

# CULTURE AND VALUES

A SURVEY OF THE WESTERN HUMANITIES

VOLUME I

LAWRENCE CUNNINGHAM • JOHN REIC  
SECOND EDITION

SCC BOOKSTORE 121791

CULTURES & VALUES VOL I  
CUNNINGHAM

0-03-026589-4



9 780030 265891



90000

NO REFUND IF  
LABEL REMOVED

38 65



# Culture and Values

---

A SURVEY OF THE WESTERN HUMANITIES

---

VOLUME I

Lawrence S. Cunningham  
University of Notre Dame

John J. Reich

SECOND EDITION

*Publisher* Charlyce Jones Owen  
*Acquisitions Editor* Janet Wilhite  
*Picture Research* Elsa Peterson  
*Project Management* York Production Services  
*Production/Manufacturing Coordinator* Kathleen Ferguson  
*Cover Design* David Harper  
*Composition/Color Separations* York Graphic Services  
*Printing and Binding* R. R. Donnelley & Sons

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cunningham, Lawrence.  
Culture and values : a survey of the Western humanities/Lawrence  
Cunningham, John Reich.—2nd ed.  
p. cm.  
Includes bibliographical references.  
ISBN 0-03-026589-4 (v. 1).—ISBN 0-03-026592-4 (v. 2)  
1. Civilization, Occidental. 2. Europe—Intellectual life.  
I. Reich, John. II. Title.  
CB245.C86 1990  
909'.09821—dc20 89-19989  
CIP

ISBN: 0-03-026589-4

Copyright © 1990, 1982 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Requests for permission to make copies of any part of the work should be mailed to: Copyrights and Permissions Department, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., Orlando, Florida 32887.

*Address Editorial Correspondence to:* 301 Commerce Street, Suite 3700, Fort Worth, TX 76102

*Address Orders to:* 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, FL 32887  
1-800-782-4479, or 1-800-433-0001 (in Florida)

Printed in the United States of America

0 1 2      0 3 9      9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.  
The Dryden Press  
Saunders College Publishing

Literary acknowledgments appear on page 416.  
Photographic credits appear on pages 417–418.



# Preface

In the first edition of this book we set out our aim: to create a readable and reliable textbook for college and university students in the integrated humanities that would satisfy the needs of the students and the standards of their instructors. We hoped to describe the most important landmarks of Western civilization's cultural heritage as enthusiastically as we could so that students would learn to love and appreciate them as we did when we first studied them ourselves.

We trust that our basic philosophy in preparing this book still shows forth in this new edition. We are still convinced of the need to use a historical approach to the humanities. We still believe that the text should focus fundamentally on the Western tradition, even if we try and remind ourselves that culture is not so neatly packaged. We are unapologetic about our focus on high culture—since that is the heritage which has shaped our civilization, for better or worse. Finally, we have held to our principle of selectivity both because we did not want this book to look like a catalogue and because we feel that fewer things understood well can stand as a springboard for broader understanding. Behind all of these convictions is our strong conviction that any textbook should be the first word and not the final one. We trust in the teacher to explain what we have left unexplained and to speak where we have been silent.

In the nearly ten-year period since the first edition appeared we have enjoyed the contact with students and teachers who have used the books and given us their reactions, generous in their praise and pointed in their criticisms, as they have tried to make our book their own. In that period, as we have predicted in the first preface, we also became aware that deficiencies, omissions, errors of fact, and unsubtle judgments would be found. And so they were. We are grateful for those criticisms just as we were chagrined by our mistakes. We trust that this new edition will respond to those criticisms and suggestions. We have taken them seriously and have tried to be responsive to them.

The decision to do a second edition of the book was made in late 1987 after the entire work was reviewed both by users and those who had no previous acquaintance with it. Their criticisms, our own discussions, and consultations with the Holt editors form the critical background for this second edition. *Culture and Values* is still here, but some significant changes and additions have been made.

In the first place, we have completely rewritten the chapter on the biblical tradition and placed it in a different part of the book to provide a better sense of chronological continuity. Secondly, we have added some boxed features to highlight different areas of cultural importance that we could not adequately treat in the text itself. *The Arts and Invention* talks about technological advances which help the student understand the arts better. Each chapter also has a box relating the contact of the West with other parts of the world; this addition is headed *East Meets West*. In order to personalize the chapters we also have a box entitled *Contemporary Voices* that provides some contact with a “living voice” of the period.

There have also been some editorial shifts in the chapters. In the first edition the primary readings were integrated into the running text. In this edition they are all at the ends of the chapters. We have also redone the end matter of each chapter with updated bibliographies, a pronunciation guide, and some exercises for further student reflection and discussion. We have also greatly expanded the glossary of terms in this edition. These changes were all done in response to the pedagogical needs expressed by our reviewers. It is for that same reason that we rearranged some of the sections in the individual chapters to make matters easier for those who use a team teaching approach in the classroom.

Some sections of the chapters were rewritten for greater clarity. We have also added more material on music, in response to a number of requests. Some readings were changed to provide longer selections or more representative ones. We felt that some of the earlier readings were too short and there were too many of them.

