



An Introduction to the Music of Milton Babbitt

Andrew Mead

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In this celebration of Milton Babbitt's art, Andrew Mead explores the development of a central figure in contemporary American music. As a teacher and writer, Babbitt has influenced two generations of students, including such notable musicians as Stephen Sondheim and Donald Martino. He has helped establish the study of music theory as a serious academic pursuit, and his articles on Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and the twelve-tone system constitute a seminal body of research. But Babbitt is first and last a composer, whose works are, in Mead's words, "truly music to be heard." With Mead as a guide, we discover the strong emotional and expressive charge of Babbitt's music that is inextricably entwined with its structure.

Babbitt is a twelve-tone composer, unabashedly so, and it is precisely his profound understanding of Arnold Schoenberg's epochal insight that gives Babbitt's music its special quality. By examining the underlying principles of twelve-tone composition, Mead allows us to appreciate Babbitt's music on its own terms, as a richly varied yet unified body of work. In achieving this purpose, he provides an excellent introduction to twelve-tone music in general. Without relying on professional jargon, he lucidly and succinctly explains Babbitt's complexities. A catalog of compositions, a discography, and a bibliography complete a book that will interest performers, music theorists, and music historians, as well as other readers who are enthusiastic or curious about contemporary musical works.

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