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Becoming Bach



Synopsis

For Johann Sebastian there was always music. His family had been musicians, or bachs as they were called in Germany, for 200 years. He always wanted to be a bach. As he grew, he saw patterns in everything. Patterns he would turn into melodies and song, eventually growing into one of the most important and celebrated musical composers of all time. This is the story of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Book Information

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

Gr 1-3 In this elegantly composed biography, Johann Sebastian shares his dream of one day following in his family's footsteps and becoming a "bach," that is to say, a musician. For the young dreamer, "there was always music." Fascinated by different musical instruments, from the harpsichord and violin to the flute and organ, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) learns to play them all. After the death of his parents, he goes to live with his older brother, who gives him music lessons, setting the boy on his journey to greatness. Bach is shown seeing colorful patterns in the music he eagerly copies for his brother. Ultimately, he becomes a church organist, and he creates a "sound that would be heard forever." Adorned with musical notes and swirls of color, the acrylic paintings inventively portray Bach's world and his love of music, providing a rich and striking canvas for the first-person narrative. In one poignant illustration, the composer sits on the riverbank

watching gentle raindrops fall. He envisions arrangements of the seven notes on the musical staff in the ripples on the water's surface. On certain pages, unfortunately, the lines of text incorporated into the artwork are lost in the magnificence of the picture. Back matter includes a suggested listening list to enhance young readers' experience of Bach's music. VERDICT A splendid addition to elementary collections. Music lovers will identify with the young composer as they witness his pursuit of his dream. — Linda L. Walkins, Saint Joseph Preparatory High School, Boston

"This beautifully illustrated picture-book biography inspires further exploration into the life of this superlative composer." — Booklist
"An imaginative look at what sparked a musical genius." — Kirkus Reviews

A lovely picture book which gives two biographies of Bach; the first, spread through the entirety of the lush illustrations, in simple lines ("I loved to copy music, but my brother hid the hard music from me. I found it when he was sleeping at night and copied it. ALL of it."), and the second, a formal and detailed history of his life all on one page, found at the back of the book. In this book, you are hearing the thoughts and recollections of Bach. First, you see him as a baby surrounded by a family tree of musicians ("bachs" in Germany, apparently). Then he is a toddler surrounded by musicians engaged in making music on cellos, violins, basses, and lutes. As a youngster, he learns to play the harpsichord, trumpet, violin, flute, and organ. Some of the tribulations of his life are touched upon, lightly: "After mother and father went to heaven, I needed to say things but words weren't enough." On one page, you can see (if you're a music reader) that young Johann is copying down the famous Pachelbel canon... I've just now purchased this book, but before that, it was loaned to me by the grandmother of one of my students. Turns out the author/illustrator is my student's uncle! The dedication page is addressed "For three strong women..." and shows a painting of an adorable young girl, the lines of whose face are composed entirely of music staves and notes. This darling girl with a gentle expression strongly resembles my music student... Sorry, you can see that I am quite taken by this book!

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