

Poussin

DELPHI  CLASSICS

Masters of Art

Nicolas Poussin

(1594-1665)



Contents

The Highlights

The Death of Chione (1622)
Bacchanals: The Andrians (1627)
The Death of Germanicus (1627)
The Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus (1629)
Parnassus (1630)
Plague of Ashdod (1630)
The Adoration of the Golden Calf (1634)
A Dance to the Music of Time (1636)
The Israelites Gathering the Manna (1638)
Et in Arcadia ego (1638)
The Seven Sacraments (1640)
Time Defending Truth against the Attacks of Envy and Discord (1641)
Landscape with Polyphemus (1649)
The Annunciation (1657)
The Four Seasons (1660-1664)
Apollo and Daphne (1664)

The Paintings

The Complete Paintings
Alphabetical List of Paintings

The Drawings

List of Drawings

The Biographies

Poussin (1838) by Arthur Thomas Malkin

Nicolas Poussin (1913) by Louis Gillet

The Delphi Classics Catalogue

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Poussin." The signature is written in a cursive, calligraphic style with a period at the end.

© *Delphi Classics* 2021
Version 1

Masters of Art Series

Nicolas Poussin



By Delphi Classics, 2021

COPYRIGHT

Masters of Art - Nicolas Poussin

First published in the United Kingdom in 2021 by Delphi Classics.

© Delphi Classics, 2021.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form other than that in which it is published.

ISBN: 978 1 80170 000 9

Delphi Classics

is an imprint of

Delphi Publishing Ltd

Hastings, East Sussex

United Kingdom

Contact: sales@delphiclassics.com

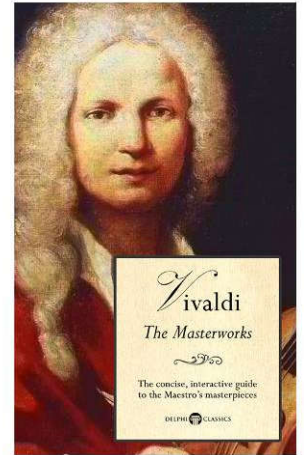
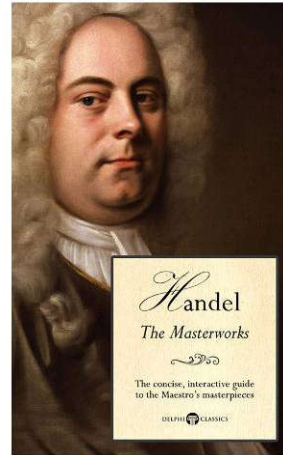
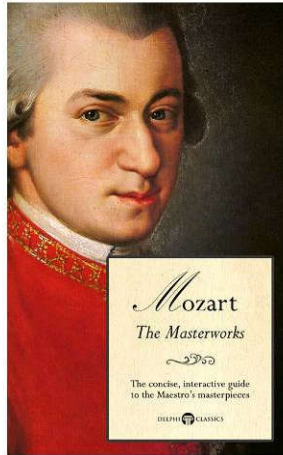
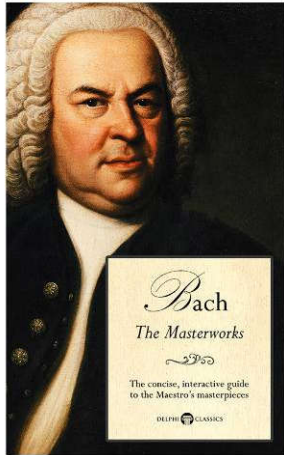
DELPHI  CLASSICS

www.delphiclassics.com

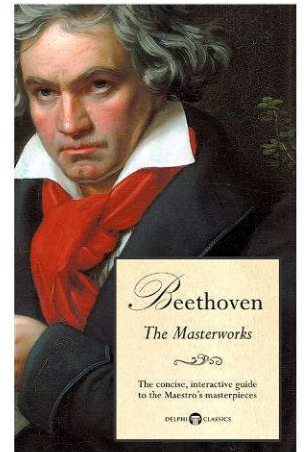
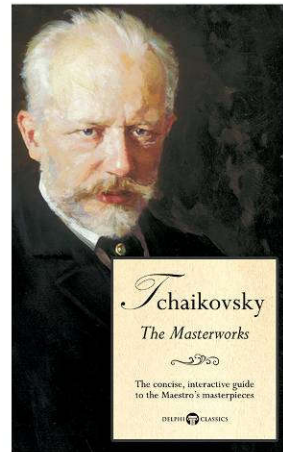
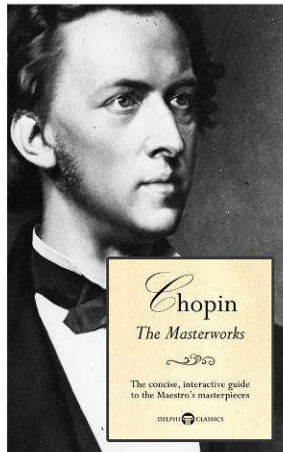
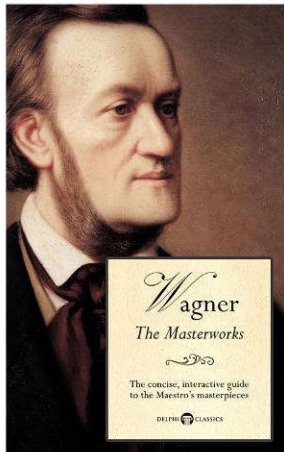
Enjoying our Art series of eBooks? Then try our Classical Music series:

