



The Triumph of Music: The Rise of Composers, Musicians and Their Art

By Tim Blanning

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The Triumph of Music: The Rise of Composers, Musicians and Their Art By Tim Blanning

A distinguished historian chronicles the rise of music and musicians in the West from lowly balladeers to masters employed by fickle patrons, to the great composers of genius, to today's rock stars. How, he asks, did music progress from subordinate status to its present position of supremacy among the creative arts? Mozart was literally booted out of the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg "with a kick to my arse," as he expressed it. Yet, less than a hundred years later, Europe's most powerful ruler—Emperor William I of Germany—paid homage to Wagner by traveling to Bayreuth to attend the debut of *The Ring*. Today Bono, who was touted as the next president of the World Bank in 2006, travels the world, advising politicians—and they seem to listen.

The path to fame and independence began when new instruments allowed musicians to showcase their creativity, and music publishing allowed masterworks to be performed widely in concert halls erected to accommodate growing public interest. No longer merely an instrument to celebrate the greater glory of a reigning sovereign or Supreme Being, music was, by the nineteenth century, to be worshipped in its own right. In the twentieth century, new technological, social, and spatial forces combined to make music ever more popular and ubiquitous.

In a concluding chapter, Tim Blanning considers music in conjunction with nationalism, race, and sex. Although not always in step, music, society, and politics, he shows, march in the same direction.

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Editorial Review

Review

Drawing on examples ranging across the last four centuries, Blanning traces the path of music from its place as servant to its current position of supremacy over all other arts in terms of status, influence, and material rewards. The author intermixes popular and classical music and musicians, jumping back and forth from one era to another, from the concert hall to the iPod, to demonstrate how music has reinforced various social and political agendas...This is not intended to be a history of music; it is a brilliantly written history of the steady growth of the power of music and its performers. (Timothy J. McGee *Library Journal* 2008-10-15)

This is a provocative and amusing book. Blanning describes not the triumph of good music but the development of Western music generally, from an aristocratic court frill to a powerful social force. (*The Atlantic* 2008-12-01)

Very entertaining...[Blanning] makes [his case] with grace, humor and a mountain of fascinating detail. (Peter Keepnews *New York Times Book Review* 2009-01-04)

This isn't a history of music but a work connecting music to politics and culture to show how it becomes integral to the souls of specific nations and groups. Music, it implies, will remain when other arts fade away. (Alan Hirsch *Booklist* 2008-11-01)

The Triumph of Music succeeds in its goal of describing music as an instrument of cultural and political change...Perhaps the most interesting chapter of *The Triumph of Music* is the one concerning music's mobilizing and liberating power in politics and culture. Blanning elegantly describes music's influential role in the rise of nationalism...*The Triumph of Music* is certainly topical--in both senses of the word. It succeeds as cultural history and has the added attraction of being full of good stories told in an amusingly irreverent style. (James Penrose *New Criterion* 2009-02-01)

The position of musicians in society and the mechanisms by which they reach their audiences are explored in fascinating depth. The book is not about music itself, but about its creators and consumers. Blanning evokes the life of the eighteenth-century musician with marvelous clarity; Haydn is particularly well treated, and the shifting status of musicians in the revolutionary period is held under the historian's sharp gaze. As a social history of music in the period from Bach to Wagner, the book is penetrating and richly documented. There are fascinating nuggets of information throughout, illuminating but not detracting from the chronicle of musicians and the responses of audiences, politicians, and critics. (Hugh MacDonald *Times Literary Supplement* 2009-02-27)

The Triumph of Music bulges with interesting facts and factoids...Blanning's is a more-often-than-not fascinating and impassioned book. (Peter Jacobi *Herald-Times* 2009-03-22)

The book is full of illuminating, often surprising and usually arresting details, as well as some excellent illustrations. If you would like to know why Louis XIV built Versailles and how he made it the center of the universe, why brass bands became the excitement of the working class, and how melody could inspire and even create nations, you will find riches in these pages. (Elaine Sisman *New Leader* 2008-11-01)

Review

Trenchant, wise and richly ironic, Tim Blanning's book travels spectacular distances between Plato and Elton John, Baroque liturgy and Robbie Williams, opera seria and internet downloads. With a masterly eye for detail he explains why music and audiences are interdependent and reveals the enduring potency of music as a sovereign art. (Jonathan Keates, author of *The Siege of Venice*)

About the Author

Tim Blanning is Professor of Modern European History at the University of Cambridge and the author of *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648–1815*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bernard McLaren:

Playing with family in the park, coming to see the ocean world or hanging out with close friends is thing that usually you will have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try thing that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not feeling tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition details. Even you love The Triumph of Music: The Rise of Composers, Musicians and Their Art, you may enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't obtain it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

Valerie Israel:

The Triumph of Music: The Rise of Composers, Musicians and Their Art can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this guide has good vocabulary that could increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to set every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing The Triumph of Music: The Rise of Composers, Musicians and Their Art although doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest along with based confirm resource data that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can drawn you into new stage of crucial contemplating.

John Carroll:

On this era which is the greater man or who has ability to do something more are more precious than other. Do you want to become one among it? It is just simple way to have that. What you are related is just spending your time almost no but quite enough to experience a look at some books. One of the books in the top checklist in your reading list is usually The Triumph of Music: The Rise of Composers, Musicians and Their Art. This book which can be qualified as The Hungry Slopes can get you closer in getting precious person. By looking upwards and review this book you can get many advantages.

David Blunt:

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