



Music, Modernity, and God: Essays in Listening

By Jeremy Begbie

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When the story of modernity is told from a theological perspective, music is routinely ignored - despite its pervasiveness in modern culture and the manifold ways it has been intertwined with modernity's ambivalent relation to the Christian God. In conversation with musicologists and music theorists, in this collection of essays Jeremy Begbie aims to show that the practices of music and the discourses it has generated bear their own kind of witness to some of the pivotal theological currents and counter-currents shaping modernity. Music has been deeply affected by these currents and in some cases may have played a part in generating them. In addition, Begbie argues that music is capable of yielding highly effective ways of addressing and moving beyond some of the more intractable theological problems and dilemmas which modernity has bequeathed to us.

Music, Modernity, and God includes studies of Calvin, Luther, and Bach, an exposition of the intriguing tussle between Rousseau and the composer Rameau, and an account of the heady exaltation of music to be found in the early German Romantics. Particular attention is paid to the complex relations between music and language, and the ways in which theology, a discipline involving language at its heart, can come to terms with practices like music, practices which are coherent and meaningful but which in many respects do not operate in language-like ways.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Begbie effectively and thoroughly examines the natures of both verbal and doctrinal languages that communicate and miscommunicate. Meanwhile, his discussions branch out to various disciplinary areas and create further applications to contrasting concepts, such as cosmology and anthropology, confinement and freedom, discovery and inventiveness, creation and human culture, eternity and transience, metaphysics and metalinguistics. The perspicacity to explore and expand the capacity of musical sound and its semantic applications certainly carries a huge impact on contemporary theological discourses... This is the perimeter and purpose of this scholarly research that, at the same time, is an introduction leading to a farther and wider study."--*Artistic Theologian*

"Although Begbie advances sophisticated and sometimes technical arguments, his lucid prose rewards those who heed the invitation to listen: the theologian, the musician, and the pastor alike." --*Transpositions*

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About the Author

Jeremy Begbie is the inaugural holder of the Thomas A. Langford Research Professorship in Theology at Duke Divinity School, North Carolina, and founding Director of Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts. He teaches systematic theology, and specializes in the interface between theology and the arts. His particular research interest is the interplay between music and theology. He is also Senior Member at Wolfson College, Cambridge, and an Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty of Music at the University of Cambridge. He is author of a number of books, including *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts*; *Theology, Music and Time*, and *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* which won the Christianity Today 2008 Book Award in the Theology/Ethics Category. A professionally trained and active musician, Begbie has taught widely in the UK and North America, and delivered performance-lectures across the world.

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