DELPHI GREAT COMPOSERS

Explore the masterpieces with Delphi Classics



A first of its kind in digital print, the *Delphi Great Composers* series allows digital readers to explore the works of the world's greatest composers in comprehensive detail, with interactive links to popular streaming services.



[*Explore the series so far...*](#)

The Highlights



Les Andelys, a commune in the northern French department of Eure, in Normandy — Nicolas Poussin was born near Les Andelys in 1594.

The Highlights



In this section, a sample of Poussin's most celebrated works is provided, with concise introductions, special 'detail' reproductions and additional biographical images.

The Death of Chione (1622)



The leading painter of the classical French Baroque style, Nicolas Poussin was born in 1594, close to the town of Les Andelys in Normandy. He was the son of a nobleman whose fortunes had been dashed in the Wars of Religion. Poussin's early education was mostly devoted to Latin and letters, though from an early age he displayed a talent for art, which in 1611 was encouraged by the arrival of Quentin Varin, an itinerant painter visiting Les Andelys; Varin is now regarded as the great artist's first master. Poussin's later works reveal the influence of Varin, particularly in their storytelling, accuracy of facial expression, fine drapery and vibrant palette.

In spite of his blossoming talent, Poussin's parents were opposed to the prospect of having an artist for a son. Varin was clearly impressed with the capabilities of this precocious young man and urged Poussin to depart for Paris the following year, where he could realise his ambition to become a major artist. Aged eighteen, Poussin took this advice and fled his parents' control.

On arriving at the great metropolis, Poussin studied anatomy, perspective and architecture, working under the instructions of several prominent masters. The most important event of his first stay in Paris was the discovery of the Royal art collections, open to him via his friendship with Alexandre Courtois, the valet de chambre of Marie de Medicis. In this esteemed gallery, Poussin saw for the first time engravings of the works of Giulio Romano and especially of Raphael, whose work had a significant influence on his development. According to Giovanni Pietro Bellori, Poussin's friend and first biographer, the painter considered himself at this early point of his career as firmly placed in the 'School of Raphael'. So inspired was he by Raphael's achievements, Poussin made two unsuccessful attempts to reach Rome in the early 1620's.

It was an opportune time to arrive in Paris, during the regency of Marie de Medici, when art was flourishing as a result of the Royal commissions for the decoration of her palace, and by the meteoric rise of wealthy Paris merchants, seeking to showcase their wealth with the purchase of classically inspired artworks. There was also a substantial market for paintings in the redecoration of churches outside Paris destroyed during the French Wars of Religion, having finally come to an end. However, Poussin could not afford to be a member of the powerful guild of master painters and sculptors, which had a monopoly on most commissions and brought lawsuits against ambitious outsiders trying to break into the profession. The young artist would have to bide his time...

One fortunate connection he did make was with Giambattista Marino, the court poet to Marie de Medici, who employed him to make a series of fifteen drawings, eleven illustrating the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and four illustrating battle scenes from Roman history. The "Marino drawings", now held in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle, are among the earliest identifiable works to the hand of Poussin.

