

**Douglass Seaton, *Ideas and Styles in the Western Musical Tradition*, 3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 486 pages. \$59.95.
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The teaching of music history today takes place in a plethora of different situations, from seminars with five graduate musicology students to auditoriums teeming with four-hundred-fifty non-majors. Dealing with different technologies, navigating online educational resources, and adjusting the level of discourse to each situation create interesting questions of balance, particularly if teachers do not wish to compromise our academic and pedagogical principles. Douglass Seaton's newly revised *Ideas and Styles in the Western Musical Tradition* is a welcome example of a textbook that can be used effectively in a number of different academic situations. *Ideas and Styles* provides a quick but substantive tour through Western musical history and the ideas and cultural context that shaped it. Written in a scholarly yet accessible and engaging narrative style, it is completely suitable for undergraduates while being more than sufficiently erudite for graduate students.

In the companion website (<http://www.oup.com/us/Seaton>), Seaton describes *Ideas and Styles* as a "discursive survey of musical thought." Thought, both individual and collective, is an ever-changing continuum, and indeed the history of music is presented as arising from historical, political, and cultural influences and values, rather than functioning as an artifact that can be boxed into the usual handy but somewhat arbitrary historical categories. Thus, for example, the thousand years usually subsumed into the category of "medieval music" are presented as a logical outgrowth of their historical context: "The Early Christian Period," "The Establishment of a Catholic Tradition," and so on. The words "Renaissance" and "Baroque" do not appear in the Table of Contents; instead we are invited to explore ideas such as "Humanism and Music," "The Reformation in Music," and "Rationalism and its Impact on Music." Musical concepts are presented through the prevailing thought of a particular culture and time period; for example, one is encouraged to understand the characteristics of nineteenth-century orchestral form and harmony

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as a manifestation of the connection between “structural and emotional drama in the Classic and Romantic periods.”¹

Ideas and Styles is not a comprehensive collection of historical facts, nor does it emphasize detailed form and analysis. It does not take the place of histories such as J. Peter Burkholder’s new rewrite of *A History of Western Music* (aka “The Grout”) or Mark Evan Bonds’s *A History of Music in Western Culture*, both with their extensive score and audio anthologies.² It is, however, more comprehensive than a number of other texts specifically designed for one-semester classes, which all too often do not have the depth and scope necessary to challenge a class of music majors or graduate students. In short, it is a stimulating book about ideas and the way that they inform musical process, presented in chronological history. In the preface, Seaton writes:

[This book] provides, as the title suggests, a look at some important contributions to Western musical thinking. It intends to encourage you to respond with thoughts of your own about the music you make and hear. But this should not serve you as a comprehensive historical reference book about music; certainly many interesting events, fine composers, and important musical works cannot be mentioned here. It is not even a compendium of information that a musically cultured person should know.³

Seaton then refers the reader to dictionaries, encyclopedias, various theoretical studies, or the “larger and more detailed histories” mentioned above. The reader is further reminded to look beyond the pages of the book through Seaton’s placement of excellent “Suggestions for Further Reading” at the end of each chapter. The Timeline can also steer students in the direction of related interdisciplinary topics, juxtaposing a chronology of music and musicians alongside a column containing contemporary world events and figures in the Arts and Humanities.

Ideas and Styles in the Western Musical Tradition has no “companion anthology” of recordings. Instead, it provides a chart correlating the contents of the book with a number of well-known recorded anthologies. This can be viewed as an advantage for an instructor who would enjoy having more individual choice and control over listening examples and audio resources, and it facilitates the use of the increasing abundance of online resources (see for example, Dane Heuchemer’s review of A-R Editions’ *Online Music Anthology*

1. Douglass Seaton, from the Introduction to the “Instructor Resources” page on the companion website to *Ideas and Styles in the Western Musical Tradition*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). <http://www.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780195379884/instructor/intro/?view=usa>.

2. J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 8th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010); Mark Evan Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2009).

3. Seaton, *Ideas and Styles*, xx.

in this issue). The potential for expanding the listening portion of a course is therefore maximized, which is in keeping with Seaton's philosophy; in his preface he makes it clear that the student should spend "much more time listening to music and studying representative works than you do reading," as "the history of the music is in the music itself."⁴

The companion website, accessible at no additional charge, is an extremely useful adjunct to the book. In addition to the correlation chart between the book's content and several popular recording anthologies, the instructor's resource pages contain a sample syllabus and, for each chapter, overviews and ideas for classroom approaches, discussion topics, stated learning objectives, PowerPoint slides, quizzes, and lists of terms and concepts. The classroom approaches are varied and allow the instructor to pick and choose according to the nature of the class itself; there are exercises that would be completely suitable for a class of non-musicians and exercises tailored to performers. The student resources include the above plus review quizzes and additional resources, such as a "Guide to Research and Writing in Musicology" and "Pronouncing Church Latin: A Quick Reference."

Music textbooks have increasingly adopted a web-style visual format in which a single page may contain multiple images, sidebars, section headings, and cross-references to companion anthologies. Such a design is compatible with the learning styles of contemporary college students, who are visually oriented and accustomed to assimilating knowledge in easily digestible portions that can be "saved" into mental "folders." Seaton's book does not wholly adopt the graphic intensity of the colorful webpage style; however, it is clearly laid-out with section headings and easy-to-read examples, figures, and maps. Primary sources and non-musical context are worked into the narrative of the text, rather than being isolated into separate sidebars that can be easily ignored. Color plates are all collected together in the middle of the book, and while one might wish that they were nearer in proximity to the relevant passages in the text, they are beautiful and vibrant.

Ideas and Styles in the Western Musical Tradition "views music history through the conviction that the cultural and philosophical contexts in which music lives—the *ideas* that surround it—interplay continuously with the *styles* of the music itself." Seaton's approach beautifully addresses the issue of music history's "relevance," contributing to students' wider understanding of the world and encouraging them to think critically about ways in which their own ideas and cultures shape them as musical performers and listeners.⁵

4. Seaton, *Ideas and Styles*, xix.

5. Seaton, *Ideas and Styles*, xix.