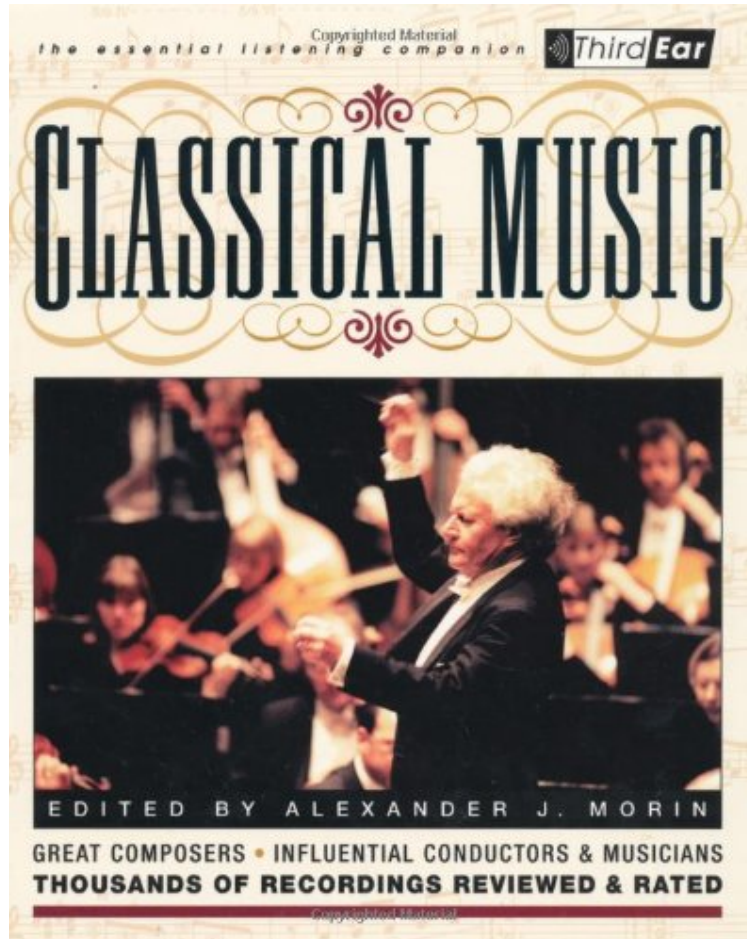


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Classical Music: Third Ear: The Essential Listening Companion

Alexander Morin

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Alexander Morin : Classical Music: Third Ear: The Essential Listening Companion before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Classical Music: Third Ear: The Essential Listening Companion:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Still Useful After All These YearsBy M. ZimmerI was a bit skeptical getting a CD guide that was more than a dozen years old, but given the embarrassment of riches that are flowing out of the studios' vaults at cheap prices, it has ended up being an essential guide through the many different performances and releases over the years. It won't help you with the new stars of classical music but it sure does its job on the ones before 2000. The best part is how it succinctly tells you what the characteristics of each performance are, and if germane the recording quality in just a few words. I find myself referring to it a dozen times a week. It's well written, so it's enjoyable on its own terms too. This book also makes a good antidote to the Britcentric Gramophone and Penguin guides, so it's a useful reference from that standpoint as well. It's quite thorough. I would warn fans of Bruckner that the editors don't care much for him, and he gets less space than even minor composers (a page and a half

or so), but other than that idiosyncrasy I recommend it wholeheartedly. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A very interesting and helpful guide

ByorchI discovered the existence of this book when reading a review on the Penguin guide which by the way is far from being a reference because it omits countless invaluable interpretations by great conductors "of the past" and is too often British biased but this is another story. Most of these great "conductors of the past" and their famous interpretations are back here and it is often practical to find a classification between historical and more recent performances. When available, recordings on period instruments are also listed apart. It is true that some composers would have deserved a few more pages (Bruckner !) compared to what some modern ones get but I also suppose the choices of the editor have to be respected. We have to remember this guide is the sum of reviews from 50 or so contributors (whose names are listed at the beginning of the book) and we have to suppose some might have felt more inspired than others ! The content of this guide makes me think about another big book (+ than 1.800 pages but smaller than Third Ear) that I have and enjoy above all others including the one reviewed here : "Les Indispensables du Disque Compact Classique" by Jean-Charles Hoffel Piotr Kaminsky written in 1995-96. For those who can read French this is a must have very pleasant to read and objectively written guide really worth the money but now hard to find (ISBN-10: 2213592853). I do think both guides are complementary. Overall although reviews could have been presented more attractively and therefore easier to find and read this book deserves a 5 star note and this is mostly because of its precious content which still helps you find and buy the best recordings even several years after its publication. 60 of 61 people found the following review helpful. A most interesting guide - but inconsistent

By Alan LekanThis is a fascinating buying guide to classical music recordings with many positive attributes. It is full of interesting historical context of the composers and their works and fascinating performer trivia, making it quite entertaining and educational in addition to comparing the many recording choices. Compared to Penguin or Gramophone, it gives MUCH MORE in-depth background on each work's history and significance. Also, there is a lack of any "British bias" (since published in USA) that some cite with Gramophone or Penguin (both UK published). Case in point: American pianist, Garrick Ohlsson's superb eight volumes of Chopin on the Arabesque label. Third Ear is the only guide to extensively review each of Ohlsson's Arabesque CD's while there is not one mention in the 2003 Penguin or Gramophone. Bias? Perhaps more likely the Brits are just not familiar with all the musicians "across the pond." Its really impossible for any one guide to be the "end-all" guide. A notable and unique feature of The Third Ear Guide is the many pages of great biographies of the FAMOUS MUSICIANS by instrument in the back (pianists, violinists, violists, cellists, wind players, percussionists, vocalists etc). So, here you can find legends from Rubinstein, Horowitz, Pires, Perahia, Grumiaux, Oistrakh, Casels, Starker, Bain, Holliger, Graham, Pavoratti and many other admired musicians/vocalists throughout the past century. In addition to some curious history and career milestones of these well-loved performers, The Third Ear Guide also cites some of their better recordings - a real valuable feature I found. However, this guide waxes hot and cold depending on the composer/genre. For example, in the listings of available performances for a huge category like Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas, there are SEVERAL entire pages covering nearly two dozen musicians who have recorded those works with compelling insights into their styles, historic performances and careers. Really great stuff for the connoisseur! But, in other categories it is a different story. Most frustrating to some is that in many cases, obvious top recordings and major performers are not mentioned, leaving the reader with an incomplete information. But, the bottom line is that no one guide is the end-all resource, and serious collectors will have this guide along with the Gramophone and Penguin Guides as each really has something valuable and often unique to contribute to the study of the finest recordings. On the style side, the commentary is not dry and academic but full of human interest and spicy opinions - revealing "nuggets" of fascinating information for the music you most love. Additionally, the editors are not always prim-and-proper, saying only positive things (like Penguin Guide) but actually give critical and insightful comments which truly helps one sort out the pack. In this respect, the Third Ear Guide is the probably the most interesting to read compared to the others. So, this guide is much more than just a guide to look up ratings - it is a fascinating journey into classical music, its vast repertoire and its performers. If you are a serious collector, multiple guides area always the best way to go to get a wide variety of opinion. If you really can only pick one guide, most people would go with legendary Penguin Guide. But, my second guide would definately be Third Ear (over Gramophone) as it often lists recordings suprisingly not listed in Penguin. Also, it is just plain fun and fascinating to read at random.

Ranging from Gregorian chant to Philip Glass, this well-balanced guide to historical and comtemporany classical music examines major works by 500 composers worldwide. It focuses on exemplary recordings of symphonies, operas, concertos, choral pieces, chamber music, piano pieces and other works performed by an internatioal spectrum of premier conductors, musicians and vocalists. Incisive, often anecdotal critiques define the distinctive style and interpretation of thousands of selected works and recordings. Composers profiled and reviewed include: Bach, Beethoven, Bernstein, Brahms, Chopin, Copland, Czerny, Debussy, Gershwin, Gilbert Sullivan, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Prokofieff, Puccini, Reich, Schubert, Tchaikovsky, Varse, Wagner and hundreds of others.

From Library Journal This excellent guide to classical music discography ranges over the entire history of recorded

sound, with 50-plus contributors covering some 500 composers. In contrast to most guides of its kind, headnote information (e.g., label, disc numbers, performers, and the like) is presented in the text in summary form only, with boldface alerting readers to particular performers and recommended recordings. Usually, a composer entry begins with a short assessment of the composer's work and historical significance, followed by a discussion of the recordings. Besides the main 1100-page composer section, editor Morin, a contributor to several prestigious musical publications, allotted sections to genres and instruments/artists. The main competition to this work is *The Penguin Guide to Compact Discs*, out in a new edition this year. Both are mammoth works, but some minor composers/works in one are not in the other (and vice versa). For certain major composers, Penguin is superior, but in general the nod goes to the newcomer, especially for its coverage of "genre" music not included in Penguin (the film music of Korngold, for example, is not mentioned in Penguin) and more complete entries on important minor composers (such as Viotti). Ideally, libraries should own both books to cover the classical scene fully. (The "About the Book" section of *Classical Music* states that, like Penguin, it will be updated periodically.) This fascinating and readable survey is recommended for all libraries.

Bruce R. Schueneman, Texas AM Univ. Lib., Kingsville Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

About the Author Alexander Morin founded the Aldine Publishing Company. He lives in Washington, D.C.