



Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music

By Joseph N. Straus

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Approaching disability as a cultural construction rather than a medical pathology, this book studies the impact of disability and concepts of disability on composers, performers, and listeners with disabilities, as well as on discourse about music and works of music themselves. For composers with disabilities--like Beethoven, Delius, and Schumann--awareness of the disability sharply inflects critical reception. For performers with disabilities--such as Itzhak Perlman and Evelyn Glennie--the performance of disability and the performance of music are deeply intertwined. For listeners with disabilities, extraordinary bodies and minds may give rise to new ways of making sense of music. In the stories that people tell about music, and in the stories that music itself tells, disability has long played a central but unrecognized role. Some of these stories are narratives of overcoming--the triumph of the human spirit over adversity--but others are more nuanced tales of accommodation and acceptance of life with a non-normative body or mind. In all of these ways, music both reflects and constructs disability.

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Editorial Review

Review

"[A] meticulously researched book that connects disability narratives with composing, theorizing, performing, and hearing music." --*Journal of the American Musicological Society*

"A work of intellectual virtuosity, *Extraordinary Measures* will change the way we think about music and the way we think about disability. Joseph Straus shows us how disability appears not only in musical performance and narrative, but most fully in musical form." --Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Emory University

"A leading figure in the field of music theory, Straus has applied his considerable talents not only as a writer and critical thinker, but also as a humanist in the most profound sense, to virtually single-handedly create the field of disability studies in music scholarship. This book is both engaging and moving, as Straus expertly draws current literature in disability studies into a new, musical context and examines our deepest beliefs and prejudices about music, musicians, and the worlds they create and inhabit." --Dave Headlam, Eastman School of Music

"A veritable music-theoretical page-turner, this book surveys a wondrously defamiliarized landscape of music reception, theory, and performance through the transformative lens of disability. It is nothing short of a major landmark, destined to exert a profound impact on the field." --Floyd Grave, Rutgers University

"Breaks new ground...A powerful and moving piece of social activism in the music arena...As *Extraordinary Measures* persuasively shows, it's time we consider disabled musicians and listeners not as defective, but merely as different." --*Chamber Music*

"[A] concise but magisterial volume...This is that rare sort of book that will radically change the way you understand an art form that seems so familiar. Straus is a clear and engaging writer, and the issues presented couldn't be more important to anyone committed to the field of notated Western art music." --*American Record Guide*

"The book sparkles with a clarity that a variety of readers will find engaging and enjoyable. The book cycles back to a number of core themes and provides a glossary of terms and clearly explained musical concepts that make it ideal for students and accessible to non-musicians. Most importantly, *Extraordinary Measures* will appeal to those readers who want to be challenged to think about music making

in a new way, through the lens of disability." --*Notes*

"Serves as a valuable resource, not only to teachers who frequently work with students with disabilities but also to all musicians who wish to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which diversity affects our varied musical endeavors...In the spirit of inclusion, this is one of the rare books that speaks to all musicians, regardless of their individual interests or pursuits." --*Music Educators Journal*

"Makes significant contributions to disability studies and musical criticism...Serves as testament to the transformative pressure and power that disability--as both discipline and as subject--evokes. Straus's work asks readers to re-conceptualize what it means to experience, create, and respond to music." --*Disability Studies Quarterly*

"*Extraordinary Measures* is an important book. It offers, in one convenient place, an overview of the recent and groundbreaking work that Joseph Straus has conjured almost single-handedly into being as a significant new sub-discipline within musicology and music theory. As time passes, I believe its position will move more towards the center of many of our analytical discourses, even as the DISMUS literature continues to expand around it." --*Music Theory Spectrum*

"[A] robust account of how disability, as an idea, makes things in the world, rather than how the world makes disability." --*American Quarterly*

About the Author

A Distinguished Professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, **Joseph N. Straus** is the author of numerous books and articles, mostly on topics in music since 1900. He is a former President of the Society for Music Theory, and is the leading figure in the study of music in relationship to disability.

Users Review

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Mavis Strain:

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Gerald Magee:

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Vincenza Nagel:

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