

Robert Philip has a new book out – with its own musical accompaniment

You will need a really big stocking to put this book in, but it is a good recommendation for the music lover in your life.

We spoke to Robert Philip who lives here in Edinburgh and is a regular contributor to BBC Radio 3 music talks as well as the author of two previous books.

Robert worked as an academic with Open University for many years and his new book is a huge one at 1000 words long, with in-depth exploration of four hundred works by sixty eight composers.

He said : “Very often I think that some of the writing on music is patronisingly simple and does not describe the music, or it is rather academic with lots of technical terms. So I have tried to write a book about most of the orchestral repertoire which anybody who is interested in classical music or who loves music can understand.”

The book is arranged in A-Z formation – actually from Bach to Webern.

Robert explains : “I write a little introduction about the composer, not too much of a biography but enough background to try to understand how the composers ticked, how they were regarded in their own time, what their reputation has been since.

“Then I take each of the most important orchestral works by each composer and I go through each one trying to lead listeners through. If somebody puts on a CD or is going to a concert I try to describe what happens in the music. I try to

get them to think of it as a journey to use a cliché, working out where the peaks and troughs are.

“It is so much like walking through a landscape this kind of music.”

Robert’s publisher Yale University Press has created a Spotify playlist of his top picks. [Click here.](#)

Robert agreed with me that it is fascinating that no two composers write the same music. But he explained : “Not only do they not compose the same tune, although they can seem to be quoting from each other, but their fingerprints are different. It is just like looking at a face. You would think that there aren’t enough elements in what makes up a face to produce so many distinct people and it is the the same with composers and the sounds they make with the orchestra.

“Ravel once said that if a composer did not know what to do they should take a work by a great composer and try to imitate it. In the way you imitate it you will display your own individuality. So somebody can set out with someone else’s work as a model but it is completely distinct.”

You can listen to our interview with Robert here :



ROBERT PHILIP

**THE
CLASSICAL
MUSIC LOVER'S
COMPANION
TO ORCHESTRAL MUSIC**

