



Rossini (Master Musicians Series)

By Richard Osborne

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Gioachino Rossini was one of the most influential, as well as one of the most industrious and emotionally complex of the great nineteenth-century composers. Between 1810 and 1829, he wrote 39 operas, a body of work, comic and serious, which transformed Italian opera and radically altered the course of opera in France. His retirement from operatic composition in 1829, at the age of 37, was widely assumed to be the act of a talented but lazy man. In reality, political events and a series of debilitating illnesses were the determining factors. After drafting the *Stabat Mater* in 1832, Rossini wrote no music of consequence for the best part of twenty-five years, before the clouds lifted and he began composing again in Paris in the late 1850s. During this glorious Indian summer of his career, he wrote 150 songs and solo piano pieces his 'Sins of Old Age' and his final masterpiece, the *Petite Messe solennelle*. The image of Rossini as a gifted but feckless amateur-the witty, high-spirited *bon vivant* who dashed off *The Barber of Seville* in a mere thirteen days-persisted down the years, until the centenary of his death in 1968 inaugurated a process of re-evaluation by scholars, performers, and writers. The original 1985 edition of Richard Osborne's pioneering and widely acclaimed *Rossini* redefined the life and provided detailed analyses of the complete Rossini oeuvre. Twenty years on, all Rossini's operas have been staged and recorded, a Critical Edition of his works is well advanced, and a scholarly edition of his correspondence, including 250 previously unknown letters from Rossini to his parents, is in progress. Drawing on these past two decades of scholarship and performance, this new edition of *Rossini* provides the most detailed portrait we have yet had of one of the worlds best-loved and most enigmatic composers.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Osborne's *Rossini* remains indispensable both as a conspectus of, and prolegomenon to, the life and work of this most colourful of operatic composers." **Conor Farrington**, *Times Literary Supplement* "The 1985 edition of Richard Osborne's *Rossini* was already the very best Rossini biography available; the new edition surpasses it in every way. Writing now with access to the published correspondence from throughout the composer's operatic career (through 1830) and with new editions and excellent performances of most of the operas, Osborne provides real insight into the life and works of a composer whose art had been poorly understood since the middle of the nineteenth century. He hones in on the major works and explains their historical significance and aesthetic appeal. Those who love Rossini and *bel canto* opera are truly in Osborne's debt." -Philip Gossett, Robert W. Reneker Distinguished Service Professor of Music, University of Chicago

"Perhaps the best general study of this composer's life and work available in any language." -Alex Liddell

"Richard Osborne's *Rossini* is an invaluable work of scholarship and passion. Life and Works together, in great detail, give the reader a splendid fund of information and allow a much clearer picture than we have ever had before, of an often misunderstood, and under-rated genius." --Sir Roger Norrington

About the Author

Richard Osborne is one of Britain's best known writers and broadcasters, and a leading authority on Rossini. Widely praised for its scholarship and readability, the original edition of his Master Musicians *Rossini* was seen as an influential act of revaluation at a time of renewed interest in the composer's music and personality. Other books by Richard Osborne include *Herbert von Karajan: A Life in Music* (1998) and *Till I End My Song. English Music and Musicians 1440-1940: A Perspective from Eton* (2002). critic and broadcaster, author of Conversations with Karajan (OUP 1991), *Herbert von Karajan: A Life in Music* (Chatto & Windus 1998), and *Till I End My Song. English Music and Musicians 1440-1940: A Perspective from Eton* (Cygnet Press 2002).

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