



Grandmasters of Chess

By Harold C Schonberg

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What makes a great chess player? Mr. Schonberg is explicit: vast memory, imagination, intuition, technique, a healthy body, relative youth, a high degree of visual imagery, and the unyielding determination to win are the prerequisites. Almost always child prodigies, chess geniuses invariably have massive egos. Mr. Schonberg begins with François Philidor, the eighteenth century French-man who laid the foundations for the game as it is played today. Among those who followed are the irascible Howard. Staunton, designer of the chess pieces that are still universally used; Paul Morphy, one of the best natural players who ever lived and one of the most tragic; Emanuel Lasker, the dapper Renaissance man of chess; Alexander Alekhine, an alcoholic "social monster"; Jose Raul Capablanca, "The Chess Machine" who lost only thirty-five out of the seven hundred games in his career; and Bobby Fischer, the ego-crushing enfant terrible who has done more to popularize the game than any other player. Mr. Schonberg's presentation of the lives of the grandmasters is so entertaining, the stories so engrossing, that even readers who are not familiar with chess will be captivated by this gallery of brilliant and unforgettable characters.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Harold C. Schonberg was born November 29, 1915. He had been the senior music critic for The New York Times since 1960 and won the Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Criticism in 1971. He is the author of thirteen books, including *The Great Pianists*, *The Great Conductors*, and *The Lives of the Great Composers*. In the summer of 1972, he covered the Spassky-Fischer chess match for The New York Times, contributing daily dispatches from Reykjavik that had all the drama and immediacy of a war correspondent's reports from the front. Schonberg was born in New York City to David and Mini Schonberg. He had a brother (Stanley) and a sister (Edith). Schonberg graduated from Brooklyn College in 1937, and did graduate studies at New York University. In 1939 he became a record critic for American Music Lover Magazine. During World War II, Schonberg was a first lieutenant in the United States Army Airborne Signal Corps. He had hoped to enlist as a pilot, but was declared pastel-blind (he could distinguish colors but not shadings and subtleties) and was sent to London, where he was a code breaker and later a parachutist. He broke his leg on a training jump before D-Day and could not participate in the Normandy invasion; every member of his platoon who jumped into France was ultimately killed. He remained in the Army until 1946. Schonberg joined The New York Times in 1950. He rose to the post of senior music critic for the Times a decade later. In this capacity he published daily reviews and longer features on operas and classical music on Sundays. He also worked effectively behind the scenes to increase music coverage in the Times and develop its first-rate music staff. Upon his retirement as senior music critic in 1980 he became cultural correspondent for the Times. Schonberg was an extremely influential music writer. Aside from his contributions to music journalism, he published 13 books, most of them on music, including *The Great Pianists: From Mozart to the Present* (1963, revised 1987)—pianists were a specialty of Schonberg—and *The Lives of the Great Composers* (1970; revised 1981, 1997) which traced the lives of major composers from Monteverdi through to modern times. Schonberg died in New York City on July 26, 2003, at the age of 87. In his obituary notice in The New York Times the next day, Allan Kozinn wrote that "as a music critic Harold Schonberg set the standard for critical evaluation and journalistic thoroughness."

Users Review

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