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## Architecture Books Every Library Should Have

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# Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

*Column Editor's Note: A big thank you to reviewer Phillip Powell for offering a witty review of Oxford University Press'*

*The Lives and Times of the Great Composers. Happy reading, everyone! — DV*



Steen, Michael. *The Lives and Times of the Great Composers*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005. 0195222180. 984 pages. \$45.00.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>

Sometimes, a book to be reviewed unexpectedly becomes a book that is sincerely enjoyed by the reviewer. Thought I, "Ah, another music book. Piece of cake." I was immediately enamored of **Steen's** easy-flowing, witty, scholarly writing. He skillfully draws the reader into the world of Europe's composers beginning with **Bach** and **Handel** to the mid-20th Century with **Britten**.


The couplets **Steen** recites in the Preface humorously sum up his attitude toward biography as compared to musicography.

The art of Biography  
Is different from Musicography.  
Musicography is about Cellos  
But Biography is about Fellows.

**Steen** writes biography as a "fellow" who has spent his life as a musician. Not only has he had a long career as an organist in the UK, he is presently (2005) the chairman of the **Royal College of Music Society**.

More or less, **Steen** describes the lives of about 50 European composers. Coverage does vary depending on the overall effect on the

public of the last 250 years. Musical giants such as **Bach, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner**—to name a few—have 30 to 35 pages devoted to their lives. Lesser composers are bundled together in a single chapter. An example of this is titled "Central-European Nationalists: Smetana, Dvorak, Janacek, and Bartok."

What makes this book so compelling is the fact **Steen** really lives up to the little ditty mentioned above. This reviewer is a total novice when it comes to things musical. Music is something to be enjoyed rather than analyzed. The author concentrates on a composer's life rather than his music. The reader is taken through the composer's life in a fair amount of detail. His family life is discussed both during his childhood and during the time if he marries. And if he is not one to go to the altar, then a composer's liaisons are discussed—be they straight or gay. 

## Architecture Books Every Library Should Have

by **Gene Waddell** (College Archivist, College of Charleston) <waddelle@cofc.edu>

This selection of architecture books attempts to represent the best Western buildings and architects in proportion to their merit. These books emphasize design methods, sources of design, types of materials, and methods of construction. They generally treat individual buildings as primary sources in their own right and include design drawings, record drawings, and building accounts. Most have illustrations that show proportions and details well enough to be useful for study. They have permanent value for research, and they deserve to be emulated as models of research and presentation.

Books that are more about history than architecture have been omitted as belonging more to the category of history than to architectural history. I have studied and written about social history, indigenous peoples, and vernacular architecture, and I am well aware of the importance of these subjects for studying the development of architecture. I regret being unable to include books on indigenous and vernacular architecture, but these types of buildings relate more to



anthropology and should be in other lists rather than this one. For example, American Indians produced numerous great monuments, but their buildings were mostly of perishable materials and simple construction with no spaces comparable the best buildings in the history of architecture. I am not among those who consider every igloo better than the Pantheon.

I know of many books better researched, written, illustrated, and produced than some that I have included, but they are about less significant buildings or architects. Such excellent books deserve to be represented in large libraries, but not in all libraries. Vanity press books about living architects deserve the lowest priority for acquisition funds. I hope someone who knows more about Asian architecture than I do will prepare a list similar to this one.

Many titles that are included have been reprinted less well than they were originally printed. It would be ideal to have first editions of every title, but more useful to have editions that can be circulated. Research libraries should, of course, make available copies of key titles in their origi-

nal language when it is other than English, but my list was prepared for the general reader with a serious interest in design and construction rather than for specialists.

This list is intended partly to help create a demand for standard works that are in many cases out-of-print, that have never been made available in English translation, or that have never been made available at a moderate price. All of these titles deserve to be as widely available as possible and to be kept in print indefinitely.

Many great buildings have not had great books written about them. Many deserve to be represented by better books, but in my opinion, all of the books listed have permanent value.

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*continued on page 54*

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*continued on page 56*

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