With the addition of so much new material it was necessary to cut the manuscript lest it should end up unmanageably bulky. With a heavy heart we reduced the interludes because instructors told us that they loved to read them but had not the time to present them in class. We have retained some of them because we think they provide a model for students to consider when they work in an interdisciplinary fashion. Likewise, we have cut the final epilogue to the book. Those cuts have been modest ones and we hope that they have not been in places which reflect favorites among our users; we hope, similarly, that the additions will be adequate compensation for those omissions.

We are now left with the happy task of expressing our gratitude to those who have helped us in preparing this second edition.

Jan Widmayer  
Boise State University, Boise, ID  
Dr. Charline Burton  
Central State University, Edmond, OK

Jim Axley  
Rose State College, Norman, OK

Donald Andrews  
Valencia Community College, Orlando, FL

Janice Allen  
Seminole Community College, Sanford, FL

Timothy Ulman  
Palomar College, San Marcos, CA

Kenneth Simonsen  
College of Lake County, Wildwood, IL

Rosemary De Paolo  
Augusta College, Augusta, GA

In addition, the helpful comments given by reviewers of the first edition were most appreciated. Our thanks go to:

Margaret Flansburg  
Central State University, Edmond, OK  
Anna C. Blackman  
Brevard Community College, Melbourne, FL  
Karl Schleunes  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro, NC

Paul Turpen  
Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, NM

Dorothy Corsberg  
Northeastern Jr. College, Sterling, CO

David McKillop  
Grove City College, Grove City, PA

Sylvia White  
Florida Jr. College Kent, Jacksonville, FL

Alma Williams  
Savannah State College, Savannah, GA

Julia Walther  
Grambling University, Ruston, LA  
Arthur Chiasson  
Suffolk University, Boston, MA  
Barbara Kramer  
Santa Fe Community College, Gainesville, FL  
Charles Davis  
Boise State University, Boise, ID

This book began—as did the first stages of the revisions—while we served on the faculty of the Florida State University. We wish to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of Classics and the Department of Religion as well as the Program in Humanities and The Florida State University Study Center in Florence, Italy, for their assistance and their many kindnesses. Lawrence S. Cunningham is now with the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. He is grateful to that department and its chair, Richard McBrien, for unfailing support and collegial atmosphere within which it is possible to write and think.

The staff at Holt, Rinehart and Winston exemplified professionalism and meticulous care in the production of this edition. We would like to single out Karen Dubno, who dealt with two not infrequently recalcitrant authors with a wholesome blend of determination and kindness. If this book deserves any praise at all, a large measure of it must be directed to Karen. Special thanks go to Mary Jo Gregory of York Production Services and Kathy Ferguson of Holt who effectively managed the intricate design and production; Elsa Peterson, for her dedication to the massive task of picture research; Buddy Barkalow, for his expertise in informational processing; Mary Pat Sitlington, for her many creative ideas, so important to the marketing of this book; and to our current editor, Janet Wilhite, who managed to move the office from New York to Fort Worth, and keep the book on schedule and on target.

Finally, we are grateful to all of the teachers and students who have used *Culture and Values* over the years. In a very basic sense, this book is theirs.

LSC  
JJR



# THE ARTS: AN INTRODUCTION

One way to see the arts as a whole is to consider a widespread mutual experience: a church or synagogue service. Such a gathering is a celebration of written literature done, at least in part, in music in an architectural setting decorated to reflect the religious sensibilities of the community. A church service makes use of visual arts, literature, and music. While the service acts as an integrator of the arts, considered separately, each art has its own peculiar characteristics that give it shape.

*Music* is primarily a temporal art, which is to say that there is music when there is someone to play the instruments and sing the songs. When the performance is over, the music stops.

*The visual arts* and *architecture* are spatial arts that have permanence. When a religious service is over people may still come into the building to admire its architecture or marvel at its paintings or sculptures or look at the decorative details of the building.

*Literature* has a permanent quality in that it is recorded in books, although some literature is meant not to be read but to be heard. Shakespeare did not write plays for people to read but for audiences to see and hear performed. Books nonetheless have permanence in the sense that they can be read not only in a specific context but also at one's pleasure. Thus, to continue the religious-service example, one can read the psalms for their poetry or for devotion apart from their communal use in worship.

What we have said about the religious service applies equally to anything from a rock concert to grand opera: artworks can be seen as an integrated whole. Likewise, we can consider these arts separately. After all, people paint paintings, compose music, or write poetry to be enjoyed as discrete experiences. At other times, of course, two arts may be joined when there was no original intention to do so, as when a composer sets a poem to music or an artist finds inspiration in a literary text or, to use a more complex example, when a ballet is inspired by a literary text and is danced against the background of sets created by an artist to enhance both the dance and the text that inspired it.

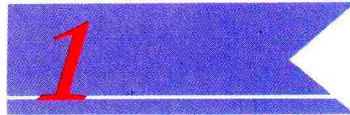
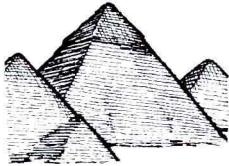
However we view the arts, either separately or as integrated, one thing is clear: they are the product of human invention and human genius. When we speak of *culture* we are not talking about something strange or "highbrow"; we are talking about something that derives from human invention. A jungle is a product of nature, but a garden is a product of culture: human ingenuity has modified the vegetative world.

