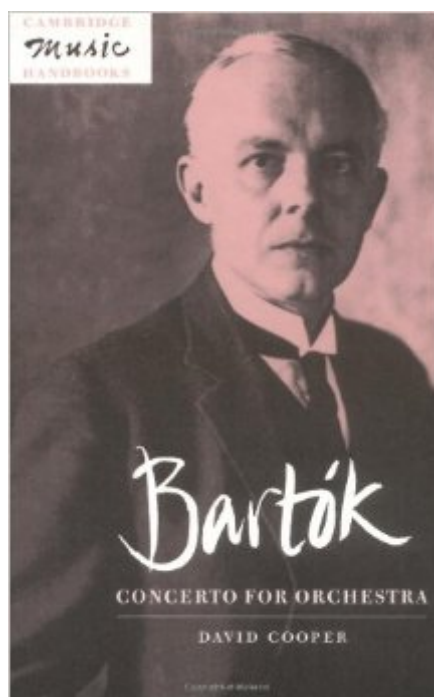


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Bartók: Concerto For Orchestra (Cambridge Music Handbooks)



Synopsis

Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra has proven to be one of the most popularly successful concert works of the twentieth century. It is seen by its champions as an example of Bartók's seamless blend of Eastern European folk music and Western art music, and by its detractors as indicative of the composer's artistic compromise. This book contains a discussion of the historical and musical contexts of the piece, its early performance history and critical reception. It also includes the first complete movement-by-movement synopsis of the Concerto, as well as detailed technical information about the work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bela Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra is an immediately accessible work, and since its premiere in 1944 it has often been inserted into concert programme as a guaranteed crowd-pleaser.

Nonetheless, coming from the genius composer that was Bartók, the Concerto for Orchestra contains a wealth of ideas more than you would imagine, the gradual discovery of which can only increase your enjoyment in listening to it. For that reason, I was happy to read this guide by David Cooper. After the short introduction, Cooper's study consists of four major parts. The first, entitled Background, is a sketch of all the orchestral works Bartók wrote before that could be said to foreshadow the Concerto for Orchestra. Indeed, Cooper believes that the Concerto harkens all the way back to Bartók's early student piece "Kossuth". The second part, "Genesis and reception",

gives the biographical facts about how Bartok came to write the piece, when he wrote it, and how it was understood by the public and later composers. You can find such biographical facts anywhere, but what makes Cooper's guide so wonderful is his bar-by-bar explanation of the Concerto. Cooper explains Bartok's harmonic turns, what Balkan folk bases he uses, the hidden and not-so-hidden motifs that reoccur in the piece, and the major divisions within each movement. This chapter assumes no deep knowledge of egghead musical analysis only that you know some general musical notation and can follow along with a score, and I daresay a great many experienced classical music listeners can manage that. The last major section, "Musical analysis" is perhaps the least important for casual listeners, but nonetheless interesting.

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