

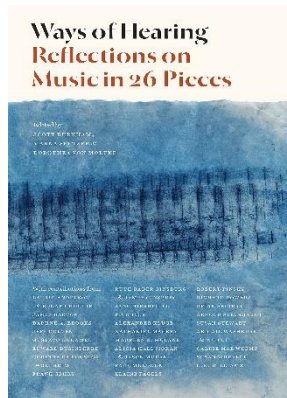


We Read - Ways of Hearing: Reflections on Music in 26 Pieces

Edited by Scott Burnham, Marna Seltzer, Dorothea Von Moltke, 2021, 195 pages

Reviewed by GPFS Member BJ Nicoletti

Rating: 5 flutes out of 5.



“We challenged these remarkable souls to write about a specific piece of concert music, a quality or genre of music, or a way of being with music that has meant much to them. We offered them the option of doing so through an interview, an essay, a poem, or even some sort of nonverbal creative expression.” (editors)

[Ways of Hearing](#) is a very unique, embraceable collection of personal reflections on music from a range of “creatives.” We hear from the poet, supreme court justice, photographer, writer, journalist, musician, music critic, composer, physicist, and general scholar. They were asked, simply, to think about the topic of music and share what comes to mind. What results is a tableau of music that spans a great variety of genres, cultures, and time periods. The reader, pleasantly, just doesn’t know what to expect in the next chapter. It is a perfect book to pick up and set down - dancing in and out of different balances of creative, intellectual, affectionate and at times spiritual wonderment. Read on to hear some of this reader’s favorites!

This reader's favorites include:

- World famous mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton reflecting on hearing Chopin's Ballad No. 2 for the first time. This artist grew up in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains listening to the radio in the dark and found her way to a world stage, inspired by much, but heavily by her early connection to this single piece - quote below. She also describes a cosmic connection to the "soundscape" of Nirvana.

My eyes shot open with the sound of the screaming piano flooding those earphones. The change in mood jolted me out of any hope of sleep I might have had. My heart pounded as I absorbed the jarring shift in musical storytelling. The right hand of the piano sounded like a wild animal desperately trying to escape entrapment, and I listened as the left hand seemed to work to soothe.... I listened to the rest of the piece with every fiber of my being, as if it were the last sound I would ever hear.

(Jamie Barton, from "On Chopin's Ballade No. 2, Op. 38)

- Justice Ginsberg's reflections on "music as a family affair" from one generation to the next and her passionate attraction to opera.

The Don I heard most often was Cesare Siepi...you could understand why any woman would be overwhelmed by him. He was a wonderful singer and a very handsome man. Every time I go to the Don and someone else is singing, I remember Cesare Siepi...he was the ultimate Don.... The sexiest duet in all of opera is between Zerlina and the Don. It is "La ci darem la mano."

(Ruth Bader Ginsburg, from Music as a Family Affair)

- Carrie Mae Weem's, the first African American woman visual artist to have a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, photography essay on Sam Cooke's music "A Change is Gonna Come." The images do invite the reader to not only see but hear the plea and hope for change. Suggestion - listen to the recording of Sam Cooke singing it while looking at the images. <https://youtu.be/Z5zDRtEC0x0>

*It's been too hard living, but I'm afraid to die
Cause I don't know what's up there, beyond the sky
It's been a long, long time coming
But I know a change is going to come, oh yes it will.*

(Sam Cooke, 1963)

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