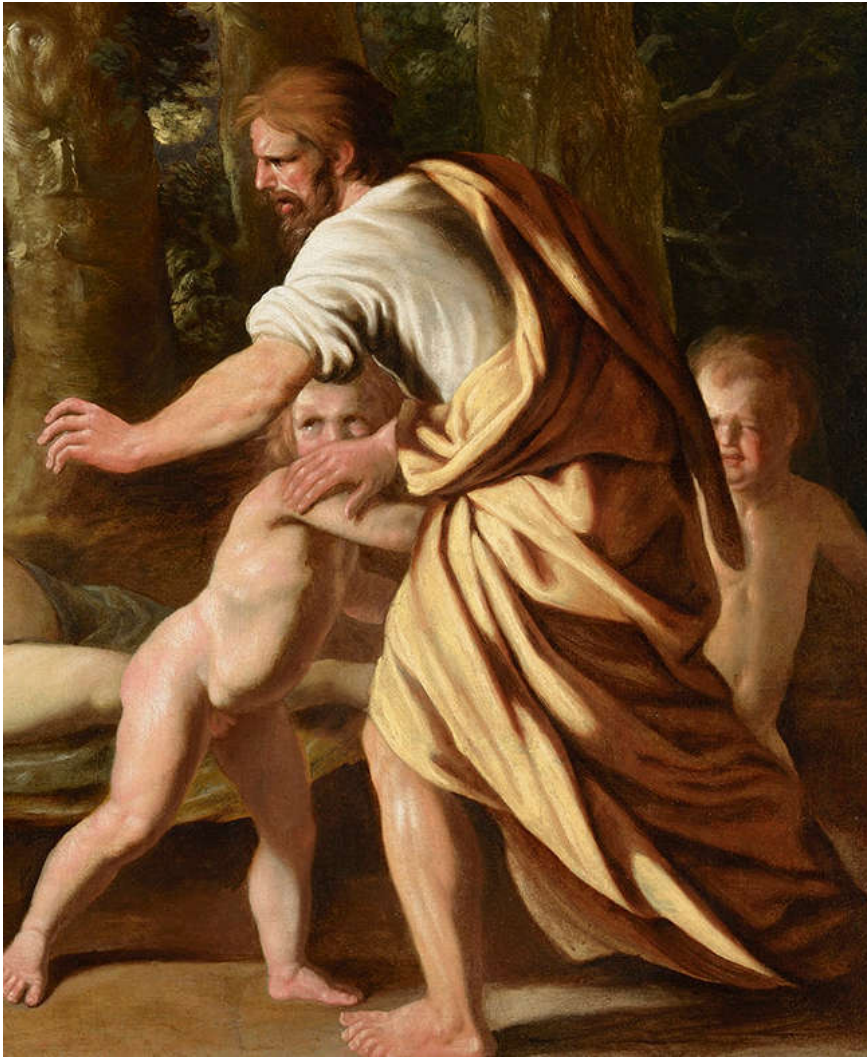
During this formative period of his apprenticeship, Poussin completed several major commissions. *The Death of Chione* (1622) is his first known surviving work in oil, which he produced during a stay in Lyon, while on one of his unsuccessful attempts to reach Italy. It portrays the death of Chione, lover of both Hermes and Apollo. The artist had already drawn the scene from Ovid's collection of myths for

the Marino commission. It was an interesting choice for a young artist, the story having been rarely treated in painting before. Ovid tells us how Chione was a maiden of such rare beauty that Apollo and Mercury fell in love with her. In time she gives birth to twins, Autolycus and Philammon, each of whom has one of the aforementioned gods as their fathers. As with many of these tales, there is a hubristic twist. Led to a moment of senseless pride, Chione boasts that she has more attractions than Diane, rousing the vengeance of the wrathful goddess, who pierces her tongue with an arrow, preventing her from speaking heresy again. The maiden's uncle Ceyx rushes to her assistance, his dramatic form dominating the right section of the canvas. Chione's father likewise tries to help his daughter and he manages to escape death by his transformation into a hawk by Apollo, illustrated in the left distance.

Poussin places the sensuous body of the girl at the centre of the composition, engaging our immediate attention. Her arms are twisted in a painful and unnatural posture, the light flooding across the corpse with dramatic emphasis, increasing the drama. Ironically, Chione is lighted by the rays of the lunar goddess, her murderer, as her life-like flesh stirs sympathy in the viewer. The tragic scene is heightened by the weeping twin children, whose tear-filled faces stress the inevitable tragedy, as they strive to save the onrushing Ceyx from further persecution. With echoes of Raphael's 1507 panel painting of *The Deposition*, Poussin's *Death of Chione* may be a work of youthful bravado, but there is no mistaking the early signs of rare genius in the composition. The use of chiaroscuro and foreshortening and the replication of flesh and other painterly details all confirm the artist's ability to express emotion in a striking and convincing manner.

The painting had in fact been lost for many years and was only rediscovered in recent times. With the help of patrons of the Saint-Pierre Museum Club, the Heritage Fund and the Rhône-Alpes Region, the canvas was purchased in 2016 by the Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon. Recent research has revealed that *The Death of Chione* was likely commissioned by Father Bernardin, Silvio I (1613-1686), during his time in Lyon. In 1691 it came into the possession of the distinguished Reynons family of Lyon, who were silk weavers originating from Milan. Impressively, the painting had remained within the family's collection for over three hundred years, until its purchase by the Lyons gallery.





Detail



Detail



Detail



Detail



Detail



Poussin's drawing of the subject, graphite underdrawing, pen and brown ink, brown wash, 1622, Windsor Castle



'The Deposition' by Raphael, Galleria Borghese, Rome, 1507



Self portrait of Raphael, aged approximately 23 — Raphael would be the most influential artist in Poussin's development of style.

DELPHI  CLASSICS

End of Sample