



Words On Music: From Addison To Barzun

Jack Sullivan

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For centuries, distinguished writers have taken on the challenge of describing great music and its significance in their lives. From Joseph Addison to Virgil Thomson, writers in and out of the music field have used their most vivid language to conjure the sounds and emotions of the music that mattered most to them. Yet until this book, no single volume has ever collected the best of this writing in one place. Scattered in magazines, essay collections, and program notes, this literature is largely unknown to the general reader—who often thinks that music essays are for musicians only—and even to the musician—who often reads only narrow specialty publications.

Words on Music is thus the first book of its kind. Covering instrumental and vocal music from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, it features essays distinguished by their literary quality, their readability, and their appeal to a wide audience. Included is writing by novelists, essayists, composers, performers, cultural historians, and others who have written about music with precision and passion.

Here is George Bernard Shaw on Handel, Albert Schweitzer on Bach, Glenn Gould on Scarlatti, E. T. A. Hoffman on Beethoven, Heinrich Heine on Rossini, Aaron Copland on Mozart, George Eliot on Wagner, G. K. Chesterton on Gilbert and Sullivan, Leonard Bernstein on Mahler, Guy Davenport on Ives, Pierre Boulez on Stravinsky, Ned Rorem on Ravel, and more than fifty others. Here also are essays on broader topics—Joseph Addison on opera, Anthony Burgess on music and literature, Jacques Barzun on music criticism, H. L. Mencken on "Music an Sin"—as well as musical memoirs by such masters of the genre as Hector Berlioz, Leigh Hunt, and Ethel Smyth.

Words on Music is a uniquely literary and readable book on music. With its wide range of tones and voices, it is ideal for the general reader, the humanities educator, and the musical specialist. Each article is introduced by an informative headnote on the writer and subject. In addition, the volume offers a bibliography with valuable clues for further reading and a substantial essay introducing the elusive art of writing about music.



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