

(Free pdf) Concerto Conversations: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1997-98 (With a 68-minute CD)

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Joseph Kerman

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**Joseph Kerman : Concerto Conversations: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1997-98 (With a 68-minute CD)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Concerto Conversations: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1997-98 (With a 68-minute CD):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A short book packed with musical insights By Roochak Given the popularity of the concerto -- it isn't easy to attend a symphony concert that doesn't have one on the program -- you'd think there'd be a wider-ranging conversation in print about the musical relationships between soloist(s) and orchestra that doesn't just stop at all-purpose words like "dramatic." It's useful, though, to keep the metaphor of drama in mind

as we listen, for as Joseph Kerman argues in these lectures, there's a good deal of roleplaying going on in concertos. But first, in describing the kinds of duality we hear in them, Kerman suggests the terms "polarity," "reciprocity" and "diffusion." Polarity, in which orchestra and solo play different musical material without sharing it, is typical of the early 18th century; reciprocity, in which the concerto agents share musical material between them, is typical of the Classical and Romantic eras; and diffusion witnesses the integration of soloist and orchestra in much post-Romantic music. Within these modes, Kerman anthropomorphises solo and orchestra into any number of roles the music suggests: "EAVESDROPPER, TEASE, SURVIVOR, VICTIM, MOURNER, MINX, LOVER, CRITIC, EDITOR..." It's fun, for example, to read of piano and orchestra in the third movement of Mozart's D minor concerto locked together like pitbulls, or to see Chaikovsky's (yes, Kerman spells it that way) violin concerto described as the quasi-narrative of a mistress whose servant, the orchestra, evolves into her critic and equal partner. Speaking of critics, in particular those who seem embarrassed by virtuoso display, Kerman construes virtuosity to encompass bravura (chops), mimesis (mimicry, especially vocal), and spontaneity, and argues that in the absence of display, you don't have a concerto; you have a symphony with an obbligato solo part. Spontaneity (or the ability to make through-composed music sound spontaneous) is the essence of virtuosity. He praises the Liszt piano concertos ("a hard sell," he admits) and leaves us with the wonderful reminder that "listening to flawed virtuosity is like watching college football -- a site of empathy and rapture for fans and alumni, but noplacement on the scale of aesthetic experience." The CD of concerto movements that comes with this book is, of course, useless until you convert it to MP3 files. How else are you gonna cue up those musical examples when you're reading on the go? 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. The conversation continues by Joseph M. This is an exceptional book. Kerman mixes just the right amount of scholarship and anecdote to satisfy a reader who prefers either approach. His metaphor of concerto as part of an ongoing musical conversation, not just between orchestra and solo instrument but also from composer to composer and epoch to epoch, lets the reader become part of a tradition known almost exclusively to composers of concerti. By the end of this book, one has certainly cultivated something important with regards to music appreciation of concerti, be they nudge or virtuoso. I even found myself "rooting" for this musical form in the end, hoping that composers today keep the conversation alive--and before this book, I was indifferent to the whole tradition.

The concerto has attracted relatively little attention as a genre, Joseph Kerman observes, and his urbane and wide-ranging Norton Lectures fill the gap in a way that will delight all music listeners. Kerman addresses the full range of the concerto repertory, treating both the general and the particular. His perceptive commentary on individual works--with illustrative performances on the accompanying CD--is alive with enthusiasm, intimations, and insights into the spirit of concerto. Concertos model human relationships, according to Kerman, and his description of the conversation between solo instrument and orchestra brings this observation vividly to life. What does the solo instrument do when it first enters in a concerto? How do composers balance claims of solo-orchestra contrast and solo virtuosity? When do they deploy the sumptuous musical textures that only concertos can provide? Kerman's unexpected answers offer a new understanding of the concerto and a stimulus to enhanced listening. In language that the Boston Globe's Richard Dyer calls "always delightfully vivid," Kerman conducts readers and listeners into the conversations that concertos so eloquently enact. Amid the musical forces at play, he renews the dialogue of music lovers with the language of the concerto--the familiar, the lesser-known, the cherished, and the undervalued. The CD packaged with the book contains movements from works that Kerman treats most intensively--by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Bartok, Stravinsky, and Prokofiev.

.com For more than 40 years, since his seminal book *Opera as Drama*, Joseph Kerman has been among the most perceptive and lucid commentators on music. Readers new to his work will find a highly personable companion in *Concerto Conversations*, while those who already know it can appreciate a late-period distillation of his methods. In typical fashion, Kerman begins not with a preface of introduction but with a chapter on beginnings. There is a general division of the dynamic between soloist and orchestra into the concepts of "reciprocity" versus "polarity," but the book is really more a collection of highly individual observations about specific concertos. Kerman touches on some works lightly and deftly while giving others a fuller treatment. Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto, Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto (Kerman, blessedly, takes Tchaikovsky very seriously), Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Winds, and Mozart's D Minor Piano Concerto get the widest overviews. We find Kerman's love of language throughout: "High noon! One can almost see solo and orchestra glaring at each other" in the Beethoven; the strings in the Tchaikovsky are "sisterly, and secular." Kerman tosses off provocative ideas along the way: the concerto has already postdated the symphony, the great contrapuntist Bach used a fugal introduction to a concerto only once, and particular events in the life of Liszt affected his piano concertos. Kerman makes an important point in contrasting virtuosity with bravura. These elegant, concise lectures were first conceived for the Norton series at Harvard. A 12-track, 69-minute CD of musical examples (along with extensive musical quotations in an appendix) is included. --William R. Braun  
From Library Journal  
What a pity this engaging, intelligent book is not a multimedia CD or video series (one of the publication formats of Leonard Bernstein's Norton lectures). Kerman (*Write All These Down: Essays on Music*)