In this book we discuss some of the works of human culture that have endured over the centuries. We often refer to these works as *masterpieces*, but what does the term mean? The issue is complicated because taste and attitudes change over the centuries. Two hundred years ago the medieval cathedral was not appreciated; it was called Gothic because it was considered barbarian. Today we call such a building a masterpiece. Very roughly we can say that a masterpiece of art is any work that carries with it a surplus of meaning.

Having "surplus of meaning" means that a certain work not only reflects technical and imaginative skill but that its very existence also sums up the best of a certain age, which spills over as a source of inspiration for further ages. As one reads through the history of the Western humanistic achievement it is clear that certain

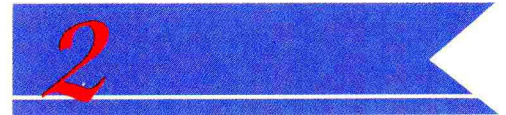
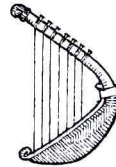
# Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>xii</b>
How to Look at Art	1
How to Listen at Music	3
How to Read Literature	7



## THE BEGINNINGS OF CIVILIZATION 10

<b>The Earliest People and Their Art</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Ancient Egypt</b>	<b>14</b>
The Old and Middle Kingdoms	15
The New Kingdom	18
<i>Contemporary Voices: Love, Marriage, and Divorce in Ancient Egypt</i> 21	
<b>The Cultures of Mesopotamia</b>	<b>21</b>
Sumer	21
<i>The Arts and Invention: The Invention of Writing</i> 23	
Akkadian and Babylonian Culture	26
The Assyrians	27
<b>Aegean Culture in the Bronze Age</b>	<b>27</b>
Cycladic Culture	28
<i>East Meets West: The Indus Valley People</i> 30	
The Excavation of Knossos	30
Life and Art in the Minoan Palaces	31
Schliemann and the Discovery of Mycenae	33
Mycenaean Art and Architecture	35
<b>Summary</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Pronunciation Guide</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Exercises</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Further Reading</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Reading Selections</b>	<b>38</b>
from The Epic of Gilgamesh	38



## EARLY GREECE 40

<b>Homer and the Heroic Age</b>	<b>43</b>
<i>Contemporary Voices: Daily Life in The World of Homer</i> 46	
<b>The Visual Arts in Early Greece</b>	<b>47</b>
Geometric Art	47
<i>The Arts and Invention: The Potter's Wheel</i> 48	
The Age of Colonization: Vase Painting at Corinth and Athens	49
<i>East Meets West: The Phoenicians</i> 50	
The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture	51
Sculpture and Painting in the Archaic Period	52
Architecture: The Doric and Ionic Orders	57
<b>Music and Dance in Early Greece</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Early Greek Literature and Philosophy</b>	<b>60</b>
Lyric Poetry	60
The First Philosophers: Presocratics	61
Herodotus, The First Greek Historian	62
<b>Summary</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Pronunciation Guide</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Exercises</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Further Reading</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Reading Selections</b>	<b>64</b>
<i>Homer, from Iliad, Book XXIV</i> 64	
<i>Sappho, from Selected Poems</i> 67	
<i>Herodotus, from History of the Persian Wars, Book VIII</i> 68	

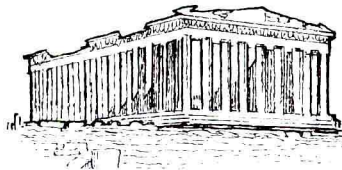




3

## CLASSICAL GREECE AND THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD 72

<b>The Classical Ideal</b>	74
<b>Drama and Philosophy in Classical Greece</b>	76
The Drama Festivals of Dionysus	76
The Athenian Tragic Dramatists	77
Aristophanes and Greek Comedy	80
Philosophy in the Late Classical Period	80
<b>Greek Music in the Classical Period</b>	82
<b>The Visual Arts in Classical Greece</b>	83
Sculpture and Vase Painting in the 5th Century B.C.	83
Architecture in the 5th Century B.C.	85
The Visual Arts in the 4th Century B.C.	91
<b>The Hellenistic Period</b>	94
<i>The Arts and Invention: City Planning</i>	95
<i>East Meets West: The Greeks in India</i>	96
<i>Contemporary Voices: Kerdo the Cobbler</i>	98
<b>Summary</b>	100
<b>Pronunciation Guide</b>	100
<b>Exercises</b>	101
<b>Further Reading</b>	101
<b>Reading Selections</b>	101
<i>Sophocles, Oedipus the King</i>	101
<i>Plato, from Phaedo</i>	120
<i>Plato, The Republic, Book VII, The Allegory of the Cave</i>	124



