



Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music

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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