knows that successful music appreciation sessions need "less talk and more music." His lectures provided more music than is found on the accompanying CD (and unlike the CD, they included video clips as well). The book does have photographs and musical examples, but they're crowded at the back. Cues to CD tracks or notated examples appear in the text, but readers must flip pages and hit CD player pause buttons to follow Kerman's ideas—which move from concerto beginnings and endings to the reciprocal interplay of soloists and orchestra ("conversations") to treatment of all this and more by various composers. With added text (to compensate for the missing music), this book would have found readers among musical connoisseurs who appreciate Kerman's imaginative skill in making connections and his unique combination of erudition and accessibility. For large libraries that can handle books with CDs. A Bonnie Jo Dopp, Univ. of Maryland Lib., College Park Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. Concerto Conversations is valuable, even crucial, for its unprepossessing manner, its casual movement from one example to the next, its elegance and literateness and lucidity. No Schenker graphs here, no narratology or gender studies. The concerto is revealed not as a construction of bourgeois identity, nor as a zone of suppressed homoeroticism, but instead as a human, emotional realm in which solo and orchestral characters are engaged in various forms of conversation and conflict. Kerman manages to be both intelligent and intelligible. He writes for the bright layman, as academicians did once upon a time. His evocations of particular musical moments are immediate and magical. His gift is so uncommon as to make one sad. (Alex Ross New Republic) Concerto Conversations is a satisfying exploration of how the wide range of composers have handled the balance and contrast between soloist and orchestra in a classical concerto. Based on his series of Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard, these are not for the musical novice, but they are surprisingly accessible for probably any regular symphony-goer. (Theodore P. Mahne New Orleans Times) Splendid, entertaining, original, and often profound... Kerman speaks directly and informally to a literate and educated public deeply interested in music... His affable manner sometimes makes his approach to the subject seem obvious, the result of common sense, even when it is most innovative. (Charles Rosen New York of Books) Kerman brings to the discussion of concertos his distinctive vision of American musicology, taking account of its adventures, its limitations and its excesses. He combines varied styles of criticism without losing his enchantment with the music... Kerman is relaxed, learned and deliberately unsystematic, probing here, redefining there, supplementing the music--some of which is available on an attached CD--with vivid analytic description that at its best can change how we hear. (Edward Rothstein New York Times) [A] graceful set of ruminations. (Richard Taruskin New York Times) Joseph Kerman's series of Norton Lectures on [concertos] could not be more timely. The first beneficial effect is to encourage reflection on the music itself, freed from the flashy trappings the 'music industry' may have forced on it... Kerman's theme, so simple and obvious, is the drama and narrative of the concerto. He aims to describe the situation and events of the concerto in human terms... Kerman's descriptions are cheekily up to the minute, and the assignation of roles to soloist and orchestra becomes something of a party game... The author plays this light-hearted game with considerable perspicacity... Present-day composers should pay particular heed to Kerman's illuminating ideas. Audiences still listen to concertos, and there are major soloists willing to be involved in the developments of something new... Snobbery still surrounds the idea of the concerto, particularly its liveliest, most human aspects. This persuasive little book argues very successively for an end to such self-denial, and suggests that the concerto could have an ebullient creative future. (Judith Weir Times Literary Supplement) Where many classical music 'self-help' books are faintly condescending in tone, this one tends towards the inspirational as Kerman swoops joyously in the concerto and exposes the drama of its shimmering textures, pounding rhythms and high-tension dialogues between soloist and orchestra. (Armintha Wallace Irish Times) As the title implies, Kerman writes in a conversational tone--full of enthusiasm and insight. (R. Pitts Choice) [An] engaging, intelligent book. (Bonnie Jo Dopp Library Journal) Kerman cites many warhorses and a few seldom heard fillies in the concertante repertoire to show how resourceful composers have met the challenges of the grand musical dialogue that is a concerto. Including 46 printed musical examples and a CD of others, this is a marvelous book for music lovers, especially because Kerman is such a good conversationalist. (Ray Olson Booklist) Six scintillating lectures on the most conversational form of classical music translate superbly to the page, and to make up for the musical exemplification Kerman provided in person, a CD full of recorded examples is part of the package. (Booklist) The set of Norton Lectures given by Joseph Kerman at Harvard University in 1997-98 has been reshaped into Concerto Conversations This sophisticated yet accessible study expands the lectures' contents but, stemming from talks that were in part extempore, it maintains an air of informality, of improvisation, that should please every reader. (Christopher Hatch Quarterly Journal of MLA)