4

## THE ROMAN LEGACY 126

<b>The Importance of Rome</b>	128
<b>The Etruscans and Their Art</b>	130
<b>Republican Rome (509–31 B.C.)</b>	132
Literary Developments during the Republic	133
Roman Philosophy	135
Republican Art and Architecture	136
<b>Imperial Rome (31 B.C.–A.D. 476)</b>	137
Augustan Literature: Vergil	138
Augustan Sculpture	140
<i>East Meets West: Roman Traders in the Far East</i>	142
The Evidence of Pompeii	143
Pliny the Younger <i>Letter to Tacitus on the Eruption of Vesuvius</i>	145
Roman Imperial Architecture	147
<i>The Arts and Invention: Roman Concrete</i>	149
<i>Contemporary Voices: A Dinner Party in Imperial Rome</i>	151
Rome as the Object of Satire	152
<b>The End of the Roman Empire</b>	152
Late Roman Art and Architecture	153
<b>Summary</b>	154
<b>Pronunciation Guide</b>	156
<b>Exercises</b>	156
<b>Further Reading</b>	156
<b>Reading Selections</b>	157
<i>Catullus, Selected Poems</i>	157
<i>Vergil, from the Aeneid, Book IV</i>	157
<i>Vergil, from the Aeneid, Book VI</i>	159
<i>Horace, Centennial Hymn</i>	163
<i>Juvenal, from the Third Satire</i>	164
<i>Marcus Aurelius, The Meditations: Book II (complete)</i>	165
<b>Interlude: Antony and Cleopatra</b>	168
<b>Further Reading</b>	171

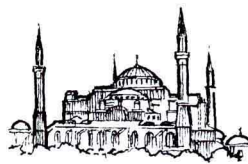




## 5

### JERUSALEM AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY 172

<b>Judaism and Early Christianity</b>	<b>174</b>
The Hebrew Bible and Its Message	174
The Beginnings of Christianity	177
<i>East Meets West: Mithraism</i>	178
Christianity Spreads	179
<i>Contemporary Voices: Vibia Perpetua</i>	180
Early Christian Art	180
<i>The Arts and Invention: Iconography</i>	181
Dura-Europos	182
Constantine and Early Christian Architecture	183
Early Christian Music	184
<b>Summary</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Pronunciation Guide</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>Exercises</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>Further Reading</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>Reading Selections</b>	<b>187</b>
<i>Genesis 1–2</i>	187
<i>Job 37–40</i>	188
<i>Exodus 19–20</i>	191
<i>Amos 3–6</i>	192
<i>Matthew 5–7</i>	195
<i>Acts 17: 14–34</i>	197
<i>I Corinthians 13</i>	198
<i>II Corinthians 11–12</i>	198



## 6

### THE WORLD OF BYZANTIUM 200

<b>The Decline of Rome</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Literature and Philosophy</b>	<b>202</b>
Augustine of Hippo	202
Boethius	203
The Ascendancy of Byzantium	204
Hagia Sophia: Monument and Symbol	205
<i>The Arts and Invention: The Dome</i>	205
<i>Contemporary Voices: Procopius of Caesarea</i>	207
<b>Ravenna</b>	<b>209</b>
Art and Architecture	209
<b>Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>The Persistence of Byzantine Culture</b>	<b>217</b>
<i>East Meets West: The Rise of Islam</i>	219
<b>Summary</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Pronunciation Guide</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Exercises</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Further Reading</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Reading Selections</b>	<b>221</b>
<i>Saint Augustine, Confessions, from Books VIII and IX</i>	221
<i>Augustine, The City of God</i>	224



7

## THE AGE OF CHARLEMAGNE 234

<b>Charlemagne as Ruler and Diplomat</b>	236	
<i>East Meets West: Muslim Spain</i>		237
<b>Learning in the Time of Charlemagne</b>	238	
<i>Contemporary Voices: An Abbot, An Irish Scholar, and Charlemagne's Biographer</i>		239
<b>Benedictine Monasticism</b>	239	
The Rule of Saint Benedict	240	
<b>Monasticism and Gregorian Chant</b>	240	
<b>Liturgical Music and the Rise of Drama</b>	242	
The Liturgical Trope	242	
<b>The Morality Play: <i>Everyman</i></b>	243	
Nonliturgical Drama	243	
<b>The Legend of Charlemagne: <i>Song of Roland</i></b>	244	
<b>The Visual Arts</b>	245	
The Illuminated Book	245	
<i>The Arts and Invention: Manuscript Illumination</i>		248
Charlemagne's Palace at Aachen	249	
The Carolingian Monastery	251	
The Romanesque Style	252	
<b>Summary</b>	255	
<b>Pronunciation Guide</b>	256	
<b>Exercises</b>	256	
<b>Further Reading</b>	256	
<b>Reading Selections</b>	257	
<i>Everyman</i>	257	
<i>Hrosvitha, The Conversion of the Harlot Thaïs</i>	269	
<i>Song of Roland, Strophe 128–182</i>	276	



