



Perfect Pitch: A Life Story

Nicolas Slonimsky

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A man of untiring energy and humor, Nicolas Slonimsky has led a long and accomplished musical life, and he remains today, in his nineties, a vital presence in American music. He has pursued four distinct careers: as a pianist, as a composer, as a pioneering conductor who introduced the works of such composers as Ives, Varese, and Cowell, and as a musical lexicographer who has achieved world-wide recognition, particularly as editor of the highly-respected *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, a reference work renowned for its highly imaginative, lively, and gem-like entries.

In *Perfect Pitch*, his fast-paced and often hilarious autobiography, Slonimsky recounts in fascinating detail a life that spans the whole of twentieth-century music, ranging from his childhood in St. Petersburg, where he studied piano with his illustrious aunt, Isabelle Vengerova, to his years as secretary and "piano pounder" to Serge Koussevitzky, to his present career as musical lexicographer. He describes the extraordinary accomplishments of members of his family; Russia before, during, and after the Revolution; his successful appearances as conductor in Paris, Berlin, and New York, as well as his fall from grace at the Hollywood Bowl; the whimsical pleasures of lexicographical detective work; unexpected fame and fortune as a game show contestant; and much more. Along the way, the reader meets famous personalities as seen through Slonimsky's eyes, including Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, Sergei Prokofiev, Leonard Bernstein, John Cage, and Frank Zappa.

Filled with illuminating anecdotes, *Perfect Pitch* captures through wit, spice, and irreverence an extraordinary life.

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