

A study apiece by Gerhard Josten and co-authors. Foreword by John Roycroft. 280pp Edition Jung. ISBN 978-3-933648-38-9. 29.80 euros from www.schach-agentur.de

The editor's aim as stated in his introduction was "to provide a comprehensive insight into the artistic work of renowned endgame composers" by giving each participating composer an opportunity to explain one of his compositions and tell the reader something about himself. There are 70 contributors, from Afek to Zinar, though it must be assumed that not every invitation was accepted. The absence of, to name just two, Oleg Pervakov and Yuri Bazlov, is slightly disappointing. The content is pleasingly varied. Some composers present their artistic credo, or explain how they became involved in the study world. A number of reasons are given for the choice of study. Some simply present their personal favourite, others a study showing a favourite theme, or one which proved especially challenging to compose. Some trace the development of a study from earlier compositions, whether by themselves or others. There are studies which unite the ideas shown in other studies. The contributions which detail the process of composition are of great interest. The reader learns some history, both of the study as a genre and its development within specific countries. One study reconstructs an epic battle from Italian history on the chessboard. The composers themselves are a diverse bunch. Many, as you would expect, are strong players, and a few are well-known problemists who have dipped a toe in the world of study composition. The works presented range from the simple-but-neat to the highly complex. There are a few game positions and problems quoted, and even a couple of unorthodox studies.

The book is a fine collection of studies in its own right and a splendid advertisement for the richness of chess. With such a variety of personalities represented, a wide range of interesting and sometimes strongly held views are expressed. The ongoing debate about the role of endgame tablebases in the composing process gets a full airing, with the main points of contention well covered. For a fascinating insight into the contemporary study world this book is highly recommended.