8

## THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES: THE SEARCH FOR SYNTHESIS 286

<b>The Significance of Paris</b>	288
<b>The Gothic Style</b>	288
Suger's Building Program for Saint Denis	288
The Mysticism of Light	293
The Many Meanings of the Gothic Cathedral	295
<b>Music: The School of Notre Dame</b>	299
<i>The Arts and Invention: Musical Notation</i>	299
<b>Scholasticism</b>	300
The Rise of the Universities	300
<i>Contemporary Voices: A Medieval Parent and a Student</i>	302
Thomas Aquinas	303
<i>East Meets West: Islamic Medicine and Science</i>	305
<b>Dante's <i>Divine Comedy</i></b>	305
<b>Summary</b>	309
<b>Pronunciation Guide</b>	310
<b>Exercises</b>	310
<b>Further Reading</b>	310
<b>Reading Selections</b>	311
<i>Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy: Inferno, Cantos I, III, V, X, XIII, XXXIII, XXXIV; Purgatory, Cantos I, IX; Paradise, Cantos XI, XXXIII</i>	311
<b>Interlude: Abelard and Eloise</b>	344





# 9

## THE 14th CENTURY: A TIME OF TRANSITION 348

### Calamity, Decay, and Violence 350

- The Black Death 350
- East Meets West: The Crusades* 350
- The Great Schism 351
- Contemporary Voices: John Ball* 352
- East Meets West: The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* 352
- The Hundred Years' War 353

### Literature in Italy, England, and France 353

- Petrarch 353
- Chaucer 355
- Christine de Pisan 356

### Art in Italy 356

- The Italo-Byzantine Background 356
- Painting in Siena 362

### Art in Northern Europe 364

### Music: *Ars Nova* 369

- Summary 371
- Pronunciation Guide 372
- Exercises 372
- Further Reading 372

### Reading Selections 373

- Giovanni Boccaccio, Decameron, Preface to the Ladies* 373
- Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, Prologue and The Nun's Priest's Tale* 376
- Christine de Pisan, Book of the City of Ladies, Chapters 30, 34, and 36* 390

### Glossary 394

### Index 401

### Literary Acknowledgments 416

### Photographic Credits 417

## Maps

- The Ancient World* 14
- Ancient Greece* 44
- The Hellenistic World* 96
- The Roman World* 129
- Production and Trade in the Roman Empire, A.D. 2d Century* 144
- Israel at the Time of Jesus* 178
- Christian Communities* 178
- The Byzantine World* 204
- Justinian's Empire* 212
- The Carolingian World* 237
- The Ile de France* 291
- The Black Death* 351

products of human genius are looked to by subsequent generations as a source of inspiration; they have a “surplus of meaning.” Thus the Roman achievement in architecture with the dome of the Pantheon both symbolized their skill in architecture and became a reference point for every major dome built in the West since. The dome of the Pantheon finds echoes in 6th-century Constantinople (Hagia Sophia); in 15th-century Florence (the Duomo); in 16th-century Rome (St. Peter’s); and in 18th-century Washington, D.C. (the Capitol building).

The notion of “surplus of meaning” provides us with a clue as to how to study the humanistic tradition and its achievements. Admittedly simplifying, we can say that such a study has two steps that we have tried to synthesize into a whole in this book:

1. **The work in itself.** At this level we are asking the question of fact and raising the issue of observation: What is the work and how is it achieved? This question includes not only the basic information about, say, what kind of visual art this is (sculpture, painting, mosaic) or what its formal elements are (Is it geometric in style? bright in color? very linear? and so on) but also questions of its function: Is this work homage to politics? for a private patron? for a church? We look at artworks, then, to ask questions about both their form and their function.

This is an important point. We may look at a painting or sculpture in a museum with great pleasure, but that pleasure would be all the more enhanced were we to see that work in its proper setting rather than as an object on display. To ask about form and function, in short, is to ask equally about context. When reading certain literary works (such as the *Iliad* or the *Song of Roland*) we should read them aloud since, in their original form, they were written to be recited, not read silently on a page.

2. **The work in relation to history.** The human achievements of our common past tell us much about earlier cultures both in their differences and in their similarities. A study of the tragic plays that have survived from ancient Athens gives us a glimpse into Athenians’ problems, preoccupations, and aspirations as filtered through the words of Sophocles or Euripides. From such a study we learn both about the culture of Athens and something about how the human spirit has faced the perennial issues of justice, loyalty, and duty. In that sense we are in dialogue with our ancestors across the ages. In the study of ancient culture we see the roots of our own.

To carry out such a project requires willingness really to look at art and closely read literature with an eye equally to the aspect of form/function and to the past and the present. Music, however, requires a special treatment because it is the most abstract of arts (How do we speak about that which is meant not to be seen but to be heard?) and the most temporal. For that reason a somewhat more extended guide to music appears below.

## How to Look at Art

---

Anyone who thumbs through a standard history of art can be overwhelmed by the complexity of what is discussed. We find everything from paintings on the walls of caves and huge sculptures carved into the faces of mountains to tiny pieces of jewelry or miniature paintings. All of these are art because they were made by the human hand in an attempt to express human ideas and/or emotions. Our response to such objects depends a good deal on our own education and cultural biases. We may find some modern art ugly or stupid or bewildering. We may think of all art as highbrow or elitist despite the fact that we like certain movies (film is an art) enough to see them over and over.

