Batten, Jack. *Oscar Peterson: The Man and His Jazz*. Toronto: Tundra Books, 2012. Print.

This Young Adult non-fiction novel explores the life of the legendary Canadian jazz pianist and composer Oscar Peterson. Beginning with an account of Peterson's 1949 breakthrough performance at Carnegie Hall as part of the influential Jazz at the Philharmonic (JATP) concert series, Batten traces the seventy year musical career of Oscar Peterson in an engaging and insightful style. This book seamlessly combines a personal and musical biography of Peterson with a history of the development of jazz from the 1920s to the time of Peterson's death in 2007.

True to the title of the book, Batten's is indeed one about both the man and his music. From Peterson's humble upbringing as the son of immigrants from the West Indies living in poverty in Montréal, the influence of his family on his personal and musical development is a consistent theme throughout the book. Batten does not hold back when describing the social conditions Peterson was operating under throughout his career. The racism Peterson encountered both at home and abroad, as well as the drug use prominent among jazz musicians is honestly explored, as are the personal tragedies Peterson faced, including his failed marriages and consistently poor health.

Peterson's many longtime musical collaborations are explored in great detail, with Batten highlighting the influential performing and recording achievements of his career. From his longtime relationship with the jazz promoter Norman Granz, through the many iterations of Peterson's famous trio, Batten doesn't leave out the details at any point. The addition of multiple photographs, quotes from Peterson's teachers and collaborators, and a selected bibliography and discography add to the historical richness of this title.

This book is recommended to the young adult reader with an interest in jazz history, and the life and accomplishments of one of Canada's most cherished musicians.

Recommended: 3 out of 4 stars
Reviewer: Sean Luyk