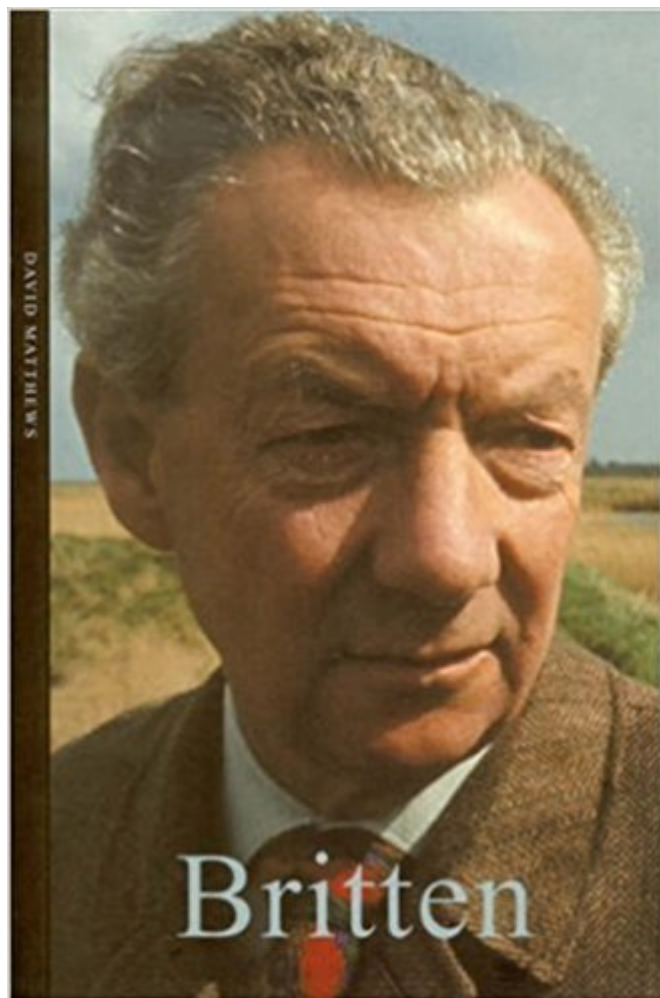


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Britten (Life&Times Series)



Synopsis

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) was the most prolific and celebrated English composer of the mid-20th century. Britten shot to international fame with his operas, which are considered the finest English operas since those of Henry Purcell in the 17th century. He was also an outstanding pianist and conductor.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Benjamin Britten's music, often simple and sparsely scored, incorporates elements from Mahler, Wagner, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg but proclaims an individual style. Britten (1913-76) capably composed for string quartet, solo and choral voices, and chamber and large orchestras. His best-known works include the operas *Turn of the Screw*, *Billy Budd*, *Albert Herring*, and *Peter Grimes*; the orchestral variations called *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*; and the largest expression of his pacificism, the *War Requiem*. He and many friends were homosexual, and homosexual poets, such as Auden, contributed words for songs he wrote for his partner, tenor Peter Pears. Matthews, a composer himself, worked with Britten as a copyist and learned much from him. He concentrates on the music in synopses of the operas and brief analyses of the instrumental music. In passing, he notes Britten's propensity to depression, major events in his personal life, his working associates, and his music's maturation over the years. Matthews covers both music and life very concisely yet thoroughly and engagingly. Alan Hirsch

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