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Bach's Goldberg Variations



Synopsis

Johann Gottlieb Goldberg is a young servant in the employ of Count Keyserlingk. A talented musician, the boy secretly practices playing the harpsichord at night. When the count discovers Goldberg one evening, he challenges Goldberg to combine all the harpsichord music he's learned--and to throw in a riddle. In a panic, Goldberg turns to Johann Sebastian Bach for the perfect piece of music to appease the count. Stylized illustrations include elements from the baroque period. For families, teachers, and curious music lovers of all ages.

Book Information

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Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

Kindergarten-Grade 3-This fictional account surrounding the composition and naming of one of Bach's most famous musical works tells the story of Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, an orphan who is one of the composer's students. When the boy becomes a servant for Count Keyserlingk, he has no time to practice during the day, so he practices in the middle of the night. One night, the Count hears him and urges him to learn a new piece every week; first one filled with energy, then a canon, then a piece "with everything." Desperate, the boy turns to his teacher, who plays his "Variations," a complex composition that has a musical "riddle" hidden within it. The child practices it faithfully and by the end of the week, he plays it for the Count, who is so delighted that he names Goldberg the Court's official harpsichordist and often calls out to him, "Goldberg! Play your variations!" A note

explains that the origins of the piece are unclear, but it is known that Bach visited the count in Dresden in 1741 and shortly thereafter Goldberg began playing this composition. This accessible and readable story will lead young readers to find out more about both Bach and his young student. The watercolor illustrations, filled with period touches, give the lad an appealing personality as he struggles with his chores and his music. The four cherubs who adorn many of the pages add to the 18th-century tone as they echo both the sentiments and the music on the page.-Jane Marino, Bronxville Public Library, NY Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

K-Gr. 3. Count Keyserlingk is brought to a church in Gdansk, Poland, by Bach in 1737 to hear a young orphan named Goldberg play the organ. Bach asks the count to care for the boy, who is placed in the count's household and cadges time at the harpsichord when he can. When the sleepless count hears the boy practicing late one night, he asks him to play something "that makes your heart pound and your fingers race." The boy doesn't know anything like that, and the count gives him a week to learn something. In desperation, Goldberg goes to Bach, who imparts quite a bit of musical knowledge about the variations he offers. Goldberg becomes the official harpsichordist, a kitchen boy no longer. The candy-colored ink-and-watercolor illustrations are a bit stiff, with many little cupids in diapers flitting about. But the story is wonderfully told in the tropes and manner of a folktale. A CD is provided, and children may enjoy picking out all the things in the Goldberg Variations that Bach wants us to hear. An informative author's note gives the history behind the story. GraceAnne DeCandido Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Disappointed. All the reviews describe Cd included, however, that is for an out of print edition. If looking for the CD make sure the printing is prior to 2015 on all the Celenza books and verify with seller.

Doesn't include the CD.

My third grade music classes loved this story. The recording is high quality and the story well-written. I started with the author's note at the back of the book, as I think this helps kids understand the historical fiction genre a bit better. Great class material! The Rhapsody in Blue book is also excellent (I've used that with 6th graders) and the recording there is absolutely amazing!

The book tells the story of Bach's Goldberg Variations with the emphasis not on Bach but on a orphan who plays Bach's piece and on a count who listens to the orphan. The CD is a very helpful companion.

I love Anna Celenza's books. I am not sure why she chose the Goldberg Variations instead of a better known piece by Bach, but the story and illustrations are high quality.

Another in Celenza's fabulous series on famous composers and their works. We own the whole set. A wonderful classroom or family resource.

I came across this book only because I was searching the internet for a John Kamitsuka recording of the Variations as a gift, only to find that it was out of stock everywhere I looked. I'm very pleased to have come across this package -- the book's a wonderful bonus!

The book is good, story is well written, and it comes with a music CD. When I bought it I misunderstood and thought it was an audiobook that the kids could listen to, but it was just samples of music, not the actual story.

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