Our lives are so bound up with art that we often fail to recognize how much we are shaped by it. We are bombarded with examples of graphic art (television commercials, magazine ads, record-album jackets, displays in stores) every day; we use



art to make statements about who we are and what we value in the way we decorate our rooms and in the style of our dress. In all of these ways we manipulate artistic symbols to make statements about what we believe in, what we stand for, and how we want others to see us.

The history of art is nothing more than the record of how people have used their minds and imaginations to symbolize who they are and what they value. If a certain age spends enormous amounts of money to build and decorate churches (as in 12th-century France) and another spends the same kind of money on palaces (like 18th-century France) we learn about what each age values the most.

The very complexity of human art makes it difficult to interpret. That difficulty increases when we are looking at art from a much different culture and/or a far different age. We may admire the massiveness of Egyptian architecture but find it hard to appreciate why such energies were used for the cult of the dead. When confronted with the art of another age (or even our own art, for that matter) a number of questions we can ask of ourselves and of the art may lead us to greater understanding.

**For what was this piece of art made?** This is essentially a question of *context*. Most of the religious paintings in our museums were originally meant to be seen in churches in very specific settings. To imagine them in their original setting helps us to understand that they had a devotional purpose that is lost when they are seen on a museum wall. To ask about the original setting, then, helps us to ask further whether the painting is in fact devotional or meant as a teaching tool or to serve some other purpose.

Setting is crucial. A frescoed wall on a public building is meant to be seen by many people while a fresco on the wall of an aristocratic home is meant for a much smaller, more elite, class of viewer. A sculpture designed for a wall niche is going to have a shape different than one designed to be seen by walking around it. Similarly, art made under official sponsorship of an authoritarian government must be read in a far different manner than art produced by underground artists who have no standing with the government. Finally, art may be purely decorative or it may have a didactic purpose, but (and here is a paradox) purely decorative art may teach us while didactic art may end up being purely decorative.

**What, if anything, does this piece of art hope to communicate?** This question is one of *intellectual* or *emotional* context. Funeral sculpture may reflect the grief of the survivors or a desire to commemorate the achievements of the deceased or to affirm what the survivors believe about life after death or a combination of these purposes. If we think of art as a variety of speech we can then inquire of any artwork: What is it saying?

An artist may strive for an ideal (“I want to paint the most beautiful woman in the world” or “I wish my painting to be taken for reality itself” or “I wish to move people to love or hate or sorrow by my sculpture”) or to illustrate the power of an idea or (as is the case with most primitive art) to “capture” the power of the spirit world for religious and/or magical purposes.

An artist may well produce a work simply to demonstrate inventiveness or to expand the boundaries of what art means. The story is told of Pablo Picasso’s reply to a woman who said that her ten-year-old child could paint better than he. Picasso replied, “Congratulations, Madame. Your child is a genius.” We know that before he was a teenager Picasso could draw and paint with photographic accuracy. He said that during his long life he tried to learn how to paint with the fresh eye and spontaneous simplicity of a child.

**How was this piece of art made?** This question inquires into both the materials and the skills the artist employs to turn materials into art. Throughout this book we will speak of different artistic techniques, like bronze casting or etching or panel painting; here we make a more general point. To learn to appreciate the *craft* of the artist is a first step toward enjoying art for its worth as art—to developing an “eye” for art. This requires *looking* at the object as a crafted object. Thus, for example, a

close examination of Michelangelo's *Pietà* shows the pure smooth beauty of marble while his *Slaves* demonstrate the roughness of stone and the sculptor's effort to carve meaning from hard material. We might stand back to admire a painting as a whole, but then to look closely at one portion of it teaches us the subtle manipulation of color and line that creates the overall effect.

**What is the composition of this artwork?** This question addresses how the artist "composes" the work. Much Renaissance painting uses a pyramidal construction so that the most important figure is at the apex of the pyramid and lesser figures form the base. Some paintings presume something happening outside the picture itself (such as an unseen source of light); a cubist painting tries to render simultaneous views of an object. At other times an artist may enhance the composition by the manipulation of color with a movement from light to dark or a stark contrast between dark and light, as in the *chiaroscuro* of Baroque painting. In all these cases the artists intend to do something more than merely "depict" a scene; they appeal to our imaginative and intellectual powers as we enter into the picture or engage the sculpture or look at their film.

Composition, obviously, is not restricted to painting. Filmmakers compose with close-ups or tracking shots just as sculptors carve for frontal or side views of an object. Since all these techniques are designed to make us see in a particular manner, only by thinking about composition do we begin to reflect on what the artist has done. If we do not think about composition, we tend to take an artwork at "face value" and, as a consequence, are not training our "eye."

**What elements should we notice about a work of art?** The answer to this question is a summary of what we have stated above. Without pretending to exclusivity, we should judge art on the basis of the following three aspects:

*Formal elements.* What kind of artwork is it? What materials are employed? What is its composition in terms of structure? In terms of pure form, how does this particular work look when compared to a similar work of the same or another artist?

*Symbolic elements.* What is this artwork attempting to "say"? Is its purpose didactic, propagandistic, to give pleasure, or what? How well do the formal elements contribute to the symbolic statement being attempted in the work of art?

