BOOKS OF THE YEAR

CLASSICAL MUSIC BOOK OF THE YEAR



Fryderyk Chopin A Life and Times by Alan Walker Faber £30

At last, the definitive biography of Chopin has arrived. This substantial new study is a masterpiece, indispensible to specialists and general music lovers alike. It overflows with revelatory information, deft characterisation and pertinent, readable explorations of the music. All this is set against a minutely detailed depiction of his world. Walker's style is elegant, literary and empathetic, while his unfailing love for the music shines from every page.



Bravura performances

Stylish composer biographies head Jessica Duchen's roundup

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Handel in London

by Jane Glover Macmillan £25

The conductor Jane Glover conjures an impression of Handel's 18th-century London that seems baroque in every sense: flamboyant, fervid, seething with intrigue. The German composer's long relationship with the British capital is his only love affair there's little here about his personal life – but Glover captures the finely balanced symbiosis between him, his singers, their audiences, their royal patrons and the city.

Schumann The Faces and the Masks by Judith Chernaik Faber £20

Chernaik tells Schumann's tragic story in a book full of fresh, thoughtful writing. The "masks" are the multiple personalities in his music; and his courtship of Clara Wieck, her father's determination to separate them, and their eventual marriage are brought convincingly to life. But the

crunch point is his mental collapse and incarceration in an asylum: Chernaik presents many details from the medical records, to heartbreaking effect.

How Shostakovich Changed My Mind by Stephen Johnson Notting Hill £14.99

Writer and broadcaster Stephen Johnson chronicles his lifelong fascination with Shostakovich's music in the light of his own struggles with bipolar disorder. Strangely, anguished music can be the most comforting: using a delicate, self-deprecating style and references encompassing everything from Greek drama to the Moomins, Johnson explores the way Shostakovich provides catharsis, transforming the personal "I" into the collective "we". Profoundly moving.

Speaking the Piano

by Susan Tomes Boydell Press £19.99

Drawing on her long experience, pianist Susan Tomes investigates, with crystalline clarity, some of the Fryderyk Chopin Walker's love of his music shines out

interferences that disrupt the flow between players and their music. The text is studded with gems of insight, encapsulating elusive matters that often defy articulation, including difficult topics such as unconscious biases against female teachers, or why some performers ham up their playing for the YouTube generation. A must-read for anyone who plays or loves the piano.

Music Lessons The Collège de France Lectures by Pierre Boulez Faber £30

In these lectures from 1976 to 1995, Boulez shows himself to be a philosopher as well as a composer and conductor. His laser-sharp analyses drill into profound issues about the study and composition of music - such as the conflict between creative process and historical research, or the impossibility of "authenticity". Chewy, intensely rewarding, it leaves one marvelling at this penetrating, questing intellect.

What lies ahea

Our future survival emerges as a question in Rob Kingston's select

SCIENCE

Back in February, the surreal sight of Elon Musk's shiny red Tesla convertible floating through space with a mannequin at the wheel gave the world the surest sign yet that the rocket game has changed. The Space Barons: Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and the Quest to Colonize the Cosmos (PublicAffairs £17.99) is a meticulously researched account by the Washington Post writer Christian Davenport of the ambitions and rivalries of the billionaires bidding to boldly take private enterprise where no government space programme has gone before.

Their vision might just save mankind, if Michio Kaku is correct. In The Future of Humanity (Allen Lane £20), he asks how mankind can avoid destruction, either self-inflicted or visited on us by a supervolcano or asteroid. In short, we need to leave Earth or face extinction. Terraforming and colonising Mars sounds challenging enough, but Kaku doesn't stop there, pondering the far-off possibilities of journeys to distant stars, suspended animation and even immortality.

For now, though, stopping the planet and getting off is not an option. If that thought depresses you, you need The Consolations of Physics by Tim Radford (Sceptre £14.99), a poetic work that celebrates the

power of science deep into the un explore its secre trapped here on Blurring the line: physics, philosoj theology, Radfor shares the joy of curiosity and co-

What fires tha the first place? Ji insightful Radio Scientific has alle than 100 scientis what makes ther of a planned coll tie-ins, The Life Explorers (Wei features adventi physical (palaeo Richard Fortey s Arctic for fossils (mathematician Cheng "stretchin out of her skull" Buckley, produc series, distils the skilfully into pri

Chad Orzel o fine example of passion in Brea Einstein: The of Everyday O (Oneworld £12.5 about quantum you almost cert think about it b had your morni does: he's a phy with a knack fo how the quanti there in front o as you wake up of your toaster sensor in your: camera and eve the shape of the let you smell tha

SCIENCE BOOK OF THE YEAR



Brief Answers to the Big Questions by Stephen Hawking J Murray £14.99

The physics world lost one of its greatest minds with the death of Stephen Hawking in March. His final book may not wrap the universe up as neatly as he hoped ("At one point,"

he writes, "I tho see the end of p does a fine job FAQs. The grea though, comes shifts his focus his outlook is la optimistic, but was so reliant (to communica dismissing the artificial intellig be "potentially mistake ever".

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