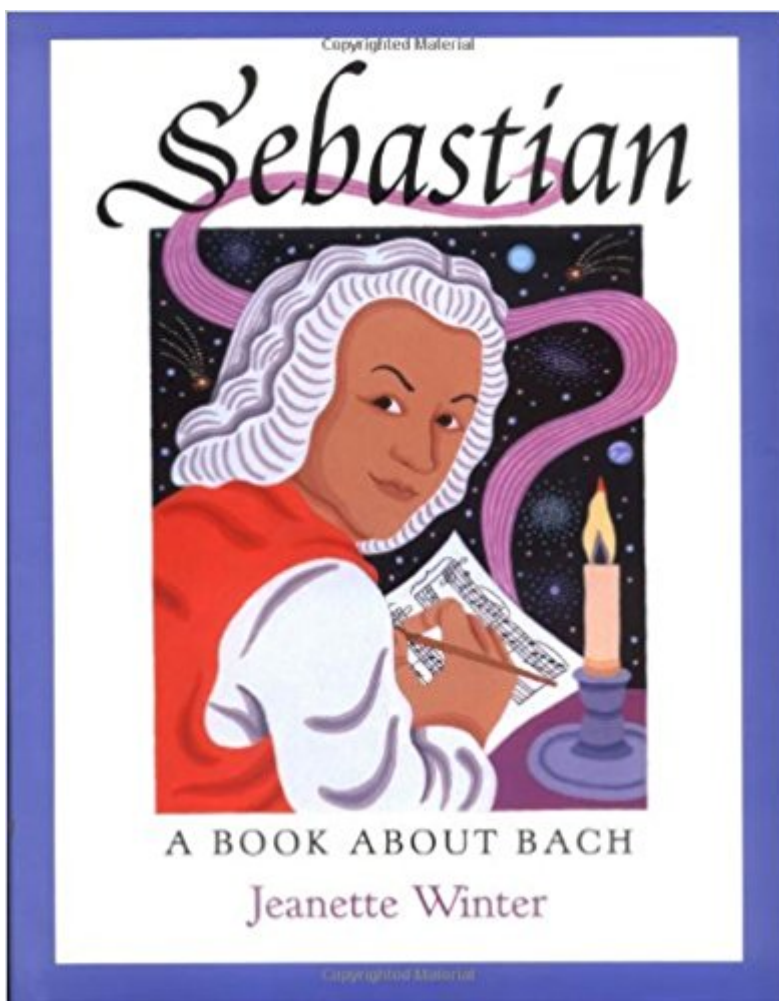


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# Sebastian: A Book About Bach



## Synopsis

A long time ago, a boy named Sebastian was born into a family of musicians. He heard music everywhere, especially in his own head, and he wrote down what he heard. Sebastian married, raised a family, and wrote more than a thousand pieces of music. He also created a little book of music especially for his wife, Anna Magdalena, so that in the evenings the whole family could make music together. Hundreds of years after his death, Bach's music is heard and played all over the world. Many people think it is some of the most glorious music ever written. And today young students--like Bach's own children--can learn to play the music from Anna Magdalena's notebook.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD780L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 40 pages

Publisher: Harcourt Children's Books; 1st edition (March 1, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 015200629X

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Product Dimensions: 10.8 x 8.3 x 0.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 15 ounces

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #476,860 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Music > History #42 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Music > Classical #124 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Musical

Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

Winter sets a mythic backdrop for her picture book biography as she shows the lineage of the esteemed composer: "In the days of castles and kings,/ the birds listened/ when Vitus Bach played his cittern." While her profile of Georgia O'Keeffe in *My Name Is Georgia* was grounded in the details of the landscapes that so moved the artist, here Winter's distinctive narration eschews the anecdotal and informal, and therefore distances readers from the subject: "The music filled the church like thunder./ Angels listened." Winter's signature acrylic paintings, evocative of folk art, also take on an other-worldly aspect: dramatic black backgrounds and silhouettes set off the many

patterns of clouds, stars, trees, rooftops, cobblestones. Winter casts the angelic audience smiling upon Bach from the firmament in a far more favorable light than the "unruly boys" Bach tutors and the "fidgety choirboys" at the church where Bach plays the organ. Readers who prefer an idealized portrait will be well served by this unusual, if somewhat elusive, book. Ages 5-8. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

PreSchool-Grade 3-As she did so effectively in *My Name Is Georgia* (Harcourt, 1998), *Diego* (Knopf, 1994), and *Josefina* (Harcourt, 1996), Winter combines a spare text and colorful illustrations to capture her subject's personality. In a folkloric tone, she presents the outlines of the composer's youth, family, marriage, and work. The author clearly relates how music dominated Bach's life as compositions filled his head and he worked feverishly to get them down on paper. She also succeeds at conveying the complexity of composition: "He heard one melody for the violin, one for the trumpet, one for the flute, and one for the oboe." Winter's palette is dominated by the blue, teal, and violet that are used to border each page, although within the illustrations, they take on a deeper, more vibrant shade. Waving ribbons of color represent the music throughout the illustrations. Although few details of the composer's life are included, readers will sense his determination to succeed. Most of all, they will understand the importance of his music to the world. Jane Marino, Scarsdale Public Library, NY Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

My 2.5 year old daughter really enjoys this story and shows great interest in Bach's life story and music since we have been reading her this book. Jeanette Winter's books are all so nicely illustrated and I really like the various subjects she has chosen to write about.

Johann Sebastian Bach was born into a family of musicians. All the Bachs played musical instruments, and young Sebastian was no exception. But even more than the joy of playing, Bach loved composing his own music. "Sebastian heard the music in his head. The melodies came fast-as his pen raced over the page, he rarely changed a note. He heard one melody for the violin, one for the trumpet, one for the flute, and one for the oboe. Each instrument had its own voice. And when all the voices sounded at the same time, it was like good friends talking together." Bach married, had twenty children, and settled in Leipzig where he was the church music and choir director. He worked all day teaching his students and playing the organ, and composed all night as "new music filled Sebastian's head." During his life, Bach wrote over one thousand compositions. It is said that even as he took his dying breath, he was composing one last piece..... Jeanette Winter

has written an engaging and informative, introductory picture book biography that brings Bach and his times to life on the page. Her simple, spare, yet eloquent prose is lyrical and poetic, and complemented by her evocative, vibrant, and expressive signature folk art paintings. Together word and art give youngsters a real feeling for the intensity of Bach's great love and devotion to both playing and composing music. Perfect for reading aloud, or for early readers 6-10, Sebastian is a fascinating and entertaining biography that will whet the appetite of budding musicians, and send them out looking for more.

My daughter and I loved this book! It's story is easily understood and the beautiful illustrations are sweet and peaceful and really bring the words to life. While the author did write about Bach's church music, she did not mention his devotion to God. But there are other books about that. This is a book for everyone.

Winter has achieved another perfect picturebook bio for reading aloud (see My Name Is Georgia and Diego Rivera). Simply told, with beautiful language this book is a keeper! Wow, she's an awesome illustrator too! Music teachers across the country should be buying multiple copies for their classrooms! Buy it!

This book is wonderfully written. It tells a mini-story of Bach's life in a very child-friendly way. It touches on his birth (and death) and his religious life. The focus is on Bach - not his religion. The artwork is vibrant and I highly recommend the book.

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