*Social elements.* What is the context of this work of art? Who is paying for it and why? Whose purposes does it serve? At this level many different philosophies come into play. A Marxist critic might judge a work in terms of its sense of class or economic aspects, while a feminist might inquire whether it affirms women or acts as an agent of subjugation and/or exploitation.

It is possible to restrict oneself to formal criticism of an artwork (Is this well done in terms of craft and composition?), but such an approach does not do full justice to what the artist is trying to do. Conversely, to judge every work purely in terms of social theory excludes the notion of an artistic work and, as a consequence, reduces art to politics or philosophy. For a fuller appreciation of art, then, all the elements mentioned above need to come into play.

## How to Listen to Music

---

The sections of this book devoted to music are designed for readers who have no special training in musical theory and practice. Response to significant works of music, after all, should require no more specialized knowledge than the ability to respond to *Oedipus Rex*, say, or a Byzantine mosaic. Indeed, many millions of people buy recorded music in one form or another, or enjoy listening to it on the radio, without the slightest knowledge of how the music is constructed or performed.

The gap between the simple pleasure of the listener and the complex skills of composer and performer often prevents the development of a more serious grasp of



music history and its relation to the other arts. The aim of this section is to help bridge that gap without trying to provide too much technical information. After a brief survey of music's role in Western culture we shall look at the "language" used to discuss musical works.

## Music in Western Culture

The origins of music are unknown, and neither the excavations of ancient instruments or depictions of performers nor the evidence from modern primitive societies gives any impression of its early stages. Presumably, like the early cave paintings, it served some kind of magical or ritual purpose. This is borne out by the fact that music still forms a vital part of most religious ceremonies today, from the hymns sung in Christian churches or the solo singing of the cantor in an Orthodox Jewish synagogue to the elaborate musical rituals performed in Buddhist or Shinto temples in Japan. The Old Testament makes many references to the power of music, most notably in the famous story of the battle of Jericho, and it is clear that by historical times music played an important role in Jewish life, both sacred and secular.

By the time of the Greeks, the first major Western culture to develop, music had become as much a science as an art. It retained its importance for religious rituals; in fact, according to Greek mythology the gods themselves invented it. At the same time the theoretical relationships between the various musical pitches attracted the attention of philosophers such as Pythagoras (c. 550 B.C.), who described the underlying unity of the universe as the "harmony of the spheres." Later 4th-century-B.C. thinkers like Plato and Aristotle emphasized music's power to affect human feeling and behavior. Thus for the Greeks music represented a religious, intellectual, and moral force. Once again, music is still used in our own world to affect people's feelings, whether it be the stirring sound of a march, a solemn funeral dirge, or the eroticism of much modern "pop" music (of which Plato would thoroughly have disapproved).

Virtually all the music—and art, for that matter—to have survived from the Middle Ages is religious. Popular secular music certainly existed, but since no real system of notation was invented before the 11th century, it has disappeared without trace. The ceremonies of both the Western and the Eastern (Byzantine) church centered around the chanting of a single musical line, a kind of music that is called *monophonic* (from the Greek "single voice"). Around the time musical notation was devised, composers began to become interested in the possibilities of notes sounding simultaneously—what we would think of as harmony. Music involving several separate lines sounding together (as in a modern string quartet or a jazz group) became popular only in the 14th century. This gradual introduction of *polyphony* ("many voices") is perhaps the single most important development in the history of music, since composers began to think not only horizontally (that is, melodically) but also vertically, or harmonically. In the process the possibilities of musical expression were immeasurably enriched.

## The Experience of Listening

"What music expresses is eternal, infinite, and ideal. It does *not* express the passion, love, or longing of this or that individual in this or that situation, but passion, love, or longing in itself; and this it presents in that unlimited variety of motivations which is the exclusive and particular characteristic of music, foreign and inexpressible in any other language" (Richard Wagner). With these words one of the greatest of all composers described the power of music to express universal emotions. Yet for those unaccustomed to serious listening, it is precisely this breadth of experience that is difficult to identify with. We can understand a joyful or tragic situation. Joy and tragedy themselves, though, are more difficult to comprehend.

There are a number of ways by which the experience of listening can become more rewarding and more enjoyable. Not all of them will work for everyone, but over the course of time they have proved helpful for many newcomers to the satisfactions of music.

1. *Before listening* to the piece you have selected, ask yourself some questions:

What is the historical context of the music? For whom was it composed—for a general or for an elite audience?

Did the composer have a specific assignment? If the work was intended for performance in church, for example, it should sound very different from a set of dances. Sometimes the location of the performance affected the sound of the music: composers of masses to be sung in Gothic cathedrals used the buildings' acoustical properties to emphasize the resonant qualities of their works.

With what forces is the music to be performed? Do they correspond to those intended by the composer? Performers of medieval music, in particular, often have to reconstruct much that is missing or uncertain. Even in the case of later traditions, the original sounds can sometimes be only approximated. The superstars of the 18th-century world of opera were the *castrati*, male singers who had been castrated in their youth and whose voices had therefore never broken; contemporaries described the sounds they produced as incomparably brilliant and flexible. The custom, which seems to us so barbaric, was abandoned in the 19th century, and even the most fanatic musicologist must settle for a substitute today. The case is an extreme one, but it points the moral that even with the best of intentions, modern performers cannot always reproduce the original sounds.

Does the work have a text? If so, read it through before you listen to the music; it is easiest to concentrate on one thing at a time. In the case of a translation, does the version you are using capture the spirit of the original? Translators sometimes take a simple, popular lyric and make it sound archaic and obscure in order to convey the sense of "old" music. If the words do not make much sense to you, probably they would seem equally incomprehensible to the composer. Music, of all the arts, is concerned with direct communication.

Is the piece divided into sections? If so, why? Is their relationship determined by purely musical considerations—the structure of the piece—or by external factors, the words of a song, for example, or the parts of a Mass?

Finally, given all the above, what do you expect the music to sound like? Your preliminary thinking should have prepared you for the kind of musical experience in store for you. If it has not, go back and reconsider some of the points above.

2. *While you are listening* to the music:

Concentrate as completely as you can. It is virtually impossible to gain much from music written in an unfamiliar idiom unless you give it your full attention. Read record-sleeve notes or other written information before you begin to listen, as you ask yourself the questions above, not *while* the music is playing. If there is a text, keep an eye on it but do not let it distract you from the music.

Concentrating is not always easy, particularly if you are mainly used to listening to music as a background, but there are some ways in which you can help your own concentration. To avoid visual distraction, fix your eyes on some detail near you—a mark on the wall, a design in someone's dress, the cover of a book. At first this will seem artificial, but after a while your attention should be taken by the music. If you feel your concentration fading, do *not* pick up a magazine or gaze around; consciously force your attention back to the music and try to analyze what you are hearing. Does it correspond to your expectations? How is the composer trying to achieve an effect? By variety of instrumental color? Are any of the ideas, or tunes, repeated?

Unlike literature or the visual arts, music occurs in the dimension of time. When you are reading, you can turn backward to check a reference or remind yourself of a character's identity. In looking at a painting, you can move from a detail to an overall view as often as you want. In music, the speed of your attention is controlled



by the composer. Once you lose the thread of the discourse, you cannot regain it by going back; you must try to pick up again and follow the music as it continues—and that requires your renewed attention.

On the other hand, in these times of easy access to recordings, the same pieces can be listened to repeatedly. Even the most experienced musicians cannot grasp some works fully without several hearings. Indeed, one of the features that distinguishes “art” music from more “popular” works is its capacity to yield increasing rewards. On a first hearing, therefore, try to grasp the general mood and structure and note features to listen for the next time you hear the piece. Do not be discouraged if the idiom seems strange or remote, and be prepared to become familiar with a few works from each period you are studying.

As you become accustomed to serious listening, you will notice certain patterns used by composers to give form to their works. They vary according to the styles of the day, and throughout this book there are descriptions of each period’s musical characteristics. In responding to the general feeling the music expresses, therefore, you should try to note the specific features that identify the time of its composition.

3. *After you have heard the piece*, ask yourself these questions:

Which characteristics of the music indicated the period of its composition? Were they due to the forces employed (voices and/or instruments)?

How was the piece constructed? Did the composer make use of repetition? Was there a change of mood and, if so, did the original mood return at the end?

What kind of melody was used? Was it continuous or did it divide into a series of shorter phrases?

If a text was involved, how did the music relate to the words? Were they audible? Did the composer intend them to be? If not, why not?

Were there aspects of the music that reminded you of the literature and visual arts of the same period? In what kind of buildings can you imagine it being performed? What does it tell you about the society for which it was written?

Finally, ask yourself the most difficult question of all: What did the music express? Richard Wagner described the meaning of music as “foreign and inexpressible in any other language.” There is no dictionary of musical meaning, and listeners must interpret for themselves what they hear. We all understand the general significance of words like *contentment* or *despair*, but music can distinguish between a million shades of each.

## Concepts in Music

There is a natural tendency in talking about the arts to use terms from one art form in describing another. Thus most people would know what to expect from a “colorful” story or a painting in “quiet” shades of blue. This metaphorical use of language helps describe characteristics that are otherwise often very difficult to isolate, but some care is required to remain within the general bounds of comprehension.

**Line.** In music, *line* generally means the progression in time of a series of notes: the melody. A melody in music is a succession of tones related to one another to form a complete musical thought. Melodies vary in length and in shape and may be made up of several smaller parts. They may move quickly or slowly, smoothly or with strongly accented (stressed) notes. Some melodies are carefully balanced and proportional, others are irregular and asymmetrical. A melodic line dictates the basic character of a piece of music, just as lines do in a painting or the plot line does for a story or play.

**Texture.** The degree to which a piece of music has a thick or thin *texture* depends on the number of voices and/or instruments involved. Thus the monophonic music of the Middle Ages, with its single voice, has the thinnest texture possible. At the opposite extreme is a 19th-century opera, where half a dozen soloists, chorus, and a large orchestra were sometimes combined. Needless to say, thickness and