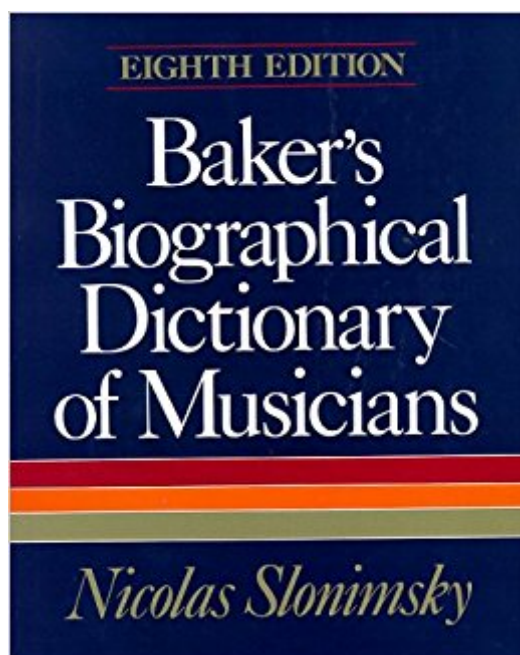


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# Baker's Biographical Dictionary Of Musicians



## Synopsis

Music Studies, Biography, Dictionary

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The splendid Biographical Dictionary of Musicians was begun in 1900 by Theodore Baker. Nicolas Slonimsky undertook the fifth through eighth editions, infusing them with inimitable, irrepressible Slonimsky style. This edition contains more than 3.5 million words, all of them delightful, all penned by Slonimsky, making it one of the world's known treasures. From Aaltonen, Erkki (Finnish composer, born 1910) to Zylis-Gara, Teresa (Polish soprano, born 1935), the work exudes factual accuracy, critical (and opinionated) insights, fine humor, and a human touch. Though associated with classical music, Slonimsky has always embraced the new, and in this edition, hundreds of popular musicians (jazz, rock, blues, and more) join the traditional ranks.

Baker's continues to be the most complete and reliable source of biographical information on musical subjects since its first appearance in 1900. The latest, an update of the 1984 edition (Schirmer: Macmillan. 7th ed.), broadens the area of coverage to include many pop stars as well as the most recently notable classical performers, composers, historians, etc. It is not difficult to locate the entries added since Slonimsky took charge; he is free with descriptive adjectives such as

"brilliant" (for Seiji Ozawa), and "fantastically popular and audacious" (for Madonna). Just as interesting are the prefaces to this and the sixth edition ( LJ 3/1/79), written in Slonimsky's quirky, gossipy style. An indispensable tool for serious music collections.- Timothy J. McGee, Univ. of Toronto  
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Good book jbs

This is a huge, comprehensive volume that should be in every music lover's library of books on various subjects music. I use it as a reference only. When researching Felix Mendelssohn, I noted a difference in an episode in his life recounted in a two volume set by Milton Cross and that recorded in the subject dictionary. I believe Milton Cross' accounting because it make more sense, so I suggest that you double-check what you read.

Quite a lot of information in this very large book. I considered later editions when shopping. However, I purchased the 7th edition and like it.

Amazing that this was available through . Mr. Slonimsky's entry for himself is really priceless!

This is the best version for browsing and just learning different things about various musicians. It is the third of four editions I have bought, and the easiest to use (no cumbersome appendices as in the previous edition) and no multiple volumes as in the latest edition. It is perfect bed or bathroom reading. Mr. Slonimsky was amazing and a true joy to read. The latest edition improves on this by its significantly greater coverage, and the new contributors try to maintain the same feel, but it's not quite the same thing. So, if you want the latest data on significantly more musicians of different styles of music, get the 6 volume next edition, but if you are looking for a joy to read get this edition (and the price is right),

As a programmer and broadcaster on the former commercial classical music radio station, KFAC, Los Angeles, between 1973 through 1986, I was obsessed with serious music. I met Nicolas Slonimsky in 1979, when I interviewed him at his home on Wilshire Blvd. He was a friend of our music director, W. Clyde Allen, Ph.D. Gradually I got to know him and studied his background. In 1986, he became a frequent guest on my Saturday afternoon broadcast. This book is an unparalleled reference work filled with informative articles about the greatest composers, performers

and musicologists throughout history. In addition to the important data regarding each, they are written, where appropriate, with great warmth and humor. (Cf. Elvis Presley and Tom Jones.) Slonimsky's attention to correct details is phenomenal. (He was one of the first to verify that the day of Mozart's funeral was NOT a dreary stormy day--but was bright and sunny.) By all means, read the various prefaces. Those are as entertaining as the rest of the book. One thing you will find is that this Baker's is like salted peanuts, or Lay's potato chips. It is a book you will turn to again and again, merely for the joy of it!

My first copy of this book was the 1958 version, the fifth edition of this text, which represented a major increase in the text (from fourth to fifth, there were some 2300 additional biographies, which can give one a sense of the scope of this text even then). It is now an impressive tome that covers not only the 'classical' world but also the pop, rock, jazz, country and other more modern areas of music to a significant degree. The research methodology for this book has continued to be developed over time. The first edition, in 1900, relied extensively on musician biographies and autobiographies, but this has since been supplemented a great deal with outside research, musicologist and historian contributions, and innovative methods by Nicolas Slonimsky (for example, Slonimsky contacted the Palais de Justice in Paris to verify the dates of Wagner's imprisonment for debt, something Wagner omitted from his official life story; he contacted the Vienna Bureau of Meteorology for a weather report on the day Beethoven died to confirm the story of the thunderstorm). This is a dictionary of musicians, but it includes many other people connected to music - Slonimsky suggested once that the title should be 'Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, Librettists, Publishers, Impresarios, and Sundry Other Men, Women, and Children Who Have to Do with Music.' The entries go back to the Middle Ages and Renaissance, but as Slonimsky states, the biographical details of music figures from those periods is rather scant, even if their importance was major. There is a major section at the beginning that discusses the standards of the dictionary, the spelling and naming conventions used, the preservation of details in different ways, and the free use of qualifying descriptions (neither Baker nor Slonimsky were shy at giving their opinions about the quality or talent of the figures involved). This is an incredibly useful dictionary, from Aaron, abbot of St. Martin and St. Pantaleon in Cologne (circa 1050) to Alberich Zwyssig, a Swiss composer of the 1800s. I find it one of my most frequently used reference books, both the older fifth edition and the new eighth edition. It is a valuable book in any edition.

This book is really indispensable for anyone who cares deeply about classical music. It is a fabulous

reference for almost all the composers you can think of and many you have never heard of, many historically important performers, musicologists, theorists, and lots of other great information. Since it is a single volume handy reference the articles tend to be concise and very informative. You learn not only biographical information, but important works in that person's life (whether composing or performing them). There are several specialized versions of Baker's this or that. For example, there is one for twentieth century musicians and another for popular music. However, this is the bedrock main version. While this volume is presently out of print, it can be had on the used market relatively affordably. A ninth edition is planned for 2007, or so I hear. However, it is going to be something like \$300! Of course it is worth it, because of the wealth of information, but you can get this version for about a quarter of that price or less. This is a book that is simply fun to flip around in and read things you never even suspected to exist. Make sure and read Slonimsky's article on himself. It